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Participant Selection and Exclusion in a New Zealand Youth Development Programme

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Abstract

Decisions about participant selection are inherent to a programme based approach to positive youth development. As well as having a way of selecting potential participants, programmes often utilise some sort of exclusion criteria. This can be a sensitive issue: the wish to support young people in need by being as inclusive as possible must be balanced with an awareness of the limits of a programme's capability to safely contain disruptive or dangerous behaviours. This thesis deals with how the New Zealand positive youth development programme 'Project K' has managed the issue of exclusion. A collaborative approach informed by community psychology and action research methodologies was utilised. Understanding Project K's current practice around exclusion was the focus of the initial phase. This included a quantitative analysis of the rates of exclusion and demographics of excluded students and a qualitative component exploring stakeholder perspectives on exclusion and how decisions about exclusion are actually made. Findings emphasised the importance of having a robust process around exclusion in order to maintain safe practice and prevent unnecessary exclusion. However, unavoidable challenges were also highlighted including constraints related to limited information and time; and more complex issues related to the need for discretion and good judgment in making decisions even when there are clear criteria. The second phase of the research considered possible responses to the issue of exclusion including action aimed at improving decision making around exclusion and options for supporting currently excluded young people. As the needs of excluded young people could not be directly assessed, this phase was guided by expert interviews. Expert perspectives on the needs of excluded youth emphasized the importance of individualized, responsive, and multisystemic interventions. Overall, this research illustrates both the importance and complexity of exclusion, an issue not often the focus of research. In considering the rationale behind the practice, wider implications related to the potential challenges posed by integrating 'at-risk' young people into the positive youth development approach are highlighted.

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Preface

This thesis focuses on processes of participant selection and exclusion in a youth development programme. These early choices, about who should and should not be included in the programme, are made well before the programme begins. However, these choices have an impact on everything that happens after that point. In a similar way, fundamental decisions made in the early stages of research, usually not discussed in any report, regarding what topics are deemed worthy and feasible targets for research have a comparably far reaching effect on all that comes after that decision.

The current research has an applied focus; its impetus came from an issue in a specific context and was raised by people in that setting being concerned by this issue and seeking ways to address it. This immediately separates it from literature-derived and/or laboratory-based approaches to research in psychology. The role of research arising from and undertaken within applied settings has now been well established with research traditions including community psychology (Rappaport & Seidman, 2000) and action research (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). Such approaches highlight utility as a criterion for quality research alongside more traditional ideas of producing valid and reliable knowledge (O'Leary, 2005). One important principle in applied research is being responsive to the local situation (Reason & Bradbury, 2008).

The need to be responsive to local contexts poses a challenge for researchers at all stages of the research including planning, undertaking, and reporting research. With regards to the last of these, my current task, finding a way to present such research that is acceptable to the scientific community but also gives an authentic account of the research process is particularly challenging. Thus, I have attempted to write a thesis that reflects the 'true story' of the research; this has guided my approach to structuring this thesis. I begin by describing the youth development programme, the organisation that runs it and the context that precipitated the research. Following this, I move on to perhaps the more traditional starting point - reviewing relevant literature – is in this case literature on positive youth development with a particular focus on how positive youth development does and does not integrate and understand risk. The third chapter discusses methodology, while chapters 4-6 present an account of the research undertaken including rationale, methods, results and the process of disseminating findings and developing recommendations. Finally, chapter 7 presents a discussion and conclusions regarding the implications of the research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This research focuses on the exclusion of youth with specific risk behaviours from a positive youth development programme called Project K that is run by an organisation called the Foundation for Youth Development (FYD). In this chapter I will explain the Project K programme, the participant selection process and the existing (and ongoing) evaluation of Project K. Following this, I briefly describe the FYD – which actually grew out of Project K – including the FYD’s current vision, mission, goals, and programmes. Next, I will outline the collaboration between the FYD and The University of Auckland that this research was situated within before touching on the understanding and shared concerns regarding exclusion at the outset of the research.

Project K and the Foundation for Youth Development

Project K is a New Zealand based positive youth development programme. Founded in 1995 by adventurer Graeme Dingle and lawyer Jo-anne Wilkinson. Project K aims to inspire young New Zealanders to ‘maximise their potential’ (Foundation for Youth Development, 2005a). Project K programme is 14 months long and involves three core components: a wilderness adventure, a community challenge and a mentoring partnership. The wilderness adventure aims to teach goal setting, teamwork, perseverance, self-reliance and self-knowledge and involves 10 days of preparation at a camp followed by a 10 day journey. The community challenge component aims to encourage students to adapt the lessons learned during the wilderness adventure and to help students identify local resources and opportunities and build stronger relationships within their community. Part of the community challenge involves the students undertaking a project to ‘give something back’ to their community. This might entail some service to a disadvantaged group in the area (e.g., work with the elderly or disabled) or some concrete contribution to the community (e.g., planting trees). The final stage of the Project K programme involves a year long partnership with a trained volunteer mentor. Mentors go through screening and a training course before being matched with a student. The mentor helps the student to set and achieve academic, health and fitness and personal goals and supports and strengthens the positive changes resulting from the first stages of the programme.

Project K is run throughout New Zealand by licensees in the form of local trusts that are either previously existing or are specifically formed to deliver the Project K programme. The use of local trusts is designed to maintain a community centred focus. Regional licensees hire their own

staff and are responsible for delivering the Project K programme and fundraising in their own areas, with programmes being co-ordinated by regional 'programme directors' (PDs). In terms of funding, as individual Project K licensees are responsible for their own fundraising and each will have slightly different sources of funding. The National Support Office holds the intellectual property rights to the Project K programme, provides programme materials, coaching, quality assurance and national networking, as well as conducting research and evaluation (Foundation for Youth Development, 2005a). Project K is now a relatively large programme with licensees throughout New Zealand running Project K in 16 schools during 2009.

In 2005 Project K's trustees decided to form the Foundation for Youth Development as an over-arching body that would oversee Project K and also develop programmes in other areas in order to eventually becoming an international leader in Youth Development. The FYD's strategic plan for 2010 – 2012 states that the FYD's vision is "to build a strong New Zealand by helping to grow great kiwi kids" and their mission is "to develop, coordinate, manage, and deliver programmes that are proven to bring positive changes to the lives of young New Zealanders and their families" (Project K National Manager, personal communication, March 16, 2010). The Foundation for Youth Development is funded through a mixture of public donations, corporate sponsorship, and government funding – details of which are available in the FYD annual reports (see www.fyd.org.nz).

The FYD currently runs a variety of programmes for young people ages 5 – 18. These programmes target a broad range of issues. At the time that this research was undertaken the FYD had recently established a programme targeting male youth offenders called the Male Youth New Directions (MYND) programme. The establishment of this programme reflected a shift within the organisation toward working with a broader range of young people including those with significant problem behaviours as well as with a more general youth population targeted by FYD's existing programmes. This interest in broadening the range of programmes offered by the FYD to meet the variety of needs present in the community was one impetus for the FYD supporting the current research.

The Project K selection process.

An overview of the Project K selection process is provided in Figure 1 and each stage is further detailed in text. Participant selection for Project K is based around a self-efficacy survey (see Appendix A) which measures academic, social and help seeking self-efficacy and is administered to

all Year 10 students (13 – 15 year olds in the second year of secondary school) in schools where the programme runs. Self-efficacy refers to people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that influence events which affect their lives (Bandura, 1994). Self-efficacy has an influence on the choices people make, the amount of effort they are likely to expend, their level of perseverance, and their resilience in the face of adversity (Bandura, 1997). Additionally, levels of self-efficacy are predicative of outcomes in the specific domain to which the measure relates (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, & Cervone, 2004).

The self-efficacy survey used in Project K selection was developed specifically for this purpose by Moore (2005). Items for the academic and social subscales were adapted from Bandura's Children's Self-efficacy Scale (Choi, Fuqua, & Griffin, 2001; Miller, Coombs, & Fuqua, 1999) and the Self-Efficacy Questionnaire for Children development by Muris (2001). Items for the help-seeking subscale were developed based on Bandura's concept of self-efficacy and the goals of the Project K programme – particularly the community challenge component. Following exploratory factor analysis the survey was condensed to 20 questions, eight focused on academic self-efficacy, eight on social self-efficacy and four on help-seeking self-efficacy. Each item is scored on a 6 point likert scale, where 1 = not at all well and 6 = quite well. This revised scale showed good reliability, with Cronbach's alphas of .92 for the total score, .88 for academic self-efficacy, .85 for social self-efficacy and .82 for help-seeking self-efficacy (Moore, 2005).

In addition to the self-efficacy survey, the selection process also involves a proxy report measuring students academic, social and help seeking abilities completed by two teachers (see Appendix A). Teachers answer three questions per student, each related to one of the three domains listed above. This additional component was included to increase the validity of the process by incorporating multiple perspectives.

Project K's selection process aims to target students who have below average self-efficacy across domains in comparison with other students at the same school, but not necessarily those whose scores are at the extreme bottom of the distribution. In order to do this scores from the self-efficacy scale and the two teacher screening surveys are combined to produce an ordered list of students. Each of the three measures is divided into the three subscales of academic, social, and help seeking self-efficacy and then each of these nine scores is given a score of zero or one. Scores of zero are given if the students score falls below the school median on that dimension and one if it falls at or above the median. The zero or one scores for each dimension are then summed to give a

total score out of nine. Based on this single 0-9 score an ordered list of all year 10 students is produced so that students scoring below average on the most dimensions are considered first.

The next stage in the selection process involves the 'liaison team exclusion meeting' with Project K and school staff. There is no specific 'cut-off' score, rather students are considered for participation starting from the bottom of the ordered list described in the previous paragraph. Students are screened against the five exclusion criteria (see Table 1) and if they meet any of these criteria are deemed ineligible for participation. This process of excluding students with the specified risk behaviours is the key focus on this research and will be explained in more detail in later chapters. In general, the use of exclusion criteria aims to help further select a group of young people who are not achieving their potential but are well positioned to benefit from a group based intervention without intensive clinical support.

Table 1: Project K exclusion criteria

The student exhibits recent or active problems related to:	Criteria number
Violent Behaviour	1
Substance abuse (alcohol, solvents or drugs)	2
Suicide attempts	3
Regular counselling for serious problems	4
Severe cognitive or learning difficulties	5
Student excluded on the recommendation of the guidance counsellor	6

The above exclusion criteria have been developed through years of working with Project K students and are based on ensuring the safety of the students and optimal functioning of the group (Moore, J., personal communication, January 9, 2008). The sixth criteria, 'student excluded on the recommendation of the guidance counsellor' is included so that guidance staff can exclude students based on one of the other criteria without breaking confidentiality (Foundation for Youth Development, 2008). The liaison team will screen enough students to identify a target number of potential participants. This target number will vary depending on the perceived likelihood that places will be taken up when offered, and whether or not the programme is being evaluated (see below), but the evaluation manual recommends a minimum of 20 males and 20 females be invited to the information evening, the next stage in the selection process.

Following the liaison team exclusion meeting, potential participants and their parents are invited to an information evening. The Project K programme is further explained and parents and

students can meet the programme director and other Project K staff and ask questions. Parents and students are asked to complete a background form that covers the same criteria used in the liaison team exclusion meeting. If concerns are highlighted at this point they are followed up by the Programme Director. Parent or student disclosure of relevant problems does not necessarily lead to exclusion. This decision is at the discretion of the Programme Director. The next part of the selection process involves a random allocation to either the Project K group, a control group (if the programme is being evaluated – detailed below) or a reserve group. Consent for participation is gained prior to the allocation in order to minimise differences between the control and Project K groups.

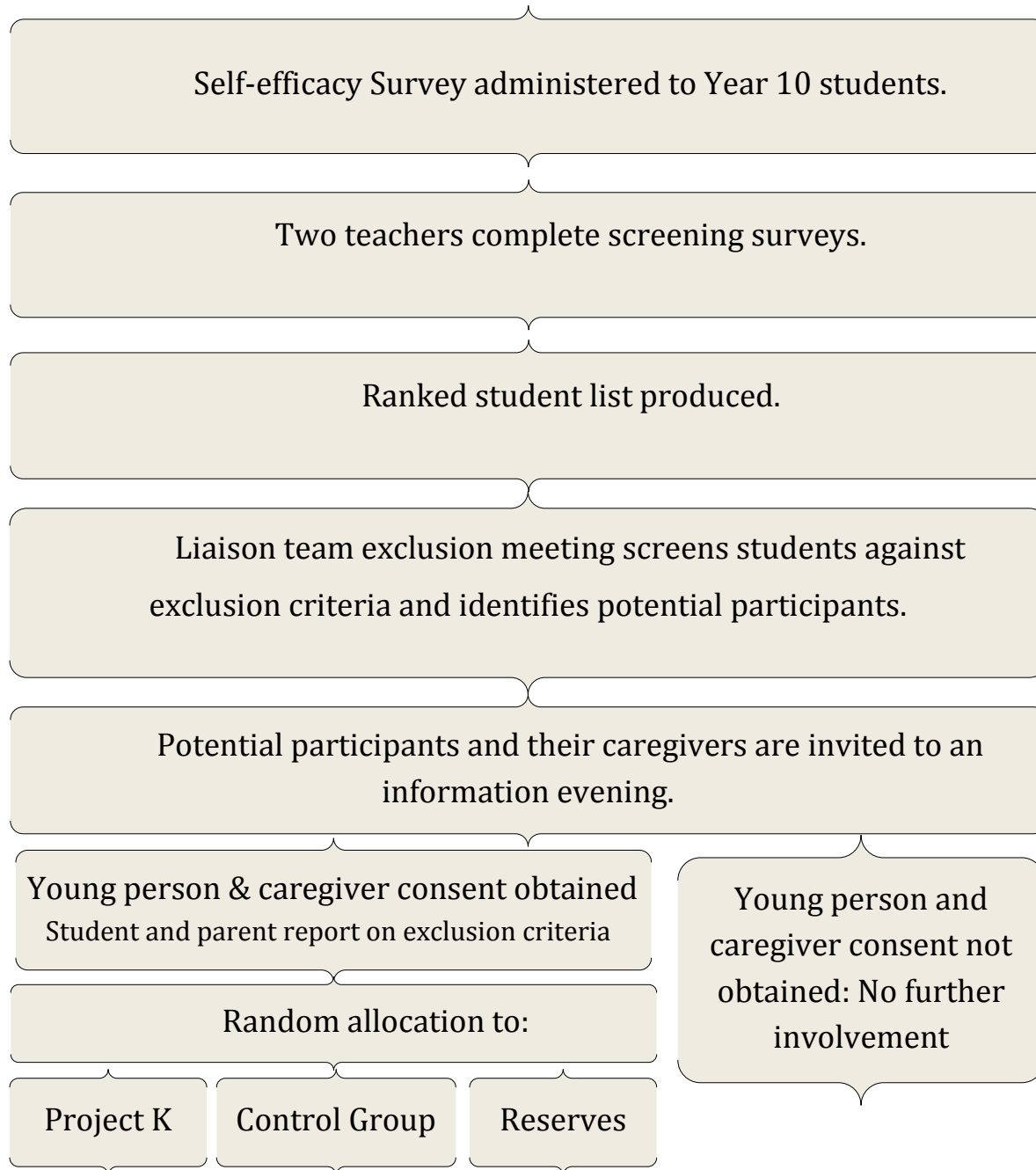


Figure 1: Outline of the Project K Selection Process for evaluated programmes

Project K evaluation.

Robust evaluation is prioritised by the Project K National Support Office (NSO) as “credibility and ability to develop and expand Project K depends on proven performance. It is therefore vital for

all of us that we can prove that the programme is worthwhile and achieving its objectives” (Foundation for Youth Development, 2005b, para. 1). The evaluation of Project K has been centred around a randomised controlled trial design (outlined in Figure 2). The selection of the Project K group and control groups is described above (see Figure 1). Pre-programme measures include the self-efficacy survey (completed as part of selection), a health and lifestyle behaviours measure, a social competence questionnaire completed by parents and teachers following selection. Post-programme measures are taken at the end of the mentoring stage, and at one, two and three years post programme. Evaluation measures are further described in Table 2.

Figure 2: Outline of the Project K randomised control trial evaluation

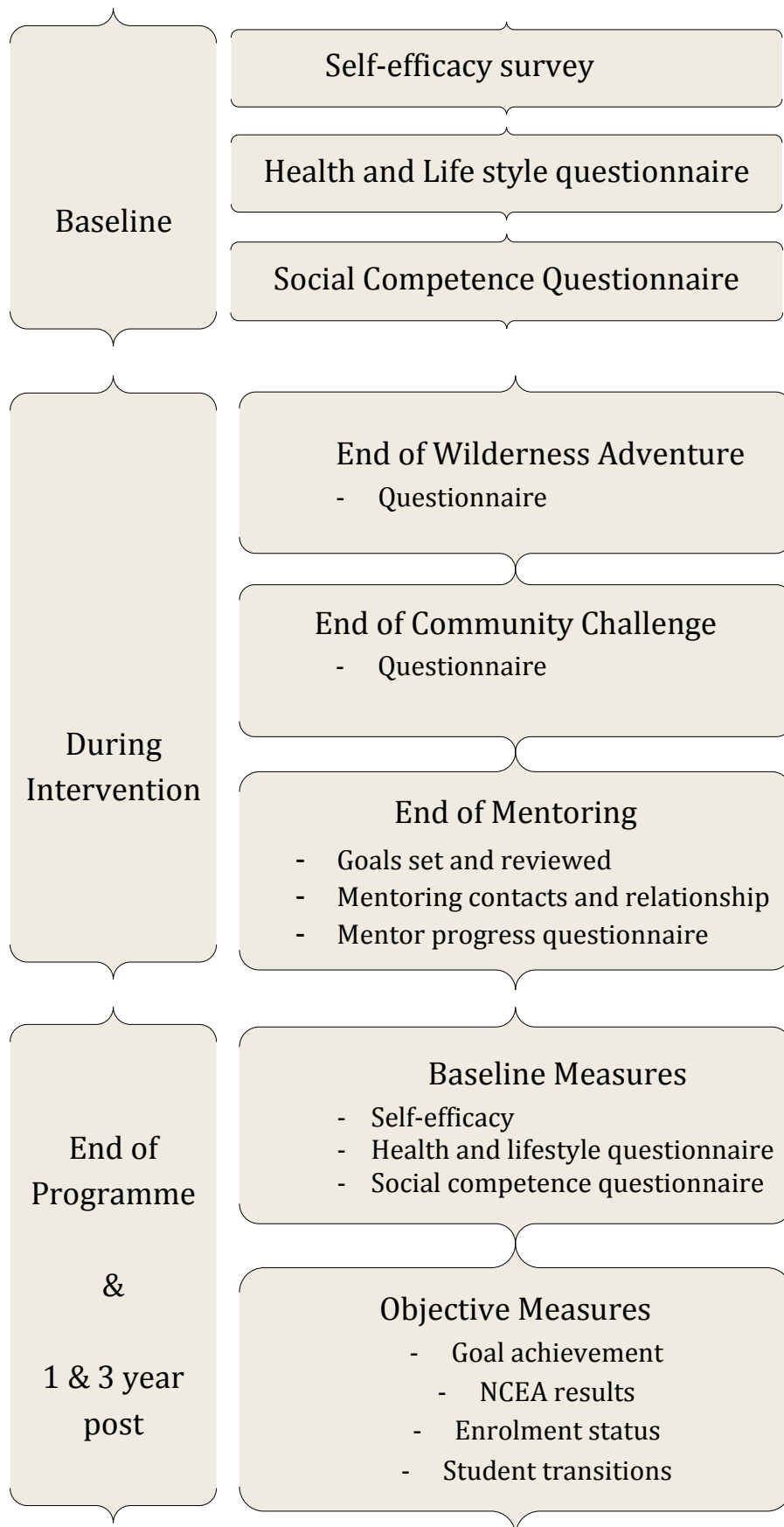


Table 2: Project K evaluation measures

Measure	Description
Self-efficacy Survey	The self-efficacy survey is utilised in the selection process (see above description of this measure) as well as being completed as a post programme measure.
Health and Lifestyle Behaviours	A 40 item questionnaire with items developed based on the behaviours that Project K aimed to influence as well as relevant literature. Includes questions on perceived levels of parental monitoring and family cohesion, which have a protective influence on adolescent risk behaviour. Although not directly targeted by Project K they are included so that any differential responses can be examined (Foundation for Youth Development, 2005b, 2008)
Social Competence	A 12 item measure of social competence items relate to pro-social behaviours, communication skills and self control. The impact of Project K on social competence is examined through parents' observations of behaviour in the home. (Foundation for Youth Development, 2005a, 2008).
Objective Measures	Objective measures include students' goal achievements, school qualifications and enrolment status, and activities on leaving school, (e.g., in further education, in full-time work or inactive) (Foundation for Youth Development, 2005a, 2008)

In 2007 an evaluation of Project K programmes funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Social Development (MSD) utilising the data already collected by Project K was undertaken (Qiao & McNaught, 2007). This evaluation showed a significant increase in academic and social self-efficacy in the Project K group compared to the control group immediately following the programme and at a one-year follow up. For help seeking self-efficacy there was a significant increase in the Project K group compared to the control group immediately following the programme but not at the one year follow up. Project K students also showed significantly greater ability to make good career decisions and execute career-related behaviours than controls at one-year post programme. Finally, Maori Project K students showed significantly higher average academic achievement (in the form of total National Certificate of Educational Achievement credits) than Maori in the control group. The MSD evaluation was limited in that it only utilised one year follow-up data and only selected programmes that were MSD funded (sample size of 75 Project K and 79 control students at the end of the programme and 70 Project K and 74 control students at the one year follow up across eight schools) (Qiao & McNaught, 2007).

FYD-UOA Collaboration and Ongoing Research

The evaluation of Project K and other FYD programmes is ongoing, and much of this work takes place in collaboration between the University of Auckland and FYD. The FYD initially approached Dr Niki Harré to collaborate and advise FYD on designing an evaluation strategy for Project K. This initial work formed the basis for the Project K evaluation but has since been substantially built upon by Dr Harré's doctoral students and led to a wider collaboration between the University of Auckland and the FYD. The FYD runs regular research meetings where researchers such as Dr Harré, her students, and FYD and NSO staff involved in research and development come together to plan, discuss, review and disseminate results of research happening within the various FYD programmes. Research happening concurrently with the current research included a PhD project expanding the evaluation of Project K (Deane, In progress), an honours project focused on the experience of Maori participants in Project K (Hollis, 2009), an evaluation of the Kiwi Can programme, and an action research project looking at the development of a youth advisory group.

The ongoing evaluation of Project K builds on the MSD evaluation in several ways (Deane, In progress). As well as analysing already collected data along similar lines to Qiao and McNaught (2007) but with a broader sample, Deane's research broadens the evaluation model beyond the randomised controlled trial design. In particular, Deane's evaluation aimed to take a more inclusive approach to make the findings not only convincing to the scientific community but relevant and useful to those actually involved with the programme. Essentially, this work aimed to balance scientific rigour and a responsive and inclusive approach to evaluation, a framework describing this model of evaluation was developed in the early stages of this work. Key components of this work included identifying key evaluation questions via a voting survey conducted with stakeholders, using a programme-logic-model framework to identify the underlying assumptions and beliefs regarding how the programme should ideally function, and using this as a guide for theory driven evaluation.

Qiao and McNaught's (2007) finding that Maori participants in Project K particularly benefited in terms of academic achievement led to a further research project that was undertaken as part of a student honours dissertation and looked to examine and explain the reasons behind this. Participants in this research highlighted several key factors associated with success, including "being pushed hard, receiving guidance and support from a role model, and developing the skills necessary to set and achieve their desired goals. The participants also identified that Project K

provided young Maori with an environment in which they could learn these skills away from the common stereotype of Maori” (Hollis, 2009, p. 1).

The research projects described above and the collaboration they are more generally part of formed a significant part of the ‘backdrop’ for the current research.

The Starting Point for the Current Research

In considering the beginning of the current research within the FYD-UoA collaboration it must be acknowledged that the word exclusion has negative connotations and the exclusion of any student had been an uncomfortable reality for many Project K and FYD staff for some time. Fisher (2001), writing in relation to education, summarises the tensions well:

“Exclusion, as a means of dealing with apparently intractable problems of human conduct, stretches back throughout history and myth – Adam and Eve, Cain, lepers, medieval banishment, Botany Bay, Dotheboys Hall, ‘sending to Coventry’ are all variations on the theme ... [for schools] the issue resonates with tensions. On the one hand, disruptive pupils can create mayhem on no inconsiderable scale, and attack the educational well-being of their contemporaries. They can damage the reputation of their school. They injure teacher morale, and may well contribute to the complex teacher shortage problem ... Left to their own devices when excluded from school, or self-excluded through persistent truancy, they add significantly to crime rates across a wide spectrum of offences. ... On the other hand, many teachers, however abused by the unruly, continue to feel a sense of responsibility towards them, and wish to work for rehabilitation rather than resort to a policy of exile or pass-the-parcel.” (D. Fisher, 2001, p. 8)

The core impetus at the outset of the research was a shared sense that exclusion, in and of itself, called for some sort of response. In particular, the possibility that these young people who are already displaying some worrying behaviours might not be getting access to services and may go on to have significant negative outcomes was a concern shared by the FYD and myself. However, the FYD were also aware that the selection process – including exclusion – had been refined into its current form over some time, and that the programme running with this selection process was working effectively in terms of outcomes measured by the randomised controlled trial. Despite a sense of discomfort surrounding the practice of exclusion there was minimal information available about exclusion, therefore understanding more about how exclusion was currently functioning and this became a core focus of the research.

In addition to better understanding exclusion, the second key focus of the research related to possibilities for potential responses addressing the issue of exclusion. In the early stages of the

research, both the FYD and myself, believed that a good ‘solution’ to the ‘problem’ of exclusion would be developing a new programme specifically for the young people currently excluded from Project K. In a sense, this reflects the sentiment of many Project K and school staff that ‘it would be great if all students could experience a programme like Project K’, and furthermore, a belief that students exhibiting behaviours specified by the exclusion criteria may be particularly in need of the positive influence that Project K affords. However, over the duration of the project, as more information came to light, there was an evolution in thinking regarding what an appropriate response to the issue of exclusion might involve. Specifically, as a more complete understanding of exclusion developed there was a shift away from focusing exclusively on a ‘programme solution’ to thinking more broadly about how issues related to exclusion could be addressed (detailed in chapter 6). These developments in how exclusion was understood were reflected in the way in which possibilities for change were investigated.

Thus, at the outset of the research there was: a) a shared concern regarding exclusion and b) a lack of information about how exclusion was currently functioning. As noted above the early phase of the research focused on understanding exclusion, this included accessing already available quantitative data relating to exclusion including the number of students being excluded and the characteristics of this group (i.e., reason for exclusion, gender, ethnicity) and also examining the current practice of exclusion in a qualitative sense through consideration of stakeholder understandings and opinions regarding exclusion (presented in Chapter 4). The second key phase of the research focused on developing recommendations regarding potential responses to the issue of exclusion. Although I refer to this as the second phase, there was some overlap between this and the aspects of the research focusing on understanding exclusion. This meant that the initial steps in this phase – which involved canvassing expert opinion on the needs of excluded youth (presented in Chapter 5) – is more reflective of the early understanding of exclusion. Chapter 6 discusses the implications the information gained had on the thinking about possibilities for addressing the issue of exclusion and the process of disseminating this information and developing recommendations for action.

Summary

This chapter has outlined the Project K programme, the selection process for this programme including the exclusion of certain at risk students that is the focus of this thesis. Project

K is a positive youth development programme – with a core aim of maximising youth potential. The Project K programme has been very successful with evaluation – which is ongoing – showing positive results. Based on this success, Project K has expanded with programme running nationwide as well as forming an overarching body – the FYD – that aims to develop programmes in other areas and ultimately become a world leader in youth development. The FYD prioritises research and evaluation and this research is situated within an ongoing collaboration between FYD and the University of Auckland. At the outset of the research there was some level of concern among FYD and Project K staff regarding the current practice of exclusion, but little information on how exclusion was actually happening or how it was viewed by key stakeholders. Thus, key phases of the research will focus on understanding the issue of exclusion and investigating possible responses addressing exclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Adolescence is a stage of life that tends to capture imaginations. ‘Coming of age’ is a concept that has inspired a myriad of poetry, music, literature and film. It has also inspired whole fields of research. This chapter will touch on some of that research, beginning with a general discussion of adolescence followed by an outline of key concepts related to adolescent development, including: risk, protection and resilience; ecological approaches to development; and approaches to problem behaviour in adolescence. Next, an outline of the Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach – a central paradigm within the current research – will be presented. The final section will focus on the potential benefits and challenges associated with applying a PYD approach with youth at risk.

Adolescence: A Period of Transition

Adolescence is the period of transition between childhood and adulthood, beginning with the onset of puberty and ending with the physical, social and legal attainment of adulthood (Steinberg, 2005). During this transition young people acquire, to a greater or lesser extent, the competencies, values, skills and attitudes that will allow them to successfully navigate adult life (Ministry of Youth Development, 2009). The transition from childhood to adulthood involves social, cognitive, physical and emotional changes (Steinberg, 2005, p. 21). Although, it is often associated with the teenage years (i.e., 13 – 19) the age range to which this ‘period of transition’ corresponds, and the experience of adolescence in general varies individually and culturally (American Psychological Association, 2002; Steinberg, 2005; Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Indeed, authors such as Philippe Ariès and Margaret Mead argue that concept of adolescence as a distinct phase of development is an invention of 20th century western culture (Ben-Amos, 1995; Mead, 1928). Such a view seems somewhat extreme given the discussion of adolescence in the writing of Aristotle and Plato. However, it is fair to say that the experience of adolescence and the ideas a society has about adolescence are heavily influenced by the cultural and historical context.

According to Piaget cognitive development in adolescence involves a shift from the ‘concrete operations’ period to the ‘formal operations’ period (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958). During the formal operations period adolescents attain the capacity for abstract logical thought, bringing a new complexity to cognitive processes. This includes the ability to understand and use metaphors, irony and sarcasm, to anticipate the consequences of potential courses of action, and to think in relative

rather than absolute terms (Carr, 2006). These changes facilitate the development of self regulatory skills. It should be noted that the stages and changes in cognitive development are not necessarily as distinct as originally described by Piaget and also vary individually (Vasta, Haith, & Miller, 2003).

Identity is a key concept related to adolescence in western psychological thought. Identity is a difficult concept to define, but can be broadly understood as the way in which an individual experiences his or her self as a discrete entity (Bonino, Cattelino, & Ciairano, 2005). Traditionally, adolescence has been associated with the development of identity (Erikson, 1968). The rapid physical, cognitive and social changes that occur during adolescence bring with them new challenges, opportunities and responsibilities and the way in which these are negotiated undoubtedly contributes to the development of identity. In particular, adolescence is a time where exploration and development around sexual orientation, values or ideals and possible vocation is likely to occur. However, identity formation should be viewed as an ongoing process—neither beginning nor ending in adolescence (Steinberg, 2005). The cognitive changes of this stage of development also mean that adolescents have an increased cognitive capacity to reflect on their developing identity (American Psychological Association, 2002).

Marcia's theory of identity development builds on the work of Erickson and is based around two ideas, 1) identity crisis (which is a process involving the exploration of and decision making around different identity possibilities) and 2) commitment to a particular identity (Marcia, 1966). Marcia (1966) identifies four different identity statuses: foreclosure, diffusion, moratorium and achievement. Foreclosure involves commitment to a particular identity without exploration, often with individuals conforming to others expectations, for example following a career path prescribed by a parent. Diffusion involves low levels of commitment and may or may not involve having experienced identity crisis. Moratorium involves being in a state of active exploration and 'trying out' of different possible commitments. Achievement occurs when an individual has experienced a period of identity crisis or exploration and has now made a commitment.

The development of autonomy is another concept emphasised in western accounts of adolescence. The word autonomy comes from Greek, with *auto* meaning self and *nomos* meaning law, thus autonomy is often defined as a state of self-governance (Allen, 1990). The importance of the adolescent moving away from family is a culturally specific aspect of development and it should be noted that even in western culture, the need for autonomy and independence from family must

be balanced with the need to remain connected with family (Steinberg, 2005). Ryan and Deci (2000), writing within the framework of self-determination theory, argue that autonomy is one of three “innate, essential and universal” (p. 74) psychological needs, the other two being competence and relatedness. According to self-determination theory, when these needs are met, higher levels of intrinsic motivation, self regulation and wellbeing are achieved. Thus there is some debate of the degree to which autonomy is intrinsic to healthy development. Part of this is likely due to differing understandings of autonomy and in particular the confusion between the concept of autonomy and the concept of independence, which is valued in some cultures but not in others.

Research, like art, has often focused on the ‘storm and stress’ of the adolescent experience—a view of adolescence as universally and inherently difficult (Steinberg, 2005; Steinberg & Morris, 2001). The ‘storm and stress’ conceptualisation of adolescent development tends to be attributed to Hall (1904) although it is an idea with a long history. More recently researchers have emphasised that the experience of adolescent development is not universally and inevitably difficult (Steinberg, 2005). Neither is the experience of conflict during adolescence inherently negative; in fact some conflict may be beneficial. For example, experiencing conflict with parents may allow adolescents to develop conflict resolution and negotiation skills in the context of a safe and warm relationship (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). On the other hand, Arnett (1999) argues that the storm and stress concept should not be totally discounted and although it is not universal, inevitable, or exclusively biological in origin, storm and stress is more likely to occur during adolescence than at any other life stage. This position is supported by research which shows an increase in conflict in relationships (particularly with parents), extremes of mood and risk behaviour during adolescence (Arnett, 1999).

The focus on ‘storm and stress’ and more generally negative aspects of adolescent behaviour and experience – particularly in the media, but also in research - has been at some expense to our developing understanding of normal or positive adolescent development (Bonino et al., 2005). Features of adolescence that make it challenging and at times difficult, such as the multitude of biological, cognitive and social changes, the increased salience of developing identity, and developing needs for autonomy on the one hand and intimacy on the other, also make adolescence an exciting life stage with significant potential for positive development.

Key Concepts in Adolescent Development

This section will outline several key concepts related to understanding adolescent development that recur across accounts of adolescent development. These include risk and protective factors, the concept of resilience, and ecological frameworks for understanding development. Following this, problem behaviour in adolescence including information specific to the issues identified by the Project K selection criteria will be discussed. Finally, a summary of prevention and problem focused interventions will be presented.

Risk, protection, and resilience.

The concepts of risk and protective factors are central to explaining adolescent development and recur across a variety of frameworks for understanding youth development (Small & Memmo, 2004). Broadly speaking, risk factors refer to individual or environmental factors that are associated with an increased likelihood of negative outcomes occurring, while protective factors are environmental or individual factors that are associated with a decreased likelihood of negative outcomes (Glantz & Johnson, 1999). It is notable that the definitions of risk and protection offered here link directly to understandings of positive and negative outcomes.

The overarching concept of identifying risk and protective factors is drawn from epidemiology (Jessor, 1991). In this original context, risk factors tended to refer to biological factors (e.g., hypertension) or environmental factors (e.g., environmental pollutants) predicative of death or disease. More recently it has been recognised that behaviour and the social environment make a significant contribution to health and development. This insight lead to the development of a field of research known as ‘behavioural epidemiology’, which, as the name suggests focuses on the influence of behaviour on health and development (Sallis, Owen, & Fotheringham, 2000).

The inclusion of risk factors related to behaviour and the social environment leads to an account of development (both healthy and unhealthy) that is more thorough and more complex (Jessor, 1998). One important way in which the inclusion of behavioural risk factors makes for a more complex account of adolescent development is that while risk behaviours may be linked to problematic development they also have functions. Risk behaviours often meet genuine needs that may be central to the developmental stage of adolescence. In this sense, risk behaviours are not necessarily “perverse, irrational, or psychopathological” (Jessor, 1991, p. 598). Instead, “the actions

of adolescents, whether they are dangerous or healthy, have a precise function, as they serve adolescents in reaching personally and socially meaningful objective for growth during the adolescent transition” (Bonino et al., 2005, p. 22). For example, risk behaviour such as excessive alcohol use may fulfil needs for entertainment, distraction, stress relief, or confidence to socialise. This has significant practical implications, in particular, that the exhortation to ‘just say no’ will inevitably be ineffective as it does not address the function of the behaviour concerned (Jessor, 1991). Bonino and colleagues identify a variety of overlapping functions of adolescent risk behaviour related to two areas: First, identity development – predominantly behaviours around asserting autonomy, exploring limits and control, and differentiation of the self as individual; and second, relationships – predominantly behaviour related to communication, sharing of actions and emotions with peers and emulative or competitive behaviours). Understanding the function of risk behaviour within an individual’s context and promoting alternative ways of meeting the relevant needs is critical to any attempt to reduce risk behaviour and prevent negative outcomes.

Historically, there has been a strong interest in identifying risk factors and understanding the processes that lead to various negative outcomes – with a view to then addressing the circumstances that cause such outcomes (Harvey & Delfabbro, 2004). In attempting to identify risk factors leading to the development of various problem behaviours it has become clear that there are substantial individual differences in peoples’ responses to adverse conditions, and that very often individuals are able to maintain mental and physical health despite less than optimal conditions (Masten, 2001; Rutter, 1985). This realisation - that some individuals maintain adaptive functioning despite a high level of risk factors - is the central to the concept of resilience. Resilience can be defined as the degree to which a person is able to function adaptively despite the presence of factors associated with negative outcomes and maladaptive functioning (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000a). Figure 3 provides a simplified representation of resilience in which despite the presence of risk factors, the developmental ‘balance’ is tipped toward adaptive functioning due to these risk factors being outweighed by protective factors. The focus on resilience has lead to interest in identifying those protective factors that account for the maintenance of adaptive function in adverse conditions.

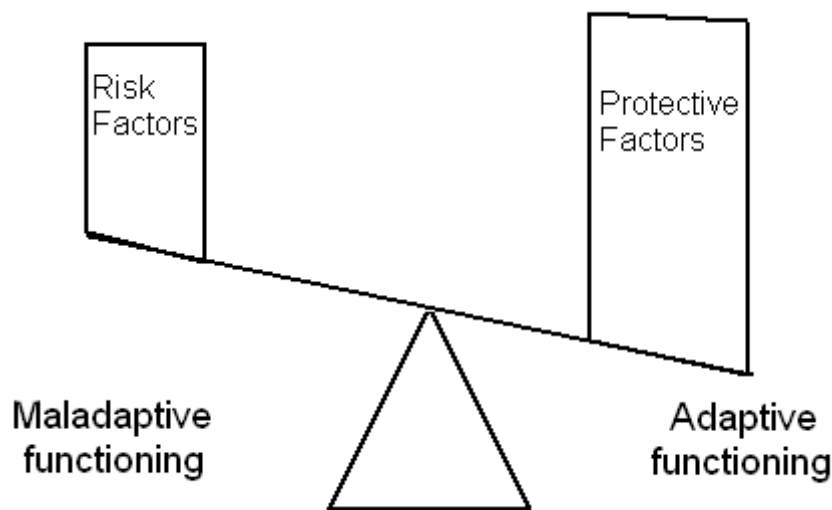


Figure 3: Schematic representation of resilience

The description of resilience and risk and protective factors provided above is somewhat simplistic and there is a large body of research that details a more nuanced view (e.g., Glantz & Johnson, 1999). Several key points will be outlined here. First, both risk and protective factors vary in the degree to which they are proximal to the outcome of interest. A commonly made distinction is between risk factors that predispose and risk factors that precipitate (Carr, 2006). For example, a history of modelled violent behaviour may be a predisposing risk factor for violent behaviour, while alcohol use may act as a precipitating factor. Similarly, the same behaviour may be defined as either a risk factor or a negative outcome depending on the context in question – so in the example above, binge drinking may be a negative outcome in itself but also a risk factor for violent behaviour. This is challenging both theoretically and methodologically. Second, as risk and protective factors refer to the probability of a given outcome occurring in a population based on the presence of risk or protective factors, they are not necessarily useful in predicting outcomes for individuals (Small & Memmo, 2004). Generalising known risk or protective factors from one sample or population to another (e.g., across cultures or genders) is not necessarily valid (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000b). Third, resilience is a dynamic developmental process—something a person does, rather than a stable personality trait—something a person is. In this sense it is mistaken to talk about ‘resilient adolescents’ or to expect a consistent level of functioning in all settings at all times (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). Fourth, what resilience looks like (its operational definition) depends on the way in which adaptive and non-adaptive functioning are defined (Fergusson & Lynskey, 1996). Luthar

and colleagues (2000b) note that the central feature of resilience research is the interest in ‘better than expected outcomes’. What constitutes ‘better than expected’ will depend on the level of risk a person is exposed to. It may be indicated by the absence of dysfunction, or in other instances a higher standard may be an appropriate indicator. Fifth, resilience may be domain specific in that an individual may function competently in one setting (e.g., with peers) but not in another (e.g., at school). In some circumstances positive functioning in one setting may even be prohibitive of positive functioning in another setting (Luthar et al., 2000a). Finally, there has been some criticism of the resilience framework in terms of its tendency to define competence according to the norms of the dominant cultural paradigm in a given situation without consideration for differing cultural perspectives (Harvey & Delfabbro, 2004).

In summary, resilience has become a popular idea in youth development and is commonly cited as a goal of interventions in the field. A growing body of longitudinal research in developmental science has enabled a systematic approach to the identification of risk and protective factors relevant to various outcomes relevant to adolescence. This research has made a considerable contribution to understanding both normal development and developmental psychopathology.

Development in context: Ecological frameworks.

While the concepts of resilience and risk/protective factors have fostered increased understanding of adolescent development and provided a framework facilitative of more coherent research, any adequate understanding of adolescent development must acknowledge the multiple layers of influence on the process of development. Essentially, risk and protective factors can operate at an individual level (biological, cognitive, emotional or behavioural), within the family, within the peer group, within schools, within communities and within wider social, structural, economic, political and cultural contexts. This broad array of influence has been articulated by Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) social ecological framework, a simplified representation of which is presented in Figure 4. From an ecological perspective human development is seen as a “progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, ... affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 21).

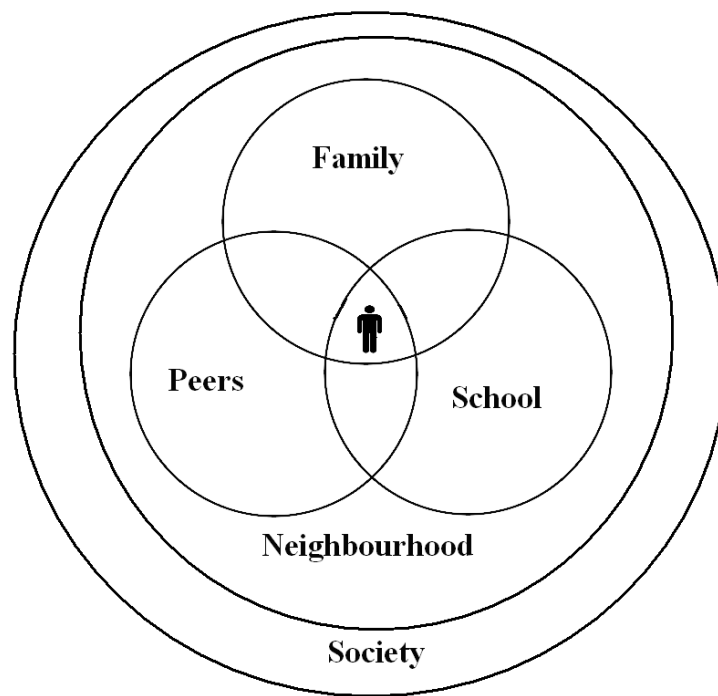


Figure 4: Simplified representation of an ecological model of youth development

The ecological model of development originally described by Bronfenbrenner (1979) consists of three main levels, the microsystem, the mesosystem and the exosystem. The microsystem refers to the activities, roles, and relationships that the developing person directly experiences in any particular setting. The mesosystem refers to the relationships between the different microsystems in which the developing person is involved, for example, the relationships between school, home and church. The exosystem refers to the wider contextual factors that impact on the individual but with which they do not necessarily have direct contact or involvement, including things like laws and legislation. One of the fundamental qualities of the framework presented in Figure 4 is that each component influences and is influenced by the others and all are influenced by the developing person. This interplay between the individual and the environment means that development is a complex, flexible, and perhaps even unpredictable process.

The ecological framework presented in Figure 3 can be used to organise risk and protective factors. Research has identified risk and protective factors within all of these areas that are relevant to development (Carr, 2006; McLaren, 2002). Table 3 outlines some specific examples of risk and protective factors from different domains. Notably absent from this table are risk and protective factors that operate at the level of the mesosystem – the interrelationships between microsystems.

For example, a risk factor for truancy might be a lack of communication between home and school, not a quality of either home or school but none the less an important influence on behaviour. In this way, the function of specific components of the system depends on the system as a whole (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). What constitutes adaptive functioning in one context may be maladaptive in another. A key implication that can be drawn from ecological frameworks for understanding development is that behaviour must be understood and addressed within the context in which it occurs.

Table 3: Example risk factors in different domains (partially adapted from McClaren, 2002)

Domain	Examples of potential risk and protective factors
Individual	Temperament Genetics Self-efficacy Attitudes
Family	Attachment Conflict / conflict resolution Modelling (positive or negative) Parenting style (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive or neglectful) Parental health or ill health
Peers	Rejection by positive peer group Peer pressure Either positive or negative modelling and social norms
School	Warmth/supportiveness of school environment Connectedness / disconnectedness Standards / expectations of school
Community	Socio-economic factors / employment rates Level of opportunity for positive involvement / experiences
Society	Laws and legislation Economic conditions Cultural norms and values

Social cognitive theory and self efficacy.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) account of development emphasises the role of the contexts in which the developing person is situated. However, he also recognises that the relationships are mutually influential in that the developing person has an impact on the systems of which they are a part. This idea can be related to Bandura's social cognitive theory and the concept of triadic reciprocal determinism. Social cognitive theory states that people have the capacity to reflect on

their environment, behaviour and experience and thereby self-regulate such that they are active agents in their lives (Bandura, 1986). 'Triadic reciprocal determinism' refers to the process of mutual causality between a person's environment, behaviour and cognition; it is through the cognitive and behavioural parts of this model that people have the potential to intentionally influence their environments and experience. Self-efficacy, which is the primary selection criteria in Project K, relates directly to the cognitive component of this model.

Self-efficacy can be defined as a person's belief in their capabilities to organize and undertake the courses of action necessary to produce given outcomes (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy theory highlights the fact that being competent to achieve something does not mean it will be achieved or even attempted; Our beliefs about our capabilities have an influence on the choices we make – whether we initiate action, how much we persist and how we respond when challenges arise (Maddux, 1995). Self efficacy acts to mediate behaviour through four key processes: a person's approach to goal setting and persistence, their affect, their cognition and the environments and activities they choose to engage with or in (Maddux, 1995). There is a strong tradition of research related to the influence of self-efficacy on health behaviour, with self-efficacy being an important variable in adopting health behaviours, ceasing unhealthy behaviours and maintaining positive changes under difficult conditions or challenge (Maddux, Brawley, & Boykin, 1995). There are six key influences on a person's level of self-efficacy for any given task: performance experiences; vicarious experiences including observation, modelling and imitation; imaginal experiences; verbal persuasion; physiological states; and emotional states. While self-efficacy has a very important influence Social Cognitive Theory is clear that it is not the sole determinant of human behaviour; other key factors include knowledge and skills, outcome expectations and values (Schunk & Meece, 2006).

Risk behaviour in adolescence.

While it is true that there has been a tendency to over focus on the 'storm and stress' of adolescence at the expense of a more well rounded account of this life stage, it is also of note that the majority of death and injury that occurs in adolescence is the result of *behaviour*, and therefore potentially preventable. Furthermore, many behaviours that occur in adolescence have negative consequences later in life that are also preventable (Carr, 2006; Lindberg, Boggess, & Williams, 2000; New Zealand Health Information Service, 2006). The potential to avoid some of this damage is

the driving force behind substantial resources focused on understanding and ultimately preventing adolescent risk behaviours. This section will discuss two key strands of research relevant to this work. First, research related to the co-occurrence of diverse adolescent risk behaviours as described by Problem Behaviour Theory (PBT) will be discussed (Jessor & Jessor, 1977). Second, research examining patterns of risk behaviour across the lifespan will be outlined.

A key contribution to attempts to understand and prevent adolescent risk behaviour has been made by Jessor (1977) in the form of problem behaviour theory (PBT). In PBT, 'problem behaviour' refers to behaviour that constitutes a "legal or normative transgression and that usually elicit social sanctions ... including delinquency, drug use, alcohol abuse and early sexual activity." (Jessor, 1998, p. 2). Problem behaviour is essentially a subset of risk behaviour, which can be defined as "behaviours that can, directly or indirectly, compromise the well-being, the health, and even the life course of young people" (Jessor, 1998, p. 1). PBT has also been extended to deal with risk behaviour in this more general sense. It is important to clarify the distinction between risk behaviour, risk factors, and negative outcomes. In this thesis, I use the term risk behaviours to refer to behavioural risk factors (as opposed to environmental or biological risk factors). Risk factors in general are always predictive of negative outcomes in the future but they may or may not also be harmful in themselves (e.g., binge drinking is harmful in itself, living in a low socio-economic area is not yet both are risk factors for violence). In general it should be emphasised that many behaviours are in fact both risk factors for future negative outcomes and negative outcomes in and of themselves.

PBT integrates the concepts of risk and protective factors and an ecological understanding of development in a multivariate account of development that focuses on the reciprocal relationships between environment, personality and behaviour in the development of risk behaviour (Jessor, 1998). The theory takes a broad view of problem behaviour and proposes a theoretical account for this range of behaviour – it is not an account of the development of a specific behaviour but rather focuses on an individual's 'proneness' to problematic behaviour in general.

Based on this interest in general 'proneness' a central focus of PBT research has been the degree to which adolescent risk behaviours co-occur and following from this, whether they are predicted by the same risk factors or whether unique risk and protective factors apply to different risk behaviours. Essentially, such research shows that both problem behaviours and the risk factors

that predict them tend to co-occur (Jessor, 1991). Jessor's basic thesis has been build on by a variety of research utilising methods such as cluster analysis. Such research supports the idea that delinquent behaviour, risky sexual behaviour, and multi-substance use co-occur (Mun, Windle, & Schainker, 2008). Given this co-occurrence, PBT proposes a description of development that focuses on the concept of problematic 'lifestyles' that lead to a general 'proneness' to problem behaviour, rather than focusing on the relationship between specific risk factors and specific behaviours (Bonino et al., 2005; Jessor & Jessor, 1977).

Moffitt and colleagues (Moffitt, 1993; Moffitt & Caspi, 2001; Moffitt, Caspi, Harrington, & Milne, 2002) have published a substantial body of research that is relevant to the Project K exclusion criteria that relate to delinquent behaviour (violence and substance abuse) based on the Dunedin longitudinal study (Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Research Unit). This research examined the developmental pathways into adolescent problem behaviours and the trajectories of delinquent adolescents into adulthood. It was originally proposed that there were two groups of adolescent delinquents: a 'life course persistent' group who display disruptive behaviour in childhood and essentially continue to display such behaviour throughout their lives and an 'adolescence limited' group who engage in delinquent behaviour as adolescents but were relatively problem free as children and were originally hypothesised to cease delinquent behaviour in adulthood (Moffitt, 1993; Moffitt & Caspi, 2001). However, analysis of follow up data at age 26 has shown that outcomes for the 'adolescent limited' groups are also significantly worse than for their non-delinquent peers in terms of criminal offending, employment and mental health, although not as severe (particularly in terms of violent offending) as that of those in the life-course persistent group (Moffitt et al., 2002). This led to a re-naming of the 'adolescent limited' group to 'adolescent onset'. The authors of this study stress that interventions in adolescence should not be limited to those in the life course persistent group, as was sometimes inferred from the originally proposed taxonomy. However, the intervention needs of these different groups are likely to be different, with the life course persistent group needing significantly more intensive intervention strategies. In addition, exposing adolescent-onset delinquents to peer influence from life-course persistent delinquents may be particularly dangerous (Dodge, Dishion, & Lansford, 2006). Also, it should be noted that the data currently available is specific to males and there is some debate over whether the distinctions apply to females (Silverthorn & Frick, 1999).

Exclusion Criteria: Definition, Prevalence, and Impact

At this point I will move from a relatively theoretical description of adolescent development to reviewing literature related to the specific issues identified by the Project K exclusion criteria. The behaviours that are represented in the exclusion criteria for Project K represent some of the most serious public health issues relevant to young people in New Zealand. It is not known what becomes of the young people excluded from Project K as current evaluation focuses only on the Project K participants and the control group. However, in general research would imply that youth excluded from Project K may be at risk of a range of negative outcomes given that they have these particular problems. This section will discuss issues related to the definition of the exclusion criteria. The criteria refer to complex behavioural, emotional, cognitive, and social issues and are thus not easily or universally defined. Prevalence and impact of the three exclusion criteria that can be most clearly defined (violence, substance abuse, and suicide attempts) will also be discussed. And some general considerations related to the other criteria: regular counselling for serious problems, severe cognitive or learning difficulties will be presented. While I will reference international literature, where available I emphasise New Zealand based adolescent development research and in particular studies with robust methodology and large sample sizes. Three major studies merit specific mention: 1) The Christchurch Health and Development Study which is a longitudinal study involving 1265 children born in the Christchurch region during 1977 led by Professor David Fergusson (Christchurch Health and Development Study; Fergusson & Horwood, 2001); 2) The Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study which is another longitudinal study involving 1037 children born in Dunedin during 1972 founded by Dr Phil Silva and currently directed by Professor Richie Poulton (Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Research Unit); and 3) the Adolescent Health Research Group's 'Youth2000' and 'Youth2007' studies which are cross-sectional studies New Zealand secondary school participants directed by Peter Watson and Simon Denny (Adolescent Health Research Group).

Violence.

There tends to be some disparity in definitions of violence and deciding what constitutes violent behaviour is more complex than one might initially think. A commonly cited definition of violence is provided by the World Health Organisation: "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against another person or against a group or community that results in

or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation” (Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg, & Zwi, 2002). Generally there is agreement that violence is harmful or damaging (or at least threatens to be) and that it is intentional, there is disagreement over whether it must be a physical act, whether it must be against another person, whether an actual action is required or whether the threat of action is sufficient (Smith et al., 1999). This brief discussion touches on the complexity of defining and categorising violence. It should also be noted that the differences in definitions used will also impact on other findings including the prevalence and impacts of violent behaviour. For example, statistics New Zealand includes offences that involve threats of violence in the category of violent offending.

The perpetration of violence is a serious public health issue among New Zealand young people. The Adolescent Health Research Group report that 49% of males and 23% of females reported physically hurting someone else, on purpose, during the last year. Furthermore 3% of males and 1% of females had used weapons (Fleming, Watson et al., 2007). It is likely that there is a wide spectrum of severity in young peoples’ violent behaviour, but engaging in some violent behaviour appears to be relatively common during adolescence.

Violence severe enough to lead to police involvement is likely at the extreme of this scale. There are two key sources of information on violent youth offending behaviour. Statistics looking at police apprehensions are periodically reported by the Ministry of Justice (Chong, 2007). Statistics looking at convicted cases are available through statistics New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2007). Here I have focused on police apprehensions as this data probably provides a better indication of the rates of youth violent offending as much of this offending is dealt with in ways that do not necessarily involve formal conviction (Chong, 2007). Based on this data, in 2006 there were 3743 apprehensions of 14-16 year olds for violent offences, constituting 12% of apprehensions for this age group. Of young people apprehended for violent offending 77-80% are male. Over the period 1995-2006 there has been a 39% increase in apprehensions for violent offending in 14-16 year olds compared to a 22% increase in adults. The increase in the population of 14-16 year olds in the same period is 22%. These statistics suggest that there has been a small increase in apprehensions for violent offending among 14-16 year olds for the period 1995 – 2006. All statistics in this paragraph are taken from (Chong, 2007).

There are obvious immediate impacts of the perpetration of violence including risks to both the perpetrator of the violence and the victim of violence and the fact that violence is illegal. Most research that examines the adult outcomes for the perpetrators of violence in adolescence is based within a juvenile justice context and looks at offending behaviour or 'delinquent' behaviour in general, usually based on some sort of official records. This is probably due to the difficulty of engaging violent youth in research, the ethical dilemmas that would come with doing so and the difficulty in defining what constitutes violent behaviour outside an official or legal definition.

Keeping the above limitations in mind, research suggests that violence in adolescence has long term impacts in adulthood. Generally speaking, previous offending and in particular an early age at first offence is thought to be predictive future offending is (Andrews & Bonta, 2003). The research by Moffitt and colleagues (Moffitt, 1993; Moffitt & Caspi, 2001; Moffitt et al., 2002) outlined earlier showed that male 'adolescent delinquents' (not exclusively violent) who had a childhood onset had greater "psychopathic personality traits, mental-health problems, substance dependence, numbers of children, financial problems, work problems, and drug-related deaths and violent crime, including violence against women and children" (Moffitt et al., 2002, p. 179). While adolescent onset delinquents "were less extreme but elevated on impulsive personality traits, mental-health problems, substance dependence, financial problems, and property offences" (Moffitt et al., 2002, p. 179). Similarly, an international review of research examining adult outcomes of antisocial behaviour in females (again, not exclusively violent) suggests higher rates of mortality, higher rates of criminality, psychiatric morbidity and dysfunctional and violent relationships, and high rates of service utilisation (Pajer, 1998). One Australian study of youth offenders, the majority of whom were violent offenders, found that rates of mortality for male youth offenders in this group were 40 times higher than in the general population, with the leading causes of death being drug related, suicide and accidental injury (Coffey, Veit, Wolfe, Cini, & Patton, 2003).

In summary, although there are few studies that examine the impact of more minor adolescent violence, it is clear that there are both immediate and long term impacts of violent behaviour in adolescence that are of serious concern.

Substance abuse.

The Project K exclusion criteria 'substance abuse (alcohol, solvents or drugs)' potentially includes a very wide variety of behaviours. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR) defines substance abuse as "a maladaptive pattern of substance use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress" (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, p. 199). With the presence of impairment or distress indicated by one of the following: failure to fulfil significant role obligations, substance use in situations where it is physically hazardous, recurrent legal problems related to substance use, and social or interpersonal problems caused or exacerbated by the substance use. The DSM-IV-TR differentiates substance abuse from substance dependence which involves physiological or behavioural symptoms of substance use (e.g., withdrawal, tolerance, spending significant amounts of time procuring or using the substance, using more of the substance than intended, desire or unsuccessful attempts to reduce substance use). The diagnosis of substance abuse cannot be made if individuals meet criteria for dependence. While there is some controversy around the DSM-IV-TR it is a widely accepted definition and at a minimum provides a starting point for considering this issue.

As it is unclear what criteria are being used to establish substance abuse in the Project K selection process, the information presented here will cover a variety of levels of substance use rather than focusing exclusively on substance abuse as defined by the DSM-IV-TR.

Alcohol is the most common substance used by young people in New Zealand. Youth2000 found that 82% of New Zealand secondary school students have tried alcohol, and 85% of these are current drinkers (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2004). Of current drinkers, 25% reported drinking at least once a week and more than half had had an episode of binge drinking (more than five standard drinks) in the past month (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2004).

The Christchurch Health and Development Study examined the use of illicit substances (in youth aged 15 – 25) and substance dependence (in youth aged 18 – 25) (Boden, Fergusson, & Horwood, 2006). They reported that at the age of 15, 9.3% of young people have used cannabis and 1.8% had used other illicit drugs. By the age of 18, 50.1% of young people had used cannabis and 4.7% were dependant, 11.1% had used other illicit drugs and 1% were dependant. By 21, 69.4% had used cannabis and 9.6% were dependant, while 26.2% had used other illicit drugs and 1.7% were dependant. By 25, 76.7% had used cannabis and 12.5 % dependant, while 43.5% had used other

illicit drugs and 3.6% were dependant. In this study, 'other illicit drugs' were made up of, hallucinogens such as LSD and ecstasy (36.2%), amphetamine-type stimulants (26.9%), cocaine (9.1%), opiates (3.7%) and 'other' which included plant based substances such as psilocybin mushrooms (17.5%).

The findings from this study are similar to those reported by the Dunedin study. In comparison with US and European studies, both use and dependence appear to be higher; this appears to be due to differences in the rate of cannabis use and dependence (Beyers, Toumbourou, Catalano, Arthur, & Hawkins, 2004; Boden et al., 2006; Vega, Aguilar-Gaxiola, Andrade, & *et al.*, 2002). It should be noted that both Dunedin and Christchurch longitudinal studies potentially misrepresent current rates of substance use and dependence as the data is somewhat dated and is based on self report.

A variety of adverse events due to alcohol use were reported in Youth2000. Of students who reported ever trying alcohol adverse outcomes related to their alcohol use included: getting into a fight 14%; an accident or injury 13%; and having sex and later regretting it 12% (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2004). Additionally, more than a quarter of students reported that they had been a passenger in a car driven by someone who was potentially intoxicated and a third of students who reported drinking also reported having some concern about their drinking and 10% reported having attempted to give up (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2004).

The Christchurch Health and Development study examined the links between alcohol use in adolescence and outcomes in young adulthood (Fergusson, Swain-Campbell, & Horwood, 2002; Wells, Horwood, & Fergusson, 2004). This research utilised latent class analysis and identified four underlying classes of severity of alcohol use in adolescence based on alcohol consumption patterns and alcohol problems at age 16. These classes appeared to lie along a single dimension which strongly predicted outcomes from 16-25 related to alcohol use, substance dependence, mental health, education, sexual relationships and offending. However, further analysis showed that of the relationships identified above, only alcohol related outcomes, the number of sexual partners, and the extent of violent offending was related to alcohol use in adolescence when the effect of other background variables, (e.g., socioeconomic status) were taken into account (Wells et al., 2004).

Suicide attempts.

The third Project K exclusion criterion is ‘serious suicide attempts’. Differentiating ‘serious’ suicide attempts from non-serious suicide attempts or deliberate self harm is complex. In research, one key criteria used to assess this distinction is the degree of suicidal intent; that is, the seriousness or the intensity of the wish of a person to end their life (Beck, Herman, & Herman, 1974). It is difficult to objectively establish whether the intent behind a deliberate act of self-harm was death, and it is likely that there are degrees of suicidal intent. Furthermore, young people who self harm may be ambivalent about their wish to die. The Suicidal Intent Scale (Beck et al., 1974) was developed to measure the severity of suicidal intent for a previous suicide attempt. The scale has two key aspects, 1) the objective circumstances surrounding the attempt (e.g., preparation, isolation, precautions against discovery) and 2) the subjective report of the attempter as to their purpose and expectations of the attempt. Intent is not the only criteria for assessing the seriousness of an attempt, another key consideration is the medical seriousness of the attempt (Hamdi, Amin, & Mattar, 1991). While there are common criteria that are used in research to measure the seriousness of suicide attempts, it is likely that there is some diversity in what is classified as a serious suicide attempt within the Project K selection process.

There is a high degree of variability in reported rates of suicide and attempted suicide. This likely depends on the definitions and the methodology used within research (e.g., self report versus hospital records). Within the Youth2000 survey, 4.7% of males and 10.5% of females reported a suicide attempt in the past 12 months (Fleming, Merry, Robinson, Denny, & Watson, 2007). Rates identified in this study are significantly higher than the rates reported in other New Zealand studies and the international average (e.g., Ministry of Health, 2007). This is possibly due to method of response used in Youth2000 – an anonymous computer based self-report survey.

Youth2000 identified several factors associated with increased rates of suicide attempts, including: depressive symptoms, alcohol abuse, having a friend or family member attempting or completing suicide, family violence, and non-heterosexual attractions. Factors associated with decreased rates included perceiving parents as caring, perceiving other family members as caring, perceiving teachers as fair and feeling safe at school. These factors were the same for both males and females. From the available data it is not clear whether effects are direct or secondary. The peak age for suicide attempts in the Youth2000 survey was 15 years for both males and females.

In New Zealand, deaths that are suspected to be a suicide are referred for a coroner's investigation and classification as suicide is based on the result of this inquiry (Ministry of Health, 2007). The official rate of completed suicides among New Zealand young people is high, with 18.1 completed suicides per 100,000 population among 15-24 year olds in 2005-2006 (Ministry of Health, 2007). This is a decrease from the peak in 1995 – 1997 where the rate was 27.2 per 100,000. New Zealand's youth suicide rate is high in comparison with other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries; the rate of suicides among 15-24 year old males was the second highest ranking and the rate for females of the same age ranking third highest (Ministry of Health, 2007). In New Zealand and internationally completed suicides are more common among males with a ratio of 3:1, while attempted suicide is higher among females (Fleming, Merry et al., 2007; Gibb & Beautrais, 2004; Ministry of Health, 2007).

Even if a suicide attempt does not result in or was never even intended to result in death, physical and psychological trauma can result (Carr, 2006). Additionally, those who have attempted suicide are at much higher risk for later completing suicide or engaging in serious deliberate self harm. For example, Gibb and Beautrais (2004) reported that the risk of being readmitted to hospital for self-harm or attempted suicide was 175.6 times higher among those who had been admitted once than among the general population.

Regular counselling for serious problems.

The fourth Project K exclusion criterion is 'regular counselling for serious problems'. This criterion could potentially cover such a broad array of issues that even discussing definitional issues is difficult. Common psychological issues that occur in adolescence include drug abuse, mood regulation problems, eating disorders and schizophrenia (Carr, 2006). Psychological issues in childhood and adolescence may also involve adjustment to major life transitions, aside from the universal biological, social and cognitive changes discussed earlier, adolescents may also be faced with parental separation and divorce and issues of grief and bereavement (Carr, 2006). It is difficult to accurately estimate the number of adolescents who access counselling services. However, the strategic access benchmarks set by the Mental Health Commission set ideal access rates for mental health services of 3.9% for 10 – 14 year olds and 5.5% for 15 – 19 year olds. In the 2002 – 2006 period the actual access rates were 1.3 – 1.6% for 10 – 14 year olds and 2.0 – 2.3% for 15 – 19 year olds (Bir et al., 2007).

Cognitive and learning difficulties.

The criteria 'severe cognitive or learning difficulties' potentially covers a wide range of presentations again making discussing definition difficult. Cognitive difficulties can be related to developmental or acquired conditions. Developmental conditions may include neuro-developmental disorders such as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, autism spectrum disorders, or any other conditions that result in intellectual disability or less severe impairment of cognitive or learning abilities. Examples of acquired conditions may include traumatic brain injury, viral infections affecting brain functioning and the results of substance abuse or other exposure harmful to brain function. Clearly there is significant variation in terms of functioning, prognosis and guidelines for appropriate intervention within and between these conditions.

Summary.

This section has outlined the definitional issues, prevalence and impact of the issues represented by the Project K exclusion criteria. Although the outcomes of excluded youth are not tracked at this point, literature would suggest that they are clearly at risk of less than optimal development. The potentially broad range of issues identified by the criteria raises the question of how they are being defined within the current selection procedure which will be addressed further in Chapter 4.

Problem Focused Approaches: Prevention and Intervention

While psychosocial problems occur at all phases of life, the challenges inherent in adolescent development mean that the incidence of psychosocial problems in this life phase are particularly high (Arnett, 1999). The issues reviewed in the previous section represent some of the common problem occurring in adolescence. There is a broad array of approaches to dealing with these problems including efforts to avert the occurrence of problems in the first instance (prevention) and efforts to ameliorate problems that have already developed (treatment). Approaches to prevention and treatment are closely informed by understandings of adolescent development - they attempt to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors within the multiple contexts that affect development in order to increase the likelihood of resilient outcomes. This section will focus on describing preventative approaches to adolescent problem behaviour as well as touching on key themes related to intervention.

The common rationale underlying prevention programmes is that intervening at an earlier stage is efficient, because early interventions have more chance of changing less entrenched behavioural patterns and also the cost (economic, social and personal) of negative outcomes is avoided (Munoz, Mrazek, & Haggerty, 1996). There is a certain degree of intrinsic appeal to this idea:

“Prevention is intended to avert unnecessary suffering. The disruption to people’s lives, the considerable emotional pain involved, and the sometimes irreparable impact on the lives of the families and communities of those afflicted by mental disorders make it imperative that we as a society devote substantial resources to prevention”. (Munoz et al., 1996, p. 1121)

While the prevention approach emphasises avoiding the occurrence of something, precisely what that ‘something’ is varies. As noted in the previous discussion of risk factors, the prevention approach was initially developed in the context of epidemiology and focused on preventing medical illnesses (Weissberg, Kumpfer, & Seligman, 2003). Prevention frameworks are now used in contexts ranging from physical illness, mental disorders, violence, school failure, health-damaging risk behaviours, and even poverty (Weissberg et al., 2003).

There are two models that describe types of prevention programmes. The first was developed in the 1960’s in a medical context and refers to primary, secondary and tertiary interventions (Weissberg et al., 2003). Primary prevention efforts are population wide and centre on reducing exposure to risk factors and thus preventing an increase in number of new cases. Secondary preventative efforts involve early identification and intervention with new cases, while tertiary preventative programmes aim to rehabilitate or reduce the severity of symptoms in an already existing case (Chaplan, 1964 as cited in Weissberg et al., 2003). The second system of subtypes was designed to be applicable to mental disorders and was developed by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) in the United States and refers to universal, selective, and indicated prevention (Munoz et al., 1996). Within this system, preventative efforts by definition must occur before the onset of a clinically diagnosable disorder, as anything occurring after this point is effectively treatment (Munoz et al., 1996). Within the IOM framework universal prevention strategies are aimed at the population as a whole (e.g., mental health awareness advertising campaigns), while selective prevention strategies are aimed at individuals or a subgroup of the population with significantly increased risk (judged on the basis of individual or environmental factors). Finally,

indicated prevention strategies target a group with risk factors as described in relation to selective prevention but who also have detectable signs of disorder that do not meet diagnostic criteria.

The main criticism of the prevention approach is its focus on disorder. To focus exclusively on preventing the occurrence of disorder is inherently limiting in that the absence of dysfunction is only part of wellbeing (Pittman, 1996a). Furthermore, if applied in a strict sense a prevention framework that is based around preventing mental disorder relies on the validity of the definitions of disorder - whether these are the diagnostic categories of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV-TR, American Psychiatric Association, 2000) or some other system. In reality, the concept of prevention is applied more broadly than exclusively targeting a reduction in clinically diagnosable disorders. A clear example is drink driving, not a disorder as such, but certainly a focus for preventative interventions. More recently 'prevention approaches' have begun to focus on building resilience and facilitating positive development as well as preventing illness or harm (Hamilton, 2006). This acknowledges that approaches that focus on developing the strengths and resources available to young people also have value in preventing negative outcomes (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004).

Discussion of problem focused intervention (rather than prevention) as a general approach is not often the focus of literature. There are however several points of general relevance that are worth noting. A key example is the shift toward the development and utilisation of evidence based interventions (Steele, Elkin, & Roberts, 2008). Evidence based interventions tend to be focused on specific issues (e.g., depression, anxiety, delinquency) by virtue of the fact that reductions in the specified problem is the way research operationalises successful outcome. Contemporary approaches to the treatment of problems in adolescence are closely informed by the key concepts discussed above, including general understandings of adolescent development, research examining the influence of specific risk and protective processes and resilience, and understandings of the importance of multiple developmental contexts. In particular, current empirical research supports the view that family therapy or other systemic intervention is important for effective outcomes (Carr, 2009). Table 4 outlines some guidelines for effective problem focused intervention. For the most part these principles are adapted from a review by Carey and Oxman (2007) which highlighted common themes in effective mental health treatment for adolescents. The review covered a very broad range of issues including: depression, anxiety disorders, conduct disorder, attention-deficit-hyperactivity disorder, eating disorders, alcohol and substance abuse disorders, suicide and

psychotic disorders (Carey & Oxman, 2007). Other important additions to this list include the recommendation specifically focused on avoiding negative peer influence come from the work of Dishion and colleagues (Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999; Dodge et al., 2006).

Table 4: Considerations for Effective Problem Focused Intervention adapted (with additions) from Carey and Oxman (2007).

General Guidelines for Effective Treatment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhering to a specific evidenced based intervention approach is associated with more positive outcomes • Generally, evidenced based intervention utilises cognitive behavioural or systemic perspectives and is skills focused and time limited • A multi-disciplinary team approach may be required for more complex issues • Ongoing evaluation of progress and if necessary adapting the intervention is associated with more positive outcomes • Treatment must be developmentally appropriate taking into account the young person's cognitive and behavioural abilities and acknowledging that adolescents are neither 'big children' nor 'small adults' • Young people should be actively involved in the treatment including planning • In planning treatment consideration needs to be given to contextual factors (family, school and peer influences) and cultural or ethnic differences • Involvement with anti-social peers as part of treatment is likely to exacerbate anti-social behaviour. Maintaining positive social norms is critical to effective group based intervention with adolescents. • The treatment needs to be meaningful and relevant to the young person • A focus on engagement, developing a therapeutic alliance and motivation may be necessary before specific problem focused interventions are planned or undertaken

Positive Youth Development

The positive youth development (PYD) approach represents a significant shift away from problem focused approaches toward a “view of the strengths of youth and the positive qualities and outcomes we wish our youth to develop” (J. V. Lerner, Phelps, Forman, & Bowers, 2009, p. 524). The PYD approach is central to the FYD and Project K and therefore to this research. This section will review the origins of the PYD approach, describe a PYD view of successful youth development,

and outline PYD informed research examining the key influences leading to successful outcomes. Following this, issues related to whether and how young people problem behaviours fit in to the PYD approach will be discussed.

It is difficult to pinpoint the origins of the PYD approach. As an idea PYD represents a crystallisation of thinking that came from a variety of forums rather than being clearly tied to one particular person or organisation. In this way PYD represents a culmination and extension of the thinking and concepts discussed above including resilience, ecological models of development, and research and practice in prevention (Bradshaw, Brown, & Hamilton, 2006; R. M. Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, 2005). Although not directly linked to the positive psychology of Martin Seligman and colleagues (Duckworth, Steen, & Seligman, 2005; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), PYD is reflective of a wider shift within psychology toward an interest in positive aspects of human life and experience (J. V. Lerner et al., 2009). As an approach PYD is neither prevention, nor treatment but rather centred around the idea of health promotion.

The Positive Youth Development approach.

As yet, there is no single accepted definition of PYD (Witt, 2002). However, there are several key ideas that commonly recur across descriptions of PYD:

First, the recognition of the significant flexibility in human development – termed plasticity – has fundamentally impacted understandings of youth development (J. V. Lerner et al., 2009). The concept of resilience arises directly from the fact that there is significant variation and flexibility in human development. In particular, some individuals maintain adaptive functioning despite being exposed to risk conditions associated with problem behaviour. This has led to a shift in focus: Researchers are increasingly looking to identify protective processes at work, and practitioners are trying and replicate these processes by building relevant protective factors in youth or their environments (Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007). Research examining risk and protective factors related to maladaptive and adaptive youth outcomes supports an ecological systemic view of development. Youth programmes are one relevant aspect of the developmental environment.

Another key thread underlying the PYD approach is the notion that risk and protective factors appear to have a general rather than a specific effect - the more risk factors a young person is exposed to the more likely they are to develop problem behaviours and the less likely they are to

achieve healthy development (Bonino et al., 2005; Leffert et al., 1998; Pittman, Irby, & Ferber, 2001). Additionally, as noted earlier risk behaviours tend to co-occur as part of a wider behavioural syndrome or lifestyle. Given this, a more sensible avenue for prevention/intervention would be addressing this problematic lifestyle rather than focusing on just one aspect or behaviour within this lifestyle. In this sense PYD can be seen as a move away from the single problem focused prevention programmes of the 1980's and early 1990's that tended to be narrowly focused on a single outcome and a limited number of risk factors thought to be related to this outcome (Catalano, Hawkins, Berglund, Pollard, & Arthur, 2002).

A third aspect to the theoretical underpinnings of the PYD movement builds on the previous point, and is summed up by the often repeated phrase 'problem free is not fully prepared' (Pittman, 1996a). Essentially proponents of the positive youth development approach argue that the ultimate goal of any programme targeting youth should go beyond preventing or reducing problem behaviour (either generally or specifically) and focus instead on the promotion of positive development:

"Much effort has been targeted toward the avoidance or reduction of the specific risk behaviours we find most worrisome. These efforts have been effective in reducing some risk ... However, it is time that we must ask ourselves whether the interventions are adequate. We must ask if they have made a difference in producing the quality of youth our nation needs to lead us into the future. We need to clarify our vision. Is our ultimate goal really to prevent adolescents from behaving in antisocial or dangerous manners? Or, is our vision to facilitate the development of individuals who are well prepared to be creative, responsible, and productive human beings?" (Ginsburg, 2003, p. 167)

Put simply, the PYD approach argues that the avoidance of problems is not a sufficient criterion on which to assess healthy development.

Describing successful youth development.

Given that a defining feature of PYD is a view that positive development is more than the absence of problems; a key question for the PYD movement has been to clearly specify the qualities that represent successful youth development. Essentially, if proponents of PYD argue that programme goals should go beyond the avoidance of specific problems, the qualities that are being

aimed for need to be described. This section will outline three related descriptions of successful youth development: a competence focused view, the five 'Cs' model, and the idea of thriving as successful development.

One approach to defining successful development relates to competence in developmentally relevant tasks (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). In the sense that what constitutes successful development depends on 'developmentally relevant tasks', competence is both dynamic – varying with age and context, and multi-dimensional – with numerous developmental tasks relevant at different times (J. V. Lerner et al., 2009). Essentially, the specific manifestation of competence varies with "person, place and time" (J. V. Lerner et al., 2009, p. 534). There have been, however, attempts to delineate a more broadly relevant set of developmental competencies. Table 5 lists key tasks identified in a review by Masten and Coatsworth (1998) as one example of many types of list, some organised by developmental stage others into different domains (e.g., physical, intellectual, psychological / emotional and social). Masten and colleagues (1995) examined the multi-dimensional nature of competence and identified three key domains of childhood competence – 'academic', 'conduct' and 'social', with the addition of two domains in adolescence: 'job' and 'romantic'.

Table 5: Key developmental tasks identified by Masten and Coatsworth (1998)

Developmental Stage	Key Tasks
Infancy – preschool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attachment • Language • Differentiation of self from environment • Beginnings of self control and compliance
Middle childhood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School adjustment (attendance, conduct) • Academic achievement (learning to read, write) • Getting along with peers
Adolescence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition to secondary school • Academic achievement • Involvement in extra-curricular activities • Forming cohesive sense of self

The Five Cs model (R. M. Lerner, Lerner et al., 2005; Pittman, 1996b; Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, 1989) describes a process of successful development in terms of the development of: competence, confidence, character, caring, and connection (see Table 6 for description). This model builds on a competency based view of PYD highlighting the fact that successful development involves more than competence or skill (Patterson, 2001). The roots of the Five C's model are somewhat ambiguous but its rise to prominence has been in large part due to the work of Richard Lerner and the 4-H youth development programme in providing empirical support for the model (Jelicic, Bobek, Phelps, Lerner, & Lerner, 2007; R. M. Lerner, Lerner et al., 2005; R. M. Lerner, von Eye, Lerner, & Lewin-Bizan, 2009). Within this research, an additionally identified sixth 'c' is contribution. The model posits that when the other Five 'Cs' are present, adolescents will contribute positively to themselves and also their family, community and ultimately society (R. M. Lerner, Lerner et al., 2005). In this way successful development is seen as a process of the five C's leading to the development of the sixth C of contribution resulting in mutually beneficial person-environment relationships. This is described as 'thriving' — where a young person is "on a trajectory toward an ideal adulthood status; that is, the person will develop behaviours that are

valued by society because they act to structurally maintain it” (R. M. Lerner, Alberts, Jelicic, & Smith, 2006, p. 24). The term thriving has also been used by other authors. Of particular importance is the work of William Damon who emphasises the concept of ‘noble purpose’ defined as “engagement in pursuits that serve the common welfare, and make meaningful contributions to communities” (J. V. Lerner et al., 2009, p. 527).

Table 6: Description of the Five C’s of PYD based on Lerner and colleagues (2005) Table 1.

Quality	Description
Competence	A positive view of one’s actions within specific areas including social (e.g., interpersonal skills / conflict resolution), academic (school grades and attendance), cognitive (decision making) and vocational (e.g., work habits and career choice explorations) functioning.
Confidence	An overall sense of self-worth and self efficacy; a person’s global self-regard (as opposed to domain specific beliefs)
Character	Understanding and respect for societal and cultural rules, standards for behaviour, sense of morality (right and wrong) and integrity.
Caring / Compassion	A sense of sympathy or empathy for others.
Connection	Positive bonds with individuals and institutions that are relevant to the adolescent. Reflected by reciprocal exchanges between the adolescent and their peers, and the adolescent and their family, school and community.

The research around the 4-H youth development programme has led to the growth of the Five C’s model from a list of key indicators to a theoretical account of successful development involving “adaptive individual ↔ context relations propel a person along a health developmental trajectory across life” (R. M. Lerner, Lerner et al., 2005).

Influences on Positive Youth Development.

The Five Cs model provides an account of positive development that identifies both the ideal outcome and the developmental process leading to this outcome. This model states that both the Five Cs and ultimately contribution/thriving are the result of “an alignment between individual strengths and ecological assets that promote healthy development” (Jelicic et al., 2007, p. 264). This section examines research that has focused on generating more specific accounts of the conditions conducive to positive development including : the research on ‘assets’ conducted by the Search Institute (Leffert et al., 1998), research focused on specifying the qualities of effective youth development programmes, and research focused on the development of specific assets as being of particular importance and in particular the development of initiative and self-efficacy as key youth development constructs.

The Search Institute is “an independent non-profit organization whose mission is to provide leadership, knowledge, and resources to promote healthy children, youth, and communities” (The Search Institute, N.D.). They specify 40 developmental assets, which are aspects of the individual or the environment that facilitate positive development (see www.searchinstitute.org for full listing). The Search Institute divides assets into external and internal types, with four subtypes of external developmental assets being support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations and constructive use of time, and four internal subtypes being commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies and positive identity (Leffert et al., 1998).

The work by the Search Institute emphasises that the developmental needs of young people go far beyond what can be provided in the context of a single programme. This is reflective of an ecological view of PYD – with relevant influences at different levels. PYD programmes represent one important context for development that is relatively amenable to research and the influence of research, perhaps leading to a disproportionate focus on programmes as opposed to other less distinct developmental contexts (e.g., neighbourhood). Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that ‘programmes’ in all their forms have been a key feature of the youth development field since its inception.

Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) addressed the need to describe exactly what constitutes a PYD programme. They identified ‘the big 3’ characteristics of PYD programmes: goals, atmosphere and activities. Goals endorsed by PYD programmes include: preventing risk, developing skill and

competency¹ and building connections to others. Key features of the atmosphere in PYD programmes include: a supportive environment in which there was a specific focus on developing youth-adult relationships; an empowering environment in which youth were involved in decision making and given leadership training and opportunities for community service or involvement; and finally an environment in which there was an expectation of positive behaviour. In terms of activities, Roth and Brooks-Gunn identified a wide range of both structured and unstructured activities (e.g., sports, cultural, arts, educational) offered by PYD programmes and considered these in terms of the opportunities offered to participants. Opportunities for skill building, challenge and 'expanding horizons' through exposure to new people, places, and situations were seen as particularly important. Larson, Hansen and Moneta (2006) looked at the differential impacts of particular youth activities, they found that faith based activities tended to have a positive impact on identity development, emotion regulation and interpersonal development, while sport and arts based activities were particularly important for initiative development, and finally service based activities had a positive impact on developing teamwork skills, relationships and social capital. Catalano and colleagues (2004) examined effective PYD programmes. They identified three core design features that were a focus in the majority (75%) of effective programmes: 1) opportunities for youth participation in decision making and leadership in the programme; 2) a focus on the development of life skills; and 3) a focus on adult-youth relationships that are caring and sustained.

Another system for describing the 'features of positive developmental settings' is proposed by Eccles and Gootman (2002). They identify eight key features which are described in Table 7. It is interesting to note that this system refers to 'positive developmental settings' rather than effective PYD programmes referring to the idea that the specified qualities are relevant to a diverse range of environments. The assets identified in this system were identified by reviewing empirical research, developmental theory (literature), and 'practical wisdom'.

¹ Skill and competency were defined broadly in this context and included social skill building, life skill building, academic improvement, personality development and motivation/future orientation (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

Table 7: Key features of positive developmental settings (Taken from Eccles & Gootman, 2002, p. 90 table 4-1).

Feature	Description
Physical and psychological safety	Safe and health-promoting facilities; and practices that increase safe peer group interaction and decrease unsafe or confrontational peer interactions.
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; closeness; connectedness; good communication; caring; support; guidance; secure attachment; and responsiveness.
Opportunities to belong	Opportunities for meaningful inclusion, regardless of one's gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disabilities; social inclusion, social engagement and integration; opportunities for socio-cultural identity formation; and support for cultural and bicultural competence.
Positive social norms	Rules of behaviour; expectations; injunctions; ways of doing things; values and morals; and obligations for service.
Support for efficacy and mattering	Youth based; empowerment practices that support autonomy; making a real difference in ones community; and being taken seriously. Practice that includes enabling, responsibility granting, and meaningful challenge. Practices that focus on improvement rather than on relative current performance levels.
Opportunities for skill building	Opportunities to learn physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, and social skills; exposure to intentional learning experiences; opportunities to learn cultural literacy, media literacy, communication skills, and good habits of mind; preparation for adult employment; and opportunities to develop social and cultural capital.
Integration of family, school and community efforts	Concordance; coordination; and synergy among family, school, and community.

Self-efficacy is one important influence on positive youth development; it is also the primary selection criteria in Project K. Given that self-efficacy influenced peoples experience and action it has a crucial influence on the decisions and life trajectories taken by young people and is thus of importance to PYD (Tsang & Hui, 2006). Several authors writing in relation to PYD refer to self-efficacy (e.g., Catalano et al., 2002; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Tsang & Hui, 2006). Self-efficacy is

particularly relevant during adolescence due to the many transitions that occur in this life phase and the challenges they pose; an individual's levels of self-efficacy will affect their school performance, peer relationships and career choices (Schunk & Meece, 2006). Furthermore, Catalano and colleagues (2002) identified activities that enhance self-efficacy (such as "personal goal-setting, coping and mastery skills, or techniques to change negative self-efficacy expectancies or self-defeating cognitions" (Catalano et al., 2002, p. 20)) as a one important feature of effective PYD programmes. Similarly, Eccles and Gootman (2002) refer to self-efficacy under 'support for efficacy and mattering (see Table 8). Empirical research suggests that self-efficacy (affective self-regulatory efficacy and empathic self-efficacy in this case) mediates the relationship between a positive developmental experience (participation in a 'caring youth sport' programme) and pro-social behaviours (Gano-Overway et al., 2009). Within the PYD literature there are a range of terms that are closely related to self-efficacy (e.g., empowerment) and some terms that are used synonymously (e.g., confidence) (Russell, Muraco, Subramaniam, & Laub, 2009). Empowerment could be seen as an example of agentic self-regulation (Bandura, 2006) in that it requires youth to take on new and challenging tasks, stretching their skills and knowledge and developing new skills and knowledge in order to represent their interests or values by contributing to, or challenging, their social or physical environment. It is not difficult to conceptualize the importance of self-efficacy in these processes (Russell et al., 2009). In summary, self-efficacy can be seen as an important component to PYD in itself, and also a necessary foundation for many other valued outcomes.

Positive Youth Development in Aotearoa / New Zealand.

Although the PYD approach has relatively recent beginnings it has become central to youth related policy in New Zealand in the form of the Ministry for Youth Development's Youth Development Strategy (McLaren, 2002; Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2002). The Youth Development Strategy emphasises the importance of facilitating positive development, and addresses both why and how the promotion of positive youth development can be achieved. The strategy identifies four key goals: 1) encouraging strengths-based youth development approaches, 2) ensuring people working with youth have the appropriate skills to develop and support positive relationships, 3) creating opportunities for young people to actively participate and engage, 4) building knowledge about youth development through information and research (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2002).

The relevance and appropriateness of PYD for different cultures is important to any consideration of PYD in New Zealand. Farrugia and Bullen (in press) note that there is a degree of concordance between Maori and Pacific conceptualisations of health and the PYD model. In particular, holistic views of the person and the relevance of person/context interactions are emphasised in both Maori and Pacific models such as Te Whare Tapa Wha (Durie, 1994) and Fonofale (Pulotu-Endemann, Anandale, & Instone, 2004). Furthermore, the importance of health promotion alongside risk reduction is well recognised in Maori conceptualisations of well-being (Durie, 1999).

Summary.

This section has introduced the PYD approach and discussed some of the literature regarding how positive development is conceptualised and those individual and environment factors research suggests are conducive to positive development. The presence and relevance of this approach in New Zealand was also touched upon. In the following section the potential and challenges for integrating risk focused approaches with PYD thinking are considered.

Positive Youth Development and At-risk Adolescents: Potential and Challenges for Integrating Approaches

The Foundation for Youth Development and Project K in particular are very much based in the PYD approach. Project K's slogan 'maximising youth potential' epitomises the type of goal advocated for by proponents of PYD with the phrase 'problem free is not fully prepared'. Given that Project K is a PYD programme, the focus on risk and those at risk within the current research is an interesting juxtaposition. This section will begin by reviewing what could be seen as a wider pattern of exclusion of at risk youth from the PYD movement with a focus on how and why this has come about. Following this, efforts to bridge PYD and problem focused intervention will be discussed including examples of the use of PYD as either prevention or intervention. Finally, reflections on who PYD is for and the potential and challenges involved in including at risk youth in PYD programmes will be presented.

The exclusion of at risk youth from Positive Youth Development.

Empirical evidence supports that view that programmes aiming to facilitate PYD can be successful in both increasing positive behaviours and decreasing problem behaviours including aggression, violence, drug and alcohol use, high-risk sexual behaviour and smoking among all youth, regardless of their level of risk (Catalano et al., 2004). Indeed much of the original impetus behind the development of PYD was to better meet the needs of young people most at risk (Pittman et al., 2001). However, to a large extent, PYD tends to be “seen as either irrelevant or too insignificant to benefit the youth, families and neighbourhoods most in need ... there is an implicit double standard: fix those in trouble, develop those who are not” (Pittman et al., 2001, pp. 31 - 33). The exclusion of at-risk youth from Project K could be seen as one example of a wider trend in which intervention with at-risk adolescents or those already displaying significant problematic behaviour tends to be problem focused, utilising strategies focused on reducing problematic behaviour by isolating and controlling ‘problem youth’ rather than strategies designed to facilitate positive development. It should be noted that there are a growing number of exceptions to this, where PYD is used as prevention or intervention, which will be discussed further below. Nonetheless it is informative to consider why it is that at risk youth have become somewhat isolated from the PYD movement.

Pittman and colleagues (2001) argue that PYD’s focus on broadening the goals of youth work, exemplified by calls for going ‘beyond’ – ‘beyond prevention’, ‘beyond quick fixes’, ‘beyond basic services’, and ‘beyond labelling’ to name a few – has been interpreted as a call for an entirely new approach (an ‘instead of’) to working with young people rather than a compatible adjunct (an ‘as well as’) to existing work. In this sense, PYD’s efforts to differentiate itself from previous problem focused models, and the enthusiasm with which the refocusing of the PYD approach has been received, may have had the unintended effect of ‘throwing out the baby with the bathwater’. While it is true that ‘problem free is not fully prepared’, it is also the case that some problems or risk behaviour prohibit full preparation or the attainment of successful adulthood.

PYD has made significant advances in describing and defining the conditions conducive to positive development. However, youth with problems such as those represented by the Project K exclusion criteria may also have additional problem focused needs (for example, to go through medical detox if they are alcohol or drug dependent). The PYD approach has tended to overlook these and the focus on going beyond the deficit focus and has had a tendency to trivialise the

importance of some risk behaviour, or at least provide little guidance regarding problems that need to be addressed directly, urgently, and effectively (Small & Memmo, 2004). Prevention and problem focused interventions offer a wealth of knowledge and experience related to doing this. Essentially, instead of further differentiating (and inadvertently isolating) PYD from prevention and problem focused interventions, a more beneficial undertaking might be to incorporate aspects of PYD into existing work as an adjunct to current approach to both research and practice (Pittman et al., 2001). Proponents of PYD would do well to approach prevention and problem focused intervention as if it was a young person: assess what strengths already exist and build on the potential that is there in the context of a caring, sustained relationship. Essentially, PYD could benefit from “connect[ing] to popular issues, institutions and strategies” (Pittman et al., 2001, p. 35). The prevention or amelioration of problems is, justifiably, seen as important in many arenas. PYD has the potential to enhance work in problem focused prevention and treatment and would benefit from building connections to do this. The following section will further discuss current efforts and future possibilities regarding the use of PYD as prevention or intervention for problem behaviours.

Positive Youth Development for problems.

In 2001 Pittman and colleagues argued that “prevention and preparation are two sides of the same coin” (p. 37). Since this time it has become increasingly recognised that developments in prevention science have converged with PYD thinking in several important ways. These include: critiquing the single-problem-focused prevention programmes of the 1980’s and early 1990’s; recognising the fact that problem behaviours tend to co-occur and are often influenced by similar risk and protective factors; and recognising the importance of protective factors (and resilience) across a variety of developmental contexts (Catalano et al., 2002). It has been argued that these developments have led to a situation in which PYD and modern prevention are in practice indistinguishable and that the division remains primarily due to structures of funding (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Although, one difference that potentially distinguishes the two fields is youth participation, which is emphasised in PYD but not in prevention; although not necessarily incompatible with this model (Hamilton, 2006). Indeed, the use of community membership and engagement has even been suggested as a means of violence prevention (Zeldin, 2004). Prevention and PYD have the potential to be of mutual benefit, as Hamilton (2006) states: “Enabling all youth to thrive is too ambitious a goal to be achieved by any agency, movement, or profession. With this

goal in common, youth development and public health can seek new ways to combine knowledge and action” (p.89).

As well as being seen as relevant to prevention, the principles of PYD are also increasingly being incorporated into problem focused interventions – for youth already displaying significant degrees of problem behaviour. One major example of this, perhaps surprisingly, is in juvenile justice – a setting in which PYD represents a significant shift away from traditional models of service (Barton & Butts, 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2006; Schwartz, 2000). Traditional approaches to juvenile justice have typically been institutionally based and aim to protect public safety by reducing reoffending. As such, the major focus of intervention tends to be those risk factors known to be directly related to the offending behaviour. A PYD informed approach to juvenile offending would ideally be community based and would aim to facilitate positive development by building those internal and external assets known to be related to positive development. While the implementation of PYD in justice settings is currently in its infancy (Barton & Butts, 2008), PYD principles have also been used in a variety of other problem focused interventions including substance abuse treatment (Wood, Drolet, Robbins-Wood, & Diez, 2007) and mental health (Bradshaw, Brown, & Hamilton, 2008).

Literature related to utilising PYD in preventing or treating problems is growing quickly. For example, a recent issue of *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* focused entirely on the use of PYD for the prevention or treatment of problem behaviour (Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008). This work focused on the development of five specific competencies: positive sense of self, self control, decision-making skills, a moral system of belief and pro-social connectedness and their effect on school failure and early school leaving, youth violence, substance use, high risk sexual behaviour. While there is a growing number of examples of both research and practice using PYD specifically to address problem behaviours, it is interesting to note that these are generally examples of problem focused services adopting a PYD perspective, either in part or as a whole, rather than of PYD based programmes working with at risk groups. Indeed the question of who PYD programmes are actually including is difficult to answer. In particular the processes of selection are not always detailed, and the measurement of problem behaviours at intake is not typically a focus of PYD programmes.

For whom is the Positive Youth Development approach appropriate?

The PYD approach was explicitly designed to be applicable to all youth: those with no problems and no known signs to risk, those considered ‘at-risk’, and those actively displaying problem behaviours (J. V. Lerner et al., 2009; Pittman et al., 2001). Essentially, this is because PYD focuses on the goal of positive development which is relevant to all young people (Barton & Butts, 2008). Additionally, although in the early stages, research suggests that PYD informed approaches (particularly when used in conjunction with strategies focused on addressing risk) can have a positive effect (see previous section). However, having such a broad target group, combined with the broadened goals epitomised in a promotion framework and the broadened influences identified in an ecological approach is also a challenge for PYD. As Connell and colleagues state: “the inclusionary impulse has produced a mind-boggling melange of principles, outcomes, assets, inputs, supports, opportunities, risks and competencies” (Connell, Gambone, & Smith, 2001, p. 293). The question becomes: where to start? Providing a full range of services, opportunities and supports for the entire youth population is unfeasible, and PYD has provided little clarity in “specifying what should be offered, why it should be offered, how it should be offered, and to whom it should be offered” (Pittman et al., 2001, p. 32). The last of these questions is particularly pertinent to the current research.

Not often covered in the literature, it seems timely that a recent background discussion paper aiming to inform the planning of structured youth development initiatives by the Ministry for Youth Development (2009) comments directly on this issue. This section will summarise the relevant comments from this report. First, it is noted that while all youth may benefit from PYD, some are more in need in that they are more likely to experience negative outcomes due to “a lack of developmental opportunities brought about by a lack of attachment to pro-social setting and people” (p.50). Such negative outcomes result in significant costs and harm to the individual and society at large and using “a strengths-based approach does not mean we are blind to this information or this potential risk” (p.50). On the other hand, it is also necessary to recognise that some young people will have sufficient assets and opportunities in their current environment. Given that funding is limited, there is a need for clear criteria in order to maximise the impact of the available resources. In order to do this we need to know: “who is likely to make a poor transition to adulthood without formal youth development intervention” (p.50)? There are also other criteria to consider including the need for participants to be: legally able, practically available, not better suited

to other available options, not likely to cause significant risks to safety, or likely to create antisocial group norms. The report identifies a variety of principles and practical criteria related to which young people should be targeted for inclusion, excluded or conditionally considered for inclusion. This is summarised in Table 8.

Table 8: Principles and practical criteria to guide participant targeting (taken from or summarised from Appendix 4 of Ministry of Youth Development, 2009).

Target:	<p>Young people who are 'at risk'</p> <p>Young people who need to develop foundational competencies, habits, values and so forth (such as motivation, confidence, self esteem, productive life habits and routines etc) in order to successfully participate in employment, training or further education</p> <p>Young people who lack strong attachments to pro-social settings, who appear likely to form attachments to anti-social settings, or who have already formed attachments to 'low level' anti-social settings</p> <p>Young people who, in the potential absence of employment opportunities (i.e. in the current economic climate), need intensive activation in pro-social settings in order to avoid general inactivity or forming attachments to anti-social settings.</p>
Exclude:	<p>Young people with adequate environmental supports to make a successful transition to adulthood</p> <p>Young people who may be struggling but whose needs are more specific than those targeted by PYD (e.g., predominantly around employment, training or education)</p> <p>Young people with established and significant offending habits (including violence)</p> <p>Young people with serious drug and/or alcohol habits</p> <p>Young people who pose a safety risk to themselves, other participants or the programme</p> <p>Young people who have no desire or intention of participating in a meaningful way</p> <p>Those who are likely to create group negative/anti-social norms</p> <p>Those who for physical, mental health or psychiatric reasons are unlikely to cope with the demands of the course (may exclude from components rather than the whole course)</p> <p>Those whose physical, mental health or psychiatric support needs exceed that which can reasonably be met by programme staff</p>
Conditional:	<p>With regards to physical, mental health and psychiatric issues consideration should be given to:</p> <p>The demands the course will place on the young person</p> <p>The demands the young person will place on the course, in some instances ability to include may be influenced by the overall mix and composition of the group</p> <p>Young people with mental health issues may be included on the advice of health care professional and with professional and family support</p> <p>In the specific case of high lethality suicide attempts in the past year: exclude unless otherwise recommended by a psychological report</p>

The Ministry for Youth Development report essential suggests that at least some – relatively intensive – youth development programmes are suitable for ‘low-end at-risk’ groups and indeed should specifically target such groups. It should be noted that the report also mentions other ‘non-intensive’ programmes as being appropriate for youth with adequate environmental assets so as to make them ineligible for intensive PYD intervention. Available research would suggest that PYD has the potential, at least, to be of benefit to youth with, or at risk of, significant problem behaviour. However, there is also a need to ensure that PYD practitioners have skills appropriate to dealing with a more difficult population. A lack of such skills is likely to be one reason why there are more examples of problem focused programme incorporating PYD principles than vice versa. As well as the importance of skills and knowledge, PYD programmes looking to include at risk youth also need to be willing to hold a dual focus of both managing risk and promoting development. Essentially, any holistic approach to youth development needs to consider and where possible address the impact of risks that are affecting the young person, however, this should not constitute the entire intervention strategy (Ginsburg, 2003). Integrating the need to address the impact of risk with the importance of focusing on building assets for development is a challenging and complex undertaking. Despite this, the potential for PYD to be of benefit to at risk groups makes it a venture worth investment.

Summary

This review has outlined some central ideas related to adolescent development in order to contextualise the discussion of the PYD approach, a model which integrates several key concepts in youth development and offers a theoretical framework to guide intervention with a focus on building strength. The PYD approach is central to New Zealand youth related policy (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2002). However, applying the PYD approach to youth with higher risk behaviour is challenging and there is a tendency for these youth to be left out of PYD initiatives, perhaps in part due to lack of clarity regarding whether and PYD is suited to youth at risk of, or already displaying, behavioural problems (Pittman et al., 2001). Youth development is a complex phenomena and the plasticity of human development offers both hope and challenge. Research and practice need to acknowledge the risk and the potential that is inherent to adolescence, integrating work that has too often been divided. There are considerable tensions and unknowns in balancing the dual goals

of maximising potential and minimising risk, but if PYD is to be relevant to higher risk populations this is a balance that must be found.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter deals with theoretical issues related to epistemology and methodology – the assumptions about the nature of the world, the purpose of research and the construction of knowledge that underlie the current research. The first section of this chapter draws on ideas from community psychology and action research with a focus on the implications of undertaking research that has the dual aims of producing knowledge and bringing about change. The second section describes the development of the current research including key areas of inquiry and a general overview of methods. More detailed descriptions of specific methods are provided in Chapters 4 and 5.

Community Psychology and Action Research: The Scholarship of Engagement

The broad fields of community psychology and action research directly inform the approach taken in the current research. This type of research, while by no means ‘mainstream’, has become more widely recognised, as suggested by the establishment of division 27 of the American Psychological Association the ‘Society for Community Research and Action’ (SCRA). Community psychology takes an ecological view focusing on the relationships and goodness-of-fit between people, communities, and wider society with a focus on goals of empowerment, social justice, health promotion, and problem prevention through collaborative research and action (Orford, 2008; Rappaport, 1977; Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA)). The term ‘action research’ in some ways describes itself, at its broadest level it is research that places equal priority on the goals of producing social change and producing knowledge (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Proponents of action research argue that the production and utilisation of contextually relevant knowledge through collaborative action in real-world situations is the most useful undertaking for social science (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). These two approaches to research can be related to a broader concept termed by Boyer ‘the scholarship of engagement’ (Boyer, 1990, 1996; Van de Ven, 2007). Essentially, the scholarship of engagement calls for an increased emphasis on the role of universities and of research as a “vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic and moral problems” (Boyer, 1996, p. 144). This section will articulate some of key concepts that recur across broad traditions of ‘engaged scholarship’ that shape and guide the current research - for example, reflections on the purpose and process of research, the role of

values in the research, where research actually happens, and the relationships between the researcher and participants.

The purpose of research.

There is growing awareness of “research designed to meet community needs by generating innovative knowledge of effective change-producing strategies ... that are feasible, sustainable, and affordable in ‘real world’ settings” (Kurtines et al., 2008, p. 234). This focus on feasible, sustainable and affordable change can be contrasted with more traditional approaches to research where the key goal is to produce reliable and valid knowledge with a high degree of generality. In this sense action research prioritises ecological validity above external validity; that is, the importance of local relevance outweighs that of global relevance (O’Leary, 2005). At the same time, action research should be conducted with enough rigour that findings regarding the specific context of one project can be generalised to other similar contexts (Dick, 1993).

The current research aims to contribute to both theory and practice. Theoretical implications of the research relate to the potential and challenges of utilising a PYD approach with at risk adolescents as introduced in the previous chapter. Also, issues around participant selection in the context of the one PYD programme examined in this research may well have relevant implications for other situations. However, the main impetus for undertaking the research came from the interest and a level of concern around the issue of exclusion within the programme itself as described in Chapter 1. This dual focus on utility as well as knowledge has a fundamental impact on the ‘basic facts’ of the research – from developing questions, choosing participants, developing relationships with these participants, all the way through the processes of data collection and analysis.

Relationship between action and research.

Central to the process of action research is that the dual purposes of action/social change and research/knowledge production are pursued simultaneously and reciprocally drive one and other – knowledge guides action and action produces knowledge (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). In this sense action research can be related to experimental research designs. Both use current knowledge to devise action – either in the laboratory or the community – and based on the outcome of this action refine their current knowledge. The reciprocal relationship between learning and action is elegantly illustrated by models of experiential learning. Kurt Lewin (1951) was a major

contributor to the development of both experiential learning models and action research. There are multiple models describing experiential learning is described, the most well known is that of (Kolb, 1984) which involves four key stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. However, a simplified version is more often cited in practical settings and provides a good heuristic for the process of research (see Figure 5). Action research can be conceptualised as consisted of iterative cycles (imagine a spiral) of planning, action and reflection through which knowledge and practice is refined (Dick, 1993).

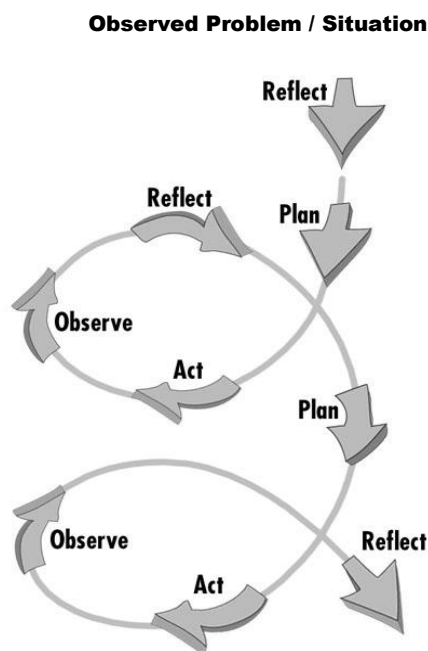


Figure 5: Iterative cycles in action research

The current research utilised a similar 'experiential' format on both micro and macro levels. On a micro level multiple full cycles were undertaken, planning in the form of identifying questions and possible sources of information, action in the form of information gathering and reflection in the form of analysis leading into and influencing further similar cycles. On a macro level, the project as a whole formed a part cycle of reflection and planning undertaken with the PYD organisation involved. Although constraints of time and resource meant undertaking the full action phase was unfeasible within the current reported project, change and in particular a focus on improvement was central to how the research was conceptualised.

Writing with regard to feminist action research, Reinharz describes an approach termed 'demystification'. Within a demystification framework "researchers believe that the very act of obtaining knowledge creates the potential for change because the paucity of research about certain groups accentuates and perpetuates their powerlessness" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 193). This fits with the concept of 'consciousness raising' popularised by Freire (Reason, 2001). In a sense the current research acted to 'spotlight' exclusion leading to a greater awareness and critical approach to dealing with the issue which ultimately has an effect on practice. For example, by asking programme directors how they made decisions about who to exclude it is assumed that not only will they provide information reflective of that process, but through this act of reflection their actual practice will be shaped.

Relationship between values and research.

A view of research in which knowledge production and action are inseparable emphasises the values laden nature of research. Research that involves the "purposive, goal-orientated modification of reality evokes disputes of the role of value in social scientific research" (Oquist, 1978, pp. 143-144). In contrast with an orthodox scientific view of research (discussed further below) the current research holds that values are central to all research undertakings in social science. Essentially, this is because the questions of interest to social science and particularly to the 'helping professions' tend to be moral, ethical and value laden (Rappaport, 1977). Given the inevitability of research being situated within a system of values and belief, the options are for these values to be either explicitly stated or implicitly assumed. The active and transparent examination of the role of values allows research consumers to assess the influence these have on the research process, quality and relevance.

Three core values guided the current research: First, an emphasis on community service and respect for FYD and Project K as positive social institutions. Being of benefit to FYD and Project K was a goal that influenced the decision to undertake the research in the first place as well as many decisions along the path to its completion. A second key value position was a view of rationality as desirable. In other words an assumption that well informed, conscious and logical decisions are desirable; and that even if perfect rationality is impossible, considered action is preferable to unexamined approaches, even when both are equally well meaning. Related to this is an emphasis on openness to practices (FYD's, Project K's and my own) and understandings shifting based on new

information. Third, was the idea that minimising exclusion and maximising access to either Project K or other, equivalent resources and support was desirable.

The 'location of research'.

A dedication to the aim of doing research that is useful has direct implications for *where* research happens. The issue is famously articulated by Schön:

"In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground overlooking a swamp. On the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves to solution through the application of research-based theory and technique. In the swampy lowland, messy, confusing problems defy technical solution. The irony of this situation is that the problems of the high ground tend to be relatively unimportant to individuals or society at large, however great their technical interest may be, while in the swamp lie the problems of greatest human concern. The practitioner must choose. Shall he remain on the high ground where he can solve relatively unimportant problems according to prevailing standards of rigor, or shall he descend to the swamps of important problems and non-rigorous inquiry?" (Schön, 1987, p. 3)

If research is going to generate solutions and information that is useful in the 'swamp' it may be that the research actually needs to be undertaken within that setting. Essentially, this is because the degree of reduction and abstraction required for controlled experimentation means findings are of limited applicability in the context of the multi-dimensional, open system that is the 'real world'. Thus, both community psychology and action research advocate that researchers must move out of the laboratory - and even out of the university - and engage with the communities and situation they seek to study and to serve. In doing so, researchers actually become a part of the situation in question.

Implications for researcher-participant relationship.

Both action research and community psychology emphasise the importance of collaborative relationships with participants. Indeed such relationships are central to some conceptualisations of action research; for example, participatory action research. O'Leary (2005) discusses relationships with participants in terms of a continuum between research 'on' others, research 'for' others, or research 'with' others. The current research falls somewhere between research 'for' and research 'with'. In particular, being responsive to the degree and nature of involvement that the FYD wanted to have with the research was important. As an organisation FYD is going through a period of rapid

growth with several significant developments underway concurrently. Therefore, while the issue being researched was of interest to FYD, it was also important that participation in the project did not over burden staff or the organisation as a whole. Essentially, there was a need to balance communication and involvement with minimising the demands of involvement and avoid an overemphasis on the a priori importance of active participation in all phases of the research perhaps more reflective of the researcher's values (and the requirements of an academic thesis) than the needs or desires of the stakeholders of the research.

This discussion of research-practitioner relationships and the previous points about the research location essentially focus on the need to be responsive to the complexities and dynamic nature of local-contexts and relationships. A key implication of this is that the design process in engaged research needs to be flexible and even emergent, adjusting to new information throughout iterative cycles of planning action and reflection. As noted by Beer and Walton: "Change is not brought about by following a grand master plan but by continually readjusting direction and goals" (1987, p. 356).

Assumptions about reality and knowledge construction.

So far this chapter has focused on the implications of holding change as a key goal of research alongside a more typical focus on producing knowledge. In the course of this discussion, several points related to ontology and epistemology have been touched on. At this point I turn to focus on such issues more directly, clarifying the assumptions about reality and the construction of knowledge that frame this research. I intentionally choose not to simply align myself with one established position because of the variation in the way in which different terms are understood, however, threads of pragmatism and critical realism are referenced in this discussion.

Ontology and epistemology are extremely complex philosophical concepts with a plethora of relevant well developed debates. I make no attempt to comprehensively review perspectives on such issues in social science. However, because "particular philosophies are not simple and self-contained but exist through their oppositions to a range of alternative positions" (Sayer, 1992, p. 5) I will outline a simplified version of what I term 'orthodox science' and then discuss my own approach in relation to this. I use the term orthodox science to encompass positivist empiricism and related approaches that are adapted from the basic sciences and endorse methods such as controlled experimentation, statistical analysis of carefully observed relationships, and detached

theoretical supposition. Within an orthodox scientific approach there is an underlying assumption that there is 'mind-independent' reality that is both observable and rule bound and therefore ultimately predictable (A. Fisher, Sonn, & Evans, 2007). The approach to knowledge construction under such assumptions emphasises the importance of objectivity and therefore separation between researcher and phenomena under study (McEvoy & Richards, 2006; Sayer, 1992). Knowledge production is explicitly separate from the application of that knowledge within this framework. Attempts to change the phenomena under study within the research process would therefore be viewed as bias.

There are significant strengths in the orthodox approach to science, particularly in terms of its level of rigour leading to replicable findings. Furthermore, it is an approach that has enabled significant and useful advances in social science. Two examples particularly relevant in the field of youth development are: first, behavioural research that outlines principles of operant learning – most obviously the principles of reinforcement and punishment as described in any undergraduate psychology textbook (e.g., Carr, 2006); and second, longitudinal studies that identify risk and protective factors (e.g., behavioural epidemiology; Sallis et al., 2000). These two fields of research underlie much of the previous chapter. Despite these impressive achievements there are also some important limitations to the orthodox approach to science. First, as social scientists a lot of what we are interested in is difficult or perhaps even impossible to directly and/or reliably observe (Sayer, 2000). An example from this research would be the way in which programme directors actually make decisions about exclusion. Second, phenomena of interest may also be dynamic, contextually situated, and even actively constructed – essentially situated within a multi-dimensional open system with reciprocally influential relationships between people and the environment (Maritz, 2001). So, to continue the example, decision making may change over time and situation with different considerations relevant in different programmes at different times. Furthermore, the very act of discussing decision making may involve participants actively formulating the process rather than passively reporting what happens. Components of such complex systems taken out of their contexts are likely to function differently, and results from research that requires a high degree of abstraction risk becoming irrelevant to the original complex context, and thus of limited utility (Jason, Keys, Suarez-Balcazar, Taylor, & Davis, 2003).

These challenges have led some social scientists to disavow the orthodox scientific method in its entirety and instead adopt a relativist approach to research (e.g., the more extreme versions of

contextualism or constructivism) which do not assume that there exists – and therefore makes no attempt to access – a ‘mind- independent’ reality holding instead that truth is relative to context rather than absolute (Sayer, 2000).

I seek to find some middle ground recognising the strengths of an orthodox approach as well as recognising its limitations. Essentially, I adopt of view of reality as a dynamic, multi-dimensional, open system where there is reciprocal influence between people and the social and physical environment. Such a wide array of influence can lead to an appearance – and sensation – of chaos. Keeping in mind the previously discussed dual goals of positive change and knowledge production I take a pragmatic position, choosing to “have sufficient faith in rationality to believe that analysis of a problem generally leads to a better decision” (Rivlin, 1970, p. 1). Such an assumption is pragmatic because by assuming a rational, rule bound reality which although dynamic is not random, the possibility of systematic inquiry, and active improvement, becomes viable (Sayer, 1992). I acknowledge certain challenges, specifically that the ability to observe this reality may be limited, while holding that a scientific (or at least systematic) approach can be useful guide leading to ‘successive approximations’ of the true situation even if a strictly scientific method is not viable (Sayer, 2000; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

With regard to the active construction of reality, I take the view that people’s accounts of their internal worlds contain reflections of an objective reality and an active process of reflection that influences that reality (Reason, 2001). So, for example, actions such as reflecting on processes of decision making in an interview are likely to do two things: provide information that is a reflection of the reality of the practice and at the same time shape how practice is understood and in fact undertaken (Schön, 1995). Essentially, if you are researching within a context you become part of the context and your activities, even the very act of observation, changes that context (Jason et al., 2003). The questions we ask shape participants reflections and thus constructions of their practice. Approaches to engaged scholarship acknowledge this and advocate careful consideration of how you are likely to impact the situation in which you are embedded, not in order to prevent such influence (which would be impossible) but to be strategic about its nature (Greenwood & Levin, 2007).

Essentially, the conceptualisation of the phenomena of interest in this study – as multi-dimensional, contextual, and constructed – aligns with the action research assertion that the

production and utilisation of contextually relevant knowledge through collaborative action in real-world situations is the most useful undertaking for social scientists (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). Furthermore, if 'reality' is understood as dynamic (as open systems are inclined to be) research should optimally be an ongoing process embedded within the system.

Methodological pluralism.

Within psychology and the social sciences more generally there are forceful debates over methodologies, and particularly between qualitative and quantitative research. Debates of methodology usually reflect underlying epistemological conflicts between variations of the orthodox science position outlined above and various relativist positions. In this thesis I take a position of 'methodological pluralism' which is a feature of community psychology (Barker & Pistrang, 2005). Essentially, such a position is the "converse of the belief that certain research methods are inherently more scientifically valid or respectable than others" (Barker & Pistrang, 2005, p. 202). As described in the above section, I take what could be seen as a critical realist position in holding that while there is an objective reality and successive approximations of this reality through active inquiry are possible. Furthermore, the field of social science is typically concerned with phenomena that are extremely complex, contextually situated and also actively constructed (Reason & Bradbury, 2008; Sayer, 2000). Two key implications for methodology arise out of these ontological assumptions and provide the rationale for the use of multiple methodologies. First, no single approach is sufficient to provide a complete account of any complex phenomena, thus multiple methods offer a form of triangulation allowing for successive approximations (Sayer, 1992). Second, certain questions and certain subjects will be better suited to particular types of methodology.

Given the critical realist position that no single method is sufficient to provide a complete account of the phenomena under study, and through the use of multiple methods, a more comprehensive account may be gained (McEvoy & Richards, 2006). In this sense multiple methods provide a form of triangulation (Van de Ven, 2007). The most typically discussed function of triangulation is that of invariant findings across methods or participants increasing validity through their convergence. However, it should be noted that a lack of convergence may also be a valid and interesting finding in terms of representing diverse understandings, values, and interests of stakeholders (Van de Ven, 2007).

In adopting a position of methodological pluralism, researchers are faced with the practical matter of when to use which methods. Sayer (1992) notes that “methods must be appropriate to the nature of the object we study and the purpose and expectations of our inquiry” (p.4). This is illustrated in Figure 6. Essentially choice of method must be compatible with both the object under study (and more specifically the assumptions about that object) and the purpose of the research. For example, within the current research the initial focus was on understanding current practice around exclusion. Questions related to this were diverse, relating to concrete measurable ‘objects’ (e.g., how many students are being excluded?) as well as more complex contextual and constructed ‘objects’ less available to objective measurement (e.g., how do people make decisions about exclusion?) It seems clear that such differences in question and object have implications for the choice of method.

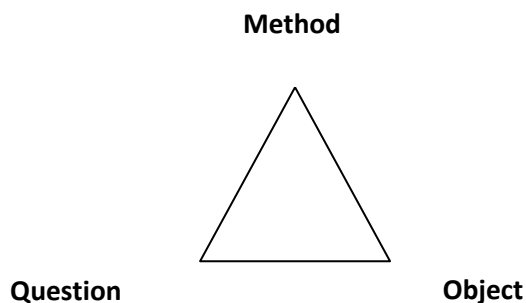


Figure 6: Reciprocal influence on choice of methods

Implications for assessing quality.

One challenge that arises in adopting a pluralist position is how to assess quality in research. Commonly cited criteria for quality research (e.g., replicable, predictive, generalisable) are directly derived from a positivist philosophy and the relevance of such criteria to different types of research has been a source of controversy (Cassell & Johnson, 2006). This has often been related to the debates between qualitative and quantitative research but is perhaps even more challenging in research that combines both quantitative methodologies (Bryman, 2006). There seem to be two different levels of criteria for quality in research. One involves the identification of very broad principles positioned as being relevant to all types of research. The other involves identifying principles that are relevant to specific types of studies. I will focus more on the former of these. Barker and Pistrang (2005) identify five generally relevant criteria: 1) the clear and explicit

description of conceptual background, context and purpose; 2) the use of methods appropriate to the research question, 3) the transparency of procedures, and 4) the ethical treatment of participants, and 5) the importance of the findings either theoretically or in application. Along similar lines Carter and Little (2007) emphasise internal consistency between method, methodology and epistemology as an alternative to developing a priori criteria.

Implications for research reporting.

A final point relates to the process – which I am engaged in now – of reporting research. This has links to the discussion above in that it is in the reports of research that quality is generally assessed, and indeed it is publication that remains the primary index of academic success. A key challenge for community psychology and engaged scholarship more generally has been that the language used in academic settings is, for the most part, reflective of an orthodox science perspective. Efforts to fit the emergent, messy, fluid and pluralistic nature of engaged scholarship into the precise language of orthodox science have led to what Hess (2005) terms a ‘language-practice gap’. This term refers to a “discrepancy between the ways in which we construct our work for publication and the ways in which we actually conduct it” (Trickett, 1996, p. 516). One key feature of engaged scholarship and action research that is particularly pertinent to this point is the emergent nature of research design. This is directly related to the need to be responsive to changes and newly available information within local settings. Although as Hess (2005) notes, it is “literally impossible to predict with certainty the best course to follow in community research or action ... community practitioners are, indeed, required to intervene in problems they do not fully comprehend” (p. 243). This inherent uncertainty requires a degree of flexibility in the design of community based research that is at odds with the language and reporting conventions of orthodox science.

As noted at the outset of this thesis I attempt to provide an authentic account of the research process and minimise the language-practice gap. This means that I do not follow a typical structure of outlining methods in detail and then presenting results instead describe cycles of research integrating questions, methods, and results. In addition, at times throughout the thesis I will re-examine particular assumptions, values, and relationships that influenced the decisions made.

Summary.

In the first part of this chapter I have described the methodological and epistemological framework that underlies this research. Much of this discussion can be summarised in terms of contrasting ideals related to the nature of knowledge, the purpose of research, and the process of research. I have attempted such a summary in Table 9.

Table 9: Summary of Contrasting Methodological Ideals

Contrasting Ideals	Relevant Questions	Response
Global : Local	Where should research focus? Is it possible to have global knowledge or only local?	While acknowledging the importance of globally valid knowledge, a pragmatic choice to focus at the local level was made. This choice reflects a recognition of the complexity and uniqueness of different social contexts and the implications this has in terms of the relevance and utility of globally focused research.
Knowledge : Utility	Is the purpose of research to generate knowledge? Or to generate useful solutions / responses to issues of importance?	Action research as a model for reconciling dual goals of producing knowledge and useful action.
Determined : Flexible	How do you balance the need for planned rigorous inquiry with the need to take into account the local context and changes in that context?	Responsiveness as a middle ground between rigid systematization and complete flexibility.
Objective : Subjective	Is knowledge and/or the practice of research ever objective? Should it be?	A recognition that pure objectivity is not possible in conjunction with the recognition that objective reality exists. Leading to a positioning of knowledge and practice such that research is seen as a process of successive approximations of objective reality. A researcher has the responsibility to make the research 'as objective as possible' while realising the relative nature of that endeavour.

I believe most researchers emphasise one or other side of each duality while also attempting to balance the interest of the other extreme. Where possible I have attempted to find some degree of pragmatic synthesis between these positions as described under the column 'response'. Having said this, it must be acknowledged that within this research my emphasis is on the side of local relevance, in line with the value of community service described above.

The development of the current research

This research, like all research, occurs within and is influenced by a wider context. I will begin this section by outlining in brief some of that context that existed prior to the formal start of the current research and then describe the process of building on this and developing a 'space' for the research to occur within.

Establishing a context for research.

During the lead up to the November 2008 election in New Zealand youth offending was a major issue. Significant debate and public interest focused on the National Party proposals for a programme they called 'Fresh Start' which was essentially a 'military style activity camp' with community based follow up (referred to as 'boot camp' in the media). Essentially this debate made visible the strong interest in effective solutions for young people most at risk, and the different ideas about what the most effective and appropriate approach to 'turning lives around'.

On a more personal level I had also had involvement with Project K and the FYD prior to the research that is relevant. I first heard of Project K through the autobiography 'Discovering the Sense in Adventure' of one of its founders (Dingle, 2005). After reading this book I decided to volunteer as a mentor for Project K. It was during my training for this role that I first became aware of the exclusion of young people with certain risk behaviours. This was something that I found concerning and continued to think about through my year as a mentor in the programme. Shortly after this, I decided to enter a social entrepreneurship competition run by the University of Auckland called Spark (see www.spark.auckland.ac.nz) with a project centred on developing a new programme for young people currently excluded. In the course of this I had the opportunity to meet with the founders of Project K and learned that they too were concerned about the issue of exclusion. At the time I was just completing my dissertation for my BA(Hons) at the University of Auckland and planning to continue with the Doctorate in Clinical Psychology which requires a research project. It was at this point that I decided to investigate the possibility of focusing on the issue of exclusion in Project K in my doctoral research.

Another critical component in the 'landscape' that this research occurred within was the existing university-community partnership between the Foundation for Youth Development and Associate Professor Niki Harré at the University of Auckland mentioned in Chapter 1. This existing relationship made the project a feasible undertaking without which it seems unlikely it would have

continued. So with the support of both the FYD and Associate Professor Niki Harré the project was officially underway in March 2008.

A key task in the early stages of the research was to establish a way of working with the FYD and with Project K. In particular, paths for communication and ways to negotiate and manage the direction the research should take. This process is characteristically messy but I shall attempt some description of it. In the early phase of the research the assumed direction was building on the idea being the Spark project: developing a programme for young people excluded from Project K. In line with this and following discussions with various staff and FYD and in Project K a 'programme development team' was formed to collaborate in developing such a programme. The programme development team involved staff from FYD and Project K in the Auckland region and met once a month over five months. At this point there was a redirection in terms of the 'programme' focus of the research derived from the Spark project and a decision to focus more generally on considering how the issue of exclusion could be most effectively and feasibly addressed (discussed in Chapter 6). At this point the main point of contact and communication shifted from the specifically formed programme and development team to working in with existing monthly research and evaluation meetings.

Key areas of enquiry.

As described above, action research is an emergent approach and much of its strength lies in its situational responsivity and flexibility. Thus the research design 'evolved' rather than being set at the beginning. However, two key phases were planned and remained as a guiding framework: first, understanding the issue by examining current practice, and then considering how the issue of exclusion might be addressed. The specific avenues and methods of inquiry were emergent as new information became available and also as new questions became pertinent, this is described in the following chapters. In general, cycles of planning, action and reflection were undertaken within each phase and the procedure was modified if planned actions were not effectively meeting the aims of each phase (or new aims that arose during the process). The second phase of the research was particularly influenced by changes in the way exclusion was understood which will be outlined in detail in later chapters. Overarching areas of enquiry and key objectives within these are described below. Ethical approval for this research was gained from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (reference number 2008/088).

Phase 1: Understanding the issue and the context.

The first part of this phase focused on accessing existing information about exclusion including the number of students excluded, the reasons cited for their exclusion and the gender and ethnicity of excluded students compared to Project K students and the school as a whole. The questions that underlie this component of the research fit relatively easily into an objective style of enquiry. Essentially, this information provided a solid platform for myself and the organisation to begin to systematically engage with the complex issue of exclusion in Project K.

The second part of this phase focused on understanding current practice around exclusion and different perspectives on the process of and rationale behind exclusion. Qualitative methods (which will be detailed in the chapters that follow) were employed to complement and add a richness of explanation to the quantitative data gathered in the previous phase. A secondary aspect of phase one was building the collaborative research-participant relationship. It is also of note that in many ways even at this early point in the research, the goal of change and ultimately improving the processes around exclusion were explicit and shared. Thus, the gathering of data is not a passive approach but one that actively engaged participants in reflecting on their practice and quite possibly changing this practice as a result of their participation.

Phase 2: Develop options for change.

This phase of the research represents a shift toward more action focused inquiry. There were three components to this phase: expert interviews, disseminating of information and building awareness, and developing options for change and transferring control and ownership through a collaborative workshop process. The first component of this phase involved interviews with experts experienced in working with at risk adolescents in New Zealand in order to incorporate local knowledge regarding effective practice. This reflects the FYD's commitment to continuous improvement and striving to operate inline with best practice. Essentially this part of the research formed the basis for a conversation around identifying options for action that characterised the third component of this phase. Before this, it was necessary to disseminate findings from Phase 1 in order to build awareness and knowledge around exclusion within the FYD and Project K. This was a major part of my brief as a researcher coming into the organisation. Intertwined with this process of building awareness and shifting attention to the issue of selection and exclusion within the Project K programme was the task of identifying options for change. A collaborative approach to this was

particularly emphasised given the issues of the gap between research recommendations and the practicalities of what can and is implemented in practice that are discussed earlier in the chapter. Another key part of the latter stages of the second phase of the research was around transferring ownership and active control over the research process. Effectively stepping back within the collaborative partnership with the goal of increasing FYD's ongoing engagement with the issues raised by the research after my formal involvement was finished.

Chapter 4: Understanding Exclusion

Following the initial processes of developing a structure and direction for working with FYD outlined in Chapter 3 this phase of the research focused on gathering information about the issue of exclusion in order to generate a richer conceptualisation and understanding of the issue. The fact that excluded students were, by definition, outside the target population of Project K meant that they were not the direct focus of any person within the FYD or Project K. At the same time the FYD had been concerned by the issue of exclusion for some time, particularly given that the founders of the Project K programme had had a long standing interest in supporting at risk youth. Despite a level of concern around exclusion, and some interest in the original idea of creating a programme for excluded youth, concrete information on the issue was lacking. As such, gathering basic information about exclusion (e.g., establishing how many students were being excluded) was essential to guide any changes to how exclusion was practiced or how the needs of excluded youth could be met. The current research focused on the Auckland region primarily for convenience. The geographic proximity to the university, the FYD, and the schools where the programmes ran; the high concentration of programmes within the Auckland region; and the diversity of the socio-economic and cultural contexts of the programmes in this region was seen as desirable both in terms of feasibility and providing enough variation to construct a detailed picture of how exclusion worked in a variety of contexts within this single geographic region. Two main sources of data were used in this phase of the research and will be presented in this chapter. First, quantitative information obtained from the Project K national service office (NSO) database and programme directors records provided a profile of exclusion and excluded students in the Auckland region. Second, qualitative information, including interviews with key stakeholders (e.g., Project K and FYD staff, school staff involved in selection), observation of selection meetings and official documentation provided information on understandings of exclusion and the actually occurring process of the liaison team exclusion meetings.

Quantitative Perspective

Quantitative data was sourced from the NSO database and records from the liaison team exclusion meeting held by Programme Directors.

Project K national service office database.

The NSO database holds information related to the evaluation of Project K (outlined in chapter 1), information used in the current research came from the initial screening process that is conducted with all available year 10 students in Project K schools. This process involves a self efficacy survey (described further below) which also includes demographic questions related to ethnicity and gender. In addition to this survey the initial screening also involves two proxy reports of students' self efficacy gained via teacher ratings.

Programme director's records.

Reasons for exclusion identified by the liaison team based on the exclusion criteria listed in Chapter 1 Table 1 are recorded on forms 'E12a' and 'E12b' (see Appendix A). These forms record the identification number of the student – which can then be linked to the information held in the database – and the reason/s for exclusion. Ideally programme directors send these forms to the NSO following the liaison team exclusion meeting. However, on investigation it was found that in some cases forms were missing from the NSO files. In such instances programme directors had to be contacted and asked to send the forms to NSO. Programme directors were also asked to check records regarding the number of students invited to the information evening. Different numbers of students are invited to an information evening as possible Project K participants for two reasons. First, if the programme is being evaluated a greater number of potential participants is needed as a control group also needs to be selected. Second, greater or lesser numbers will be considered depending on the perceived popularity of the programme and the historical rate of uptake of offered places within the particular school. This information was important to consider in making comparisons on the number of students excluded across programmes and was available for all but one programme. This programme was excluded from analyses that included this variable.

Variables.

Essentially there were two levels of variables investigated: programme level variables (N excluded, N invited, evaluated / not evaluated, programme region, year, and school decile) and student level variables (self efficacy data, ethnicity, gender, student type, and reason for exclusion). These are listed and described in Table 10.

Table 10: Description of variables

Level	Variable	Source	Description	Relevant issues
Programme level variables	Year	NSO database	The year in which the Project k programme began.	
	Region	NSO database	The region in which the project K programme ran.	
	School decile	Ministry of education – publicly available information	Decile is a measure (1-10 with 1 being the lowest) of the socio-economic status of the students attending the school (see Ministry of Education, 2008).	There were no changes in decile rating in any of the schools included in this analysis during the relevant period.
	Evaluated	NSO database	Whether or not the programme was evaluated.	
	N excluded	Programme directors records	The number of students who were excluded from the project K programme.	
	N invited	Programme director's records	The number of students who were invited to the information evening.	Not available for one programme, which was excluded from analyses involving this variable.
	N considered	Sum of N invited and N excluded (NSO database)	The number of students who were considered for selection (N excluded + N invited = N considered).	Note that students invited to the information evening but do not choose to participate can not be identified in the database.
Student level variables	Self efficacy	NSO database	Three domains (academic, social and help seeking).	Measure described below.
	Gender	NSO database	Male / Female	
	Ethnicity	NSO database	As measured by the self efficacy questionnaire (see text for further detail).	Ethnicity was recoded into 6 key groups using a trumping system as detailed in the text.
	Student type	NSO database and programme directors records	Excluded, Project K / Control (combined) and 'Other'.	Excluded students are not identified in the database, there were 3 instances of student ID numbers identified by E12a/E12b form that could not be located in the database. As such these students could not be included in analyses that required information from the database.
	Reason for exclusion	Programme directors records (E12a/E12b forms)	Criteria cited by the liaison exclusion team	Multiple criteria were cited for several students, as no reason is indicated as being primary, in such cases both categorizations were included.

Self efficacy survey.

A description of the self efficacy survey used in selection including its reliability and validity was provided in Chapter 1. Self-efficacy and teacher report scores for the programmes involved in the research were extracted from the NSO database. Instead of using the method Project K utilises to make the ordered list used in selection (converting the nine self efficacy and teacher report scores into a 0-9 score based on whether each score is above or below the median - as described in Chapter 1) the nine raw score were summed to give a total self efficacy score. The method used in Project K selection was not used as it effectively reduces some of the variance in the scores, and while this is in line with Project K's aim of targeting a group that who are consistently below average on self efficacy but not necessarily at the extreme bottom of the distribution, retaining the extra variance was seen as desirable in the research context.

Description of the sample.

Twenty four programmes were included in the analysis (see Table 11). This constitutes 86% of the programmes that ran over the 2006-2009 period in the relevant area. Data for four programmes was missing from the database and programme director records for these programmes were inaccessible due to staff changes. For these 24 programmes the E12a/E12b forms showed 216 students were excluded from selection to Project K, however only 211 of these could be found in the database. Including these 211, the database had information on 5323 students from these programmes: 283 Project K students, 143 control students, and 4693 'others'. The others group is predominantly students who completed the survey and were not identified as having low scores but also includes a small number of students who were highlighted by the survey and subsequently invited to the information evening but, either: did not attend, attended but did not put themselves forward for participation, or attended and put themselves forward but were not allocated to Project K or control groups.

Table 11: Deciles of Programmes Included in the Analysis

Region	Decile ¹ of included 2006 Programmes	Decile of included 2007 Programmes	Decile of included 2008 Programmes
North Shore	6	6	6
	9	9	9
	10	10	10
	10	10	10
	10	10	10
	8	8	8
Manukau		2	2
		1	1
Central Auckland			7
			3

¹Decile is a measure (used by the New Zealand Ministry of Education to determine funding levels) of the socio-economic status of the population attending the school see table 10 for further description.

Overview of procedure.

There were four main components to the quantitative analysis that will be detailed below. First, descriptive statistics related to the number of students per programme were calculated in order to compare programmes in terms of the frequency with which students were being excluded. Second, based on the variation in the number of students being excluded per programme found in the first step of the analysis, a regression examining variables that might account for differences in the number of students excluded across programmes was conducted. Third, chi square analyses examining the relationships between a) student type and ethnicity, b) student type and gender, and c) ethnicity and reason for exclusion were conducted. Finally a factorial analysis of variance examining the effects of student type, ethnicity and gender on self efficacy scores was conducted.

How many students are being excluded?

Analysis began by examining descriptive statistics related to the number of students excluded per programme. The available data showed that there was an extremely wide range (0 – 33) in the number of students excluded per programme (see Figure 7).

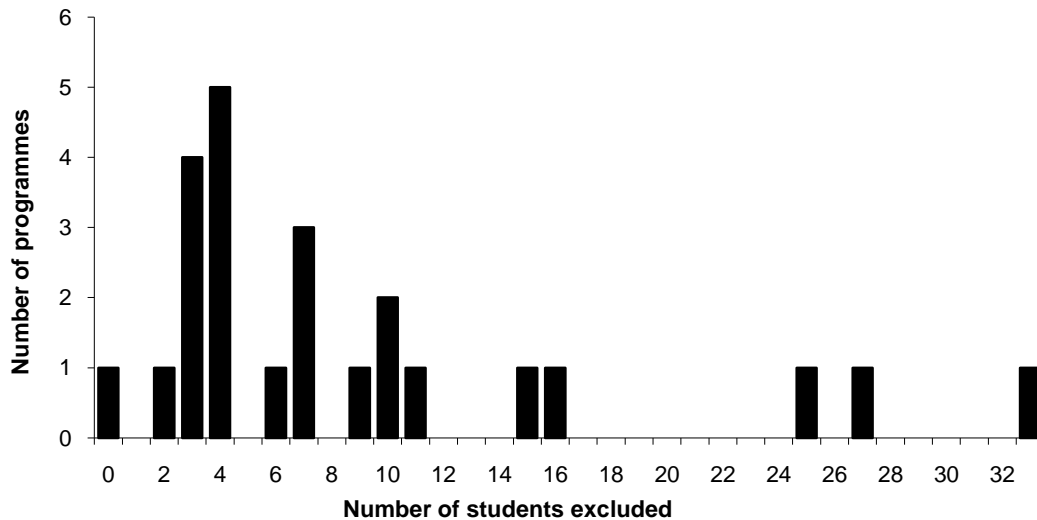


Figure 7: Distribution of values for N excluded

The mean number of students excluded per programme was 9 (SD= 8.52). However, this number is unduly affected by several outliers in the distribution. The median number of excluded students per programme was 6.25 and is perhaps more representative of a typical programme in this case.

Understanding variability in number of students excluded.

The outliers in the distribution shown in Figure 7 (values 25, 27 and 33) raise the question of why the number of exclusions is considerably higher in some programmes than in others. The three highest values were not from one specific school, area or year. Several possible explanations for these higher values were examined. Programmes consider different numbers of students for selection, so it may be that the proportion of students excluded is consistent because these programmes considered greater numbers of students for selection. There are two reasons higher numbers of students may be considered: 1) if the uptake of offered places is lower, higher numbers of potential participants are needed – programme directors report that uptake was usually lower in evaluated programmes and in low decile schools; 2) if programmes are evaluated a control group must also be selected and thus more students must be considered. The possibility that the wide range in the number of students excluded is accounted for by some programmes considering higher

numbers of potential participants was investigated by considering the percentage of considered students that were excluded.

The sum of students invited and students excluded will be referred to as students considered. Figure 8 shows the percentage of considered students who were excluded. As noted above the values for the number of students considered are not available from the Project K database so were obtained directly from programme directors. Such information was not available for one 2008 programme (a decile 3 school in central Auckland) so the analyses involving the percentage of considered students who are excluded do not include this programme.

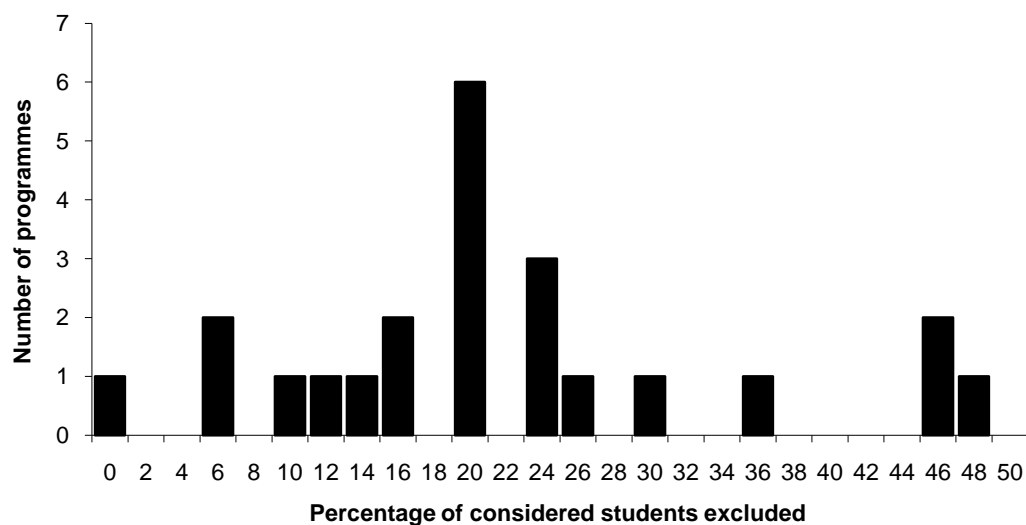


Figure 8: Percentage of Considered Students Who Were Excluded

Figure 8 shows that there were a higher percentage of excluded students in three programmes. On inspection it was found that these were the same programmes that showed higher raw numbers in Figure 7. This suggests that the difference in numbers of excluded students is not solely accounted for by differences in the number of students considered for selection. To further test this hypothesis the relationship between the number of students invited and the number excluded was investigated using regression analysis. Figure 9 shows the number of students excluded as a function of the number of students invited. 'Invited' refers to the number of students invited to the information evening for a particular programme. It is logical to look at the relationship between the number of students excluded and the number of students invited because these variables are independent - the number of students to be invited is a target set before the meeting takes place. Unlike the total number of students considered, which is partially dependant

on the number of exclusions that are made. If decisions about exclusion are made on a consistent set of criteria, it would be reasonable to hypothesise that the number of students invited would be a significant predictor of the number of students excluded. Linear regression was used to test this hypothesis. The model did not fit the data ($R^2=.06$, $r = .238$, $F(22)=1.26$, $p=.27$), thus the number of students considered was not a significant predictor of the number of students excluded.

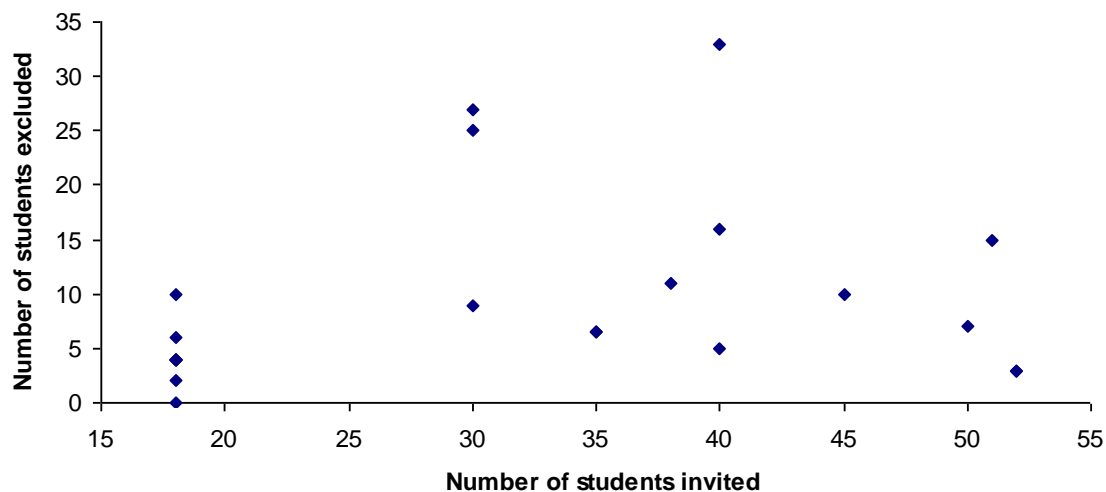


Figure 9: Number of students excluded from consideration as a function of the number of students invited to the information evening.

The fact that the number of students invited is not a significant predictor of the number of students excluded suggests that some other variable contributes to the wide range in the number of students excluded per programme. One possibility is that there is a real difference in the number of students who meet exclusion criteria in the year 10 of the years/schools that have higher rates of exclusion. Given the relative stability over time of these traits within the population fluctuations of the magnitude seen here seem unlikely. However, it should be noted that research implicates neighbourhood, school and peer group characteristics in the aetiology of some of the behaviours identified by the exclusion criteria. Thus it is possible that some contextual variable could be responsible for considerable increases in the incidence of risk behaviours identified by the exclusion criteria. The data currently available does not allow for a complete analysis of the influence of peer, school or neighbourhood characteristics. However, one rudimentary avenue of investigation is available through considering the relationship between school decile and exclusion. School decile is

an indicator of the socio-economic level of the community in which the school is situated. While socio-economic status is clearly not a direct indicator of risk behaviour, it is linked (directly or otherwise) with moderate learning and behavioural difficulties (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002). Thus it would be expected that there would be higher numbers of students excluded in lower decile schools.

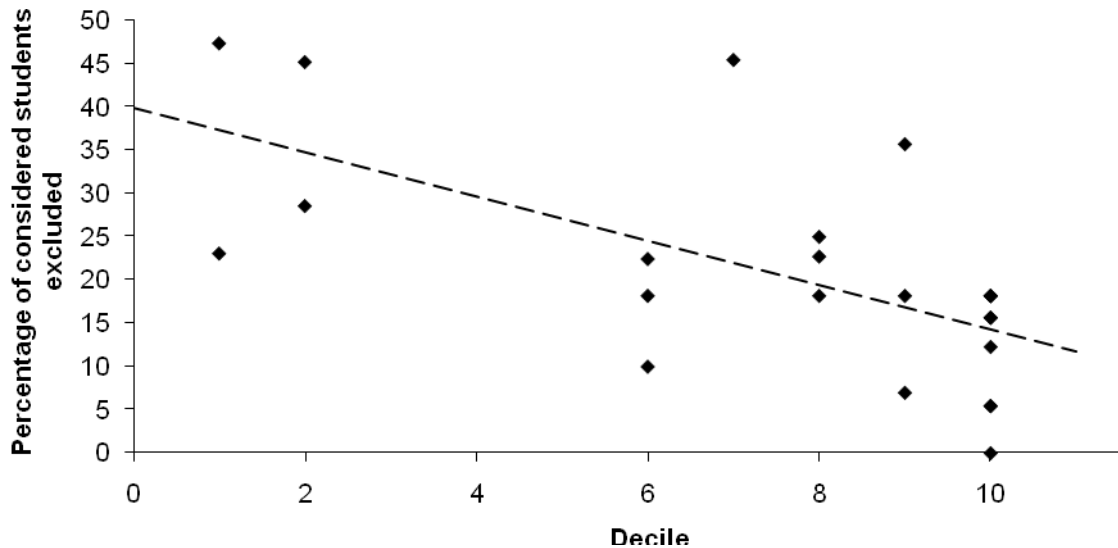


Figure 10: Percentage of considered students who were excluded as a function of school decile.

Linear regression was used to test whether the percentage of considered students who are excluded is predicted by school decile. The model fitted the data ($\beta = -2.544$, $t(22) = 3.7313$, $p = .001$). Decile accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in the percentage of students excluded ($R^2 = .40$, $F(22) = 3.73$, $p = .001$). It should be noted that real differences in the incidence of the behaviours identified by the exclusion criteria is only one possible explanation for the relationship between decile and percentage of students excluded, such a relationship might, for example, be due to differences in the way the process is conducted within low decile schools.

The above analysis raises the question of whether variation in the percentage of considered students who are excluded is due to real differences in the incidence of the behaviours/problems identified by the exclusion criteria. However, it is notable that there are considerable changes in a single region across time. For example, one programme excluded over 45% of considered students in 2007, but only 25% in 2008; there was no change in decile over this time. Despite this, it is

possible that real differences in the incidence of risk behaviours occurred and contributed to the fluctuation in rate of exclusion. For example, if rapid and geographically specific changes in organisational, neighbourhood or peer characteristics occurred (e.g., active gang recruiting). These possibilities cannot be objectively examined with the available data.

Qualitative data (presented below) suggests that there is significant variability in terms of the process by which selection is undertaken. Although some guidelines are established, there is a significant degree of judgement and interpretation required in making decisions regarding selection for Project K. In the case of the programme that drastically changed the proportion excluded, it is of note that all 27 exclusions in the high exclusion programme were made on the basis of guidance counsellor recommendation. As outlined earlier, this criterion is only meant to be applied when the student meets one of the other criteria and the guidance counsellor is aware of this but cannot reveal the information due to confidentiality. Thus it appears that there is some variability in the way the criteria are applied across programmes. And it is likely variation in the process of selection/exclusion is also a significant cause of variability in the rate of exclusion.

Reasons for exclusion: which criteria are cited most?

Another aspect of exclusion which was investigated related to the criteria cited for exclusion. Table 12 shows the number and the percentage of students from the 24 programmes included in the analysis that were excluded under each criterion. The data presented here includes multiple reasons cited for a single students, thus while the number of students excluded was only 216, there are 232 cited criteria.

Table 12: Number and percentage of students excluded under each criteria.

Exclusion Criteria Cited	N	%
1 Violent behaviour	55	25%
2 Substance abuse (alcohol, solvents or drugs)	33	15%
3 Suicide attempts	2	1%
4 Regular counselling for serious problems	26	12%
5 Severe cognitive or learning difficulties	50	23%
6 Student excluded on recommendation of Guidance Counsellor	66	31%

For the available data guidance counsellor recommendation was the most frequently cited criteria, followed by violent behaviour and cognitive and learning difficulties. Serious suicide attempts were the least common reason for exclusion with only 2 exclusions under this criterion for all 24

programmes. Table 13 and Table 14 show the number and percentage of students excluded under each criteria split by gender. There were considerably more males excluded (N=140) than females excluded (N=76) excluded.

Table 13: Number and percentage of male students excluded under each criteria.

Exclusion Criteria Cited	N	%
Violent behaviour	41	39%
Substance abuse (alcohol, solvents or drugs)	20	14%
Suicide attempts	0	0%
Regular counselling for serious problems	12	9%
Severe cognitive or learning difficulties	32	23%
Student excluded on recommendation of Guidance Counsellor	41	29%

Table 14: Number and percentage of female students excluded under each criteria.

Exclusion Criteria Cited	N	%
Violent behaviour	11	14%
Substance abuse (alcohol, solvents or drugs)	13	17%
Suicide attempts	2	3%
Regular counselling for serious problems	14	18%
Severe cognitive or learning difficulties	18	24%
Student excluded on recommendation of Guidance Counsellor	25	33%

Chi-squared tests of independence were used to examine the relationship between gender and being excluded for particular criteria. Exclusion criteria were recoded in binary form (e.g., 0 = excluded for violent behaviour, 1 = not excluded for violent behaviour). A significant relationship was observed between gender and being excluded for violent behaviour ($\chi^2(1) = 4.316, p=.038$). Males were more likely to be excluded for violence than females. The relationship between gender and being excluded for being in regular counselling for serious problems was also significant ($\chi^2(1)=4.513, p=.034$). Females were more likely to be excluded for being in regular counselling for serious problems than males. No other significant relationships were found. It should be noted that the relation between being excluded for suicide and gender could not be reliably tested given the small number of exclusions for this reason.

Ethnicity

Information on the ethnicity of excluded students is available through the self report information gained in the self efficacy survey. The instruction to students is, “Please tick the circle for the ethnic group(s) you belong to. You may tick more than one.” There are 15 options offered, these are listed along with the number and percentage of students endorsing each option in Table 15.

Table 15: Number and percentage of students endorsing each ethnic group

Ethnicity	N	%
NZ Maori	42	19.4
NZ European/Pakeha	60	27.8
Tokelauan	0	0
Other European	4	1.9
Fijian	7	3.2
South-East Asian	2	0.9
Niuean	4	1.9
Indian	4	1.9
Tongan	20	9.2
Chinese	10	4.6
Cook Islands Maori	18	8.3
Other Asian (e.g., Japanese, Korean)	13	6.0
Samoan	23	10.6
Other (e.g., African, South American)	6	2.7
Other Pacific Islands	2	0.9
Not stated	1	0.5

Table 15 includes multiple ethnic identifications for individual students. The available information does not specify which, if any, endorsed option students viewed as their primary or dominant identity. In order to more easily view the data and increase the size of each group in order to make comparisons the 15 options below were collapsed into six categories: Maori, Pacific Island, Asian, New Zealand European, Other and Unknown. In cases where multiple options were endorsed, priority was given in the order listed above. Thus if a person endorsed ‘Maori’ on the question, they were categorised as Maori regardless of whether they also endorsed other options. If they identified as Pacific Island, they would be classified as Pacific Island except in the instance that they also identified as Maori. While this method loses significant information in terms of responses that identify more than one category as well as the more specific categories in the

original response, it enabled analysis with the available sample size. The method of prioritising certain groups was employed to give precedence to Maori as the indigenous peoples and other minorities known to be disadvantaged in New Zealand society.

Relationship between ethnicity and exclusion.

Chi square tests of independence were used to examine the relationship between ethnicity and student type. A significant relationship between student type and ethnicity was found ($\chi^2(8) = 147.6, p < .001$). In order to examine the differences between specific ethnic groups standardised residuals (z) were calculated; because standardised residuals are a normally distributed variable values of > 1.96 correspond to a significance level of $p < .05$ (Sheskin, 2004). By this method it was found that excluded students were significantly more likely to be Maori ($z = 4.8$) or Pacific ($z = 5.8$) and significantly less likely to be Asian ($z = -2.1$), NZE ($z = -3.5$) or 'other' ($z = -2.8$). Project K/Control students were significantly more likely to be Maori ($z = 3.6$) or NZE ($z = 2.6$) and less likely to be Asian ($z = -5.9$). Figure 11 shows the ethnic makeup of Project K/Control, Excluded and Other groups. Table 16 shows the difference between with observed and expected counts as a percentage. For example, the value of 11.93% in the cell corresponding to 'Excluded' and 'Maori' means 11.93% more Maori were excluded than would be expected given the size of this group. Significant differences (where $z > 1.96$) are indicated.

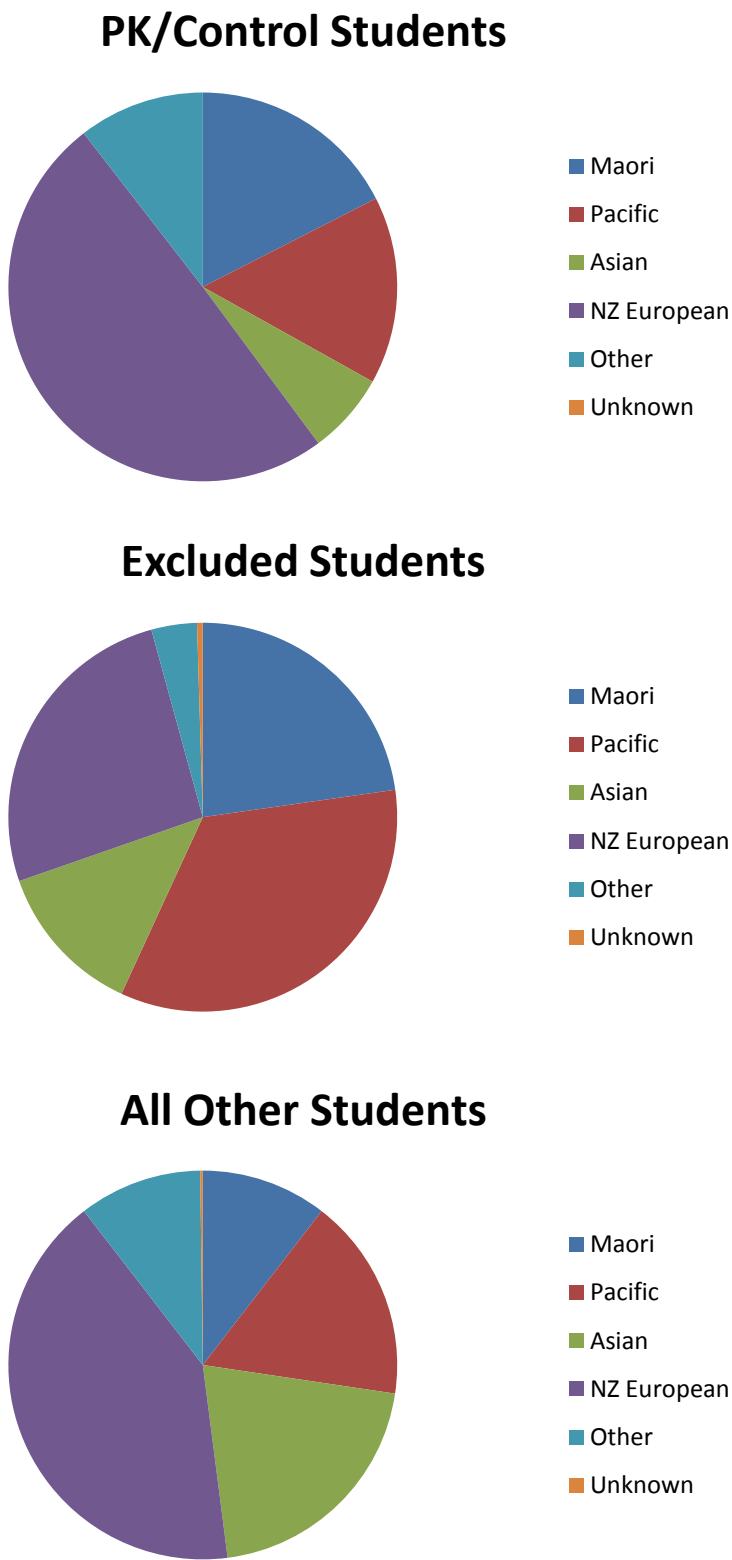


Figure 11: Project K/Control student's, Excluded student's, and all 'other' student's ethnic identity.

Table 16: Difference between actual percentage excluded and expected percentage excluded.

Student type	Maori	Pacific	Asian	NZE
Other	-1.05%*	-0.58%*	1.43%	-0.03%
PK / Control	5.94%*	-1.89%*	-12.47%*	7.95%
Excluded	11.33%*	16.76%*	-6.38%*	-15.52%*

* Standardised residuals of >1.96

Differences in criteria cited for exclusion across ethnicity.

The relationship between ethnicity and the criteria cited for exclusion was also investigated. Table 17 shows the frequency with which each criteria was cited for the six ethnic groups used in analysis. Chi square tests of independence were used to investigate the relationship between ethnicity and reason for exclusion. Pacific island students were significantly more likely to be excluded due to guidance counsellor recommendation ($\chi^2 (1) = 4.395, p = .036$). Maori students more likely to be excluded for substance abuse ($\chi^2 (1) = 7.611, p = .006$). And New Zealand European students were more likely to be excluded for being in regular counselling for serious problems ($\chi^2 (1) = 4.419, p = .036$). While no other relationships were found to be significantly different from independence, it should be noted that some relationships could not be reliably tested due to the smaller number students involved.

Table 17: Number of students excluded under each criteria and endorsed ethnicity/culture

	Maori	Pacific	Asian	NZ Euro	Other	Unknown	TOTAL
Violent	9	23	8	13	2	0	55
Substance	13	9	4	7	0	0	33
Suicide	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Counselling	8	2	1	14	4	0	29
Cognitive learning	10	12	10	11	3	1	47
GC recommendation	12	30	8	15	1	0	66
TOTAL	52	76	31	62	10	1	232*

* Includes multiple criteria for individual students where more than one criteria is cited

Self efficacy of excluded students.

A factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) examining the effects of student type, ethnicity and gender on self efficacy scores was conducted. The analysis comprised a 4×3×2 between subjects design with the independent variables being ethnicity (Maori/Pacific/Asian/NZE), student type

(Other/PK-Control/Excluded) and gender (Male/Female) and the dependent variable being self efficacy score.

Data screening examining the distribution and variance in the data set was undertaken. The 'other' ethnicity group was excluded from this analysis due to insufficient sample size. Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests (with Lilliefors significance correction) were used to check for violations of the assumption of normality. This showed that the distribution of self efficacy was normal in both male and female subsets of the sample, as well as across student type and for each ethnic group with the exception of Maori. Self efficacy scores for the ethnic group Maori were significantly non-normally distributed based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests ($k=0.34$, $df=509$, $p=.20$). However, visual inspection of the histogram showed only a minor positive skew and given that at large sample sizes ANOVA is relatively robust against violations of this assumption due to the central limit theorem this was deemed acceptable. A Levene's test was undertaken in order to check homogeneity of variance across groups. While there was some difference in the variances, given that the largest variance was less than four times the smallest this was deemed acceptable.

Significant main effects were found for all variables (see Table 18). The main effect for gender was significant, showing that males had slightly but significantly lower total self efficacy scores than females. The main effect for ethnicity was also significant, post hoc comparisons (using a Bonferroni correction) showed that Maori had lower self efficacy than all other groups at a significance level of $p=.05$. The main effect for student type was significant. Post hoc comparisons (using a Bonferroni correction) showed Project K / Control and excluded students had significantly lower self efficacy than other students tested in the initial survey at a significance level of $p<.05$. This suggests that the Project K selection process is effectively targeting students with low self efficacy scores. The fact that there is no significant difference between PK and excluded students also suggests that excluded students are not simply those with the lowest self efficacy scores. Finally, there was a significant interaction between ethnicity and student type ($F(8,4517)=3.885$, $p<.001$). Post hoc analyses showed that Maori in the 'other' group had significantly lower self efficacy than students of other ethnicities, however this difference was not found in the PK/Control group or in the excluded group.

Table 18: Main effects of the ANOVA examining the relationship between student type, ethnicity, gender and self efficacy.

Variable	Levels	Self Efficacy		Main effects		
		Mean	SD	F	df	p
Student type	Other	109.49	17.00	241.02	(2,4071)	>.001
	PK/Control	86.02	16.15			
	Excluded	85.32	18.62			
Ethnicity	Maori	101.63	18.49	3.19	(3,4071)	.023
	Pacific	106.56	19.05			
	Asian	107.60	17.57			
	NZE	107.63	19.19			
Gender	Male	104.12	18.77	14.25	(1,4071)	>.001
	Female	109.89	18.69			

Summary of quantitative perspective on understanding exclusion.

By examining existing quantitative data a considerably more detailed picture of exclusion was constructed. A key finding was the considerable variability in the number of students excluded from Project K in different programmes. This is probably at least partly due to differences in way decisions about exclusion are made. In most cases the number of students being excluded is between 3 and 16, with more males than females excluded. Students are excluded for a broad variety of reasons, in order of frequency these are GC recommendation, violence, cognitive and learning difficulties, substance abuse, regular counselling and suicide attempts. There are differences in the reason for exclusion based on gender. Males are more likely to be excluded for violence while females are more likely to be excluded for being in regular counselling for serious problems. With regards to self efficacy, excluded students self efficacy is not significantly lower than PK/controls but both of these groups have lower self efficacy than the remainder of the school. Maori students have lower self efficacy than other groups, and both Maori and Pacific students are more likely to be excluded. There is also a relationship between ethnicity and reason for exclusion, with Maori students being more likely to be excluded for substance abuse, Pacific students being more likely to be excluded base on GC recommendation, and less likely to be excluded for being in regular counselling for serious problems, and finally New Zealand European students are more likely to be excluded for being in regular counselling for serious problems.

These findings had a variety of implications on the process of the research moving forward which are discussed further at the conclusion of this chapter. However, one key issue that was raised by the quantitative findings that impacted the focus of the following qualitative investigation was the possibility that differences in the way decisions are made accounts for the variability in the number of students' being excluded. Based on this finding, the process and thinking behind decisions was emphasised and explored further in the following qualitative section of this thesis.

Qualitative Perspective

This section takes a qualitative perspective on understanding exclusion in the Project K programme. Data from a variety of sources is utilised including interviews, observation, and sections of the Project K programme manual relevant to selection and exclusion. This triangulation of multiple sources focused on the same geographical area targeted in the quantitative exploration detailed above enabled a richer and more balanced conceptualization of the issue of exclusion and its functioning within these programmes. This section will begin with a detailed description of the process involved in exclusion based on the official guidelines regarding the exclusion process outlined in the Project K evaluation manual and observation of two separate liaison exclusion meetings. Particular emphasis is given to areas of divergence between these two sources of information. Following this, the process of undertaking semi-structured interviews with FYD, Project K and school staff involved in exclusion is described and results from a thematic analysis of these interviews are presented.

The process of 'liaison team selection meetings'.

The 'liaison team selection meeting' is the key setting in which decisions about exclusion are made. Chapter 1 provided an overview of the selection process, the current section focuses more closely on the liaison team selection meeting which occurs subsequent to other aspects of the selection process including the self-efficacy survey and production of a ranked list based on this survey (see figure 1, Chapter 1 for an overview of the selection process). Two liaison team selection meetings facilitated by different programme directors were observed and the guidelines regarding these meetings were reviewed. What follows is a detailed description of the process at these meetings.

Observation of selection meetings was non-participatory, overt, and unstructured (O’Leary, 2005). Notes were taken during observation, these focused on the participants, setting, and process of the meeting, a separate column was used to record impressions or interpretations of what was happening. These notes were not included in the formal data analysis as the purpose of the observation was to supplement my understanding exclusion prior to undertaking interviews of how the process described in the evaluation manual was being translated into practice.

At the meeting the ranked list of students is considered in terms of whether or not the particular student meets any of the official exclusion criteria. Exactly who is involved in the liaison team is decided by the school and programme directors on an individual basis. School staff potentially involved in the liaison team and selection meetings include guidance counsellors, senior school staff (e.g., deputy principal, year group deans – whose role is to oversee the year group and provide the first point of contact for parents should they have concerns about their child’s wellbeing or schooling) and teachers (identified liaison teacher or otherwise) involved or interested in Project K. There is considerable variation in the number of people present at selection meeting. One programme director reported a selection meeting involving only the PD a member of guidance and a senior member of staff. Programme directors emphasized the importance of guidance staff as offering a valuable perspective in selection meetings, however, in one observed meeting no guidance staff were available and the selection team included three senior staff members (two ‘year 10’ deans and the ‘year 9’ dean). In the other observed selection meeting there were four school staff involved including two guidance, the year 10 dean, and the Project K liaison teacher, the meeting was also attended by the Project K mentor coordinator and input from a senior staff member had been provided to the programme director prior to the meeting. At both observed selection meetings one or more staff members who had planned to be there were unable to attend – either due to prior commitments or in one case the designated guidance counsellor was in an unplanned session with a student in crisis.

Observed selection meetings took place at the school during a lunch break. This meant that there was a clear limit of at most an hour for the meeting to take place. The limited time was one important contextual factor that posed a challenge to making valid and reliable decisions about exclusion and is discussed further below.

While not mentioned in the guidelines an important feature of observed selection meetings was programme directors opening introduction and explanation of the purpose and process of the

meeting. In observed meetings programme directors described the purpose of the meeting as making sure they had selected 'the right students' and noted that exclusion could be based only on the specified criteria and that to be relevant issues must be recent or active. Essentially, programme directors introduction and explanation were the main form of instruction available to staff involved in the selection meetings, however, these introductions were very brief and unsurprisingly somewhat different at each meeting given the lack of guidelines for how exclusion should be discussed in the procedures officially outline in the evaluation manual.

Both the official guidelines and the observed process including programme directors introduction mentioned above emphasized that exclusion decisions must be based on the specified exclusion criteria. Although other information was raised in observed selection meetings issues not related to the exclusion criteria were not used as a basis for exclusion in observed meetings. Conversely, it must be noted that there is a significant subjective component in deciding what constitutes 'meeting the criteria' which is something that is expanded on based on interview data presented below.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the selection meetings that were observed was the brevity of the whole process. Decisions to include or exclude in observed selection meetings were made promptly with often little more than a 'yes' or 'not known to guidance' or in the case of exclusions 'he / she would be out on x criteria'. This is perhaps in part related to the fact that the time available is limited by the school lunch hour.

Another point made clear during observation relates to the way in which the process by which decisions are made is impacted by how many students need to be and have been identified. As noted previously, programmes identify different numbers of potential participants depending on the uptake of offered places and whether the programme is being evaluated. The number of students that need to be identified has an impact on the process of selection simply in terms of the time available for discussion. However, regardless of the number of students being selected there comes a point in the process where there are more students with equal self efficacy rankings than there are potential places. This is because as there are only 10 possible scores (0-9) there are many students with equal scores. So for example, if a team is looking to select 14 males and 14 females as potential participants, they may come to a point where they have selected 12 females and have come to the end of the list of students ranked at a particular band of scores. It is most likely that there will be more than two females in the next band of scores so at this point staff have some flexibility in nominating students they think will be more likely to benefit from participation rather than focusing

solely on excluding students based on criteria.

Guidance counsellor exclusion is another feature of the selection/exclusion process. The Project K evaluation manual states that the purpose of guidance counsellor (GC) exclusion is so that guidance staff can maintain student-counsellor confidentiality but also exclude students if they meet one of the specified criteria. In this sense GC exclusion should not be based on different information or issues than exclusion under any criteria, the difference is only that the GC holds this information and cannot share it with the liaison team due to confidentiality. However, in observed selection meetings it was not clear that GC exclusion functioned in this way and this purpose was not emphasized by PD's in their explanation of the process. It appeared that GC exclusions were based more on the recommendation or professional opinion of the staff member of whether the student would be suitable for Project K.

The officially described procedure is that Programme Directors make the final decisions regarding exclusion after the selection meeting. In observed selection meetings for the most part PD's made their decision and filled in the E12a forms at the meeting. There was no debate about whether a student should or should not be excluded but in instances where there was a lack of information the decision was postponed until more complete information was available. In practice it appeared that programme directors placed less emphasis on the importance of independence in decision making, and that in coming to a decision they were entirely dependent on the information provided by staff. During observation it was noted that not all staff are aware of the same information, and that often exclusion decisions are based on one staff member's recommendation. Having said this there were some instances where there was some disagreement and the final decision was clearly held by the Programme Director.

Another relevant step in the process that occurs following the selection meeting is that students and their parents/caregivers are asked to report if any of the issues identified by the exclusion criteria are relevant to them. This step is further described in Chapter 1, but essentially involves the parent and the student individually filling in forms asking about the exclusion criteria or any other relevant problems at an information evening to which potential participants are invited following the liaison team meeting where the ranked list of students is screened against the exclusion criteria. This additional screening process may increase the likelihood of the criteria being consistently applied. Official guidelines state that confidentiality and discretion regarding the course of action should any issues be disclosed is required.

Exploring stakeholder perspectives.

Further to the review of officially outlined procedure and the observed process of the liaison team selection meeting detailed above, semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders were undertaken to explore stakeholder perspectives on and understandings of exclusion. The current section details the process of undertaking these interviews and analysing data, and then presents the results based on this.

Interviews.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight participants from three key stakeholder groups: Project K programme directors for the three Auckland regions included in the study; four school staff involved in the liaison exclusion meetings; and the FYD staff member primarily responsible for the evaluation of Project K. School staff involved in interviews were self selected – programme directors emailed all liaison teams asking for volunteers to participate. More detailed information about participants could not be included in this section this would make participants identifiable to one and other and to people outside of the organisation. Interviews focused on understanding the rationale behind exclusion – both generally and for specific exclusion criteria, understanding the process by which decisions about exclusion made and the perspectives of these stakeholders on the issue of exclusion. Interview outlines (see Appendix B) were used as a guide, but a semi-structured approach to interviews were seen as desirable in that each interview was flexible and allowed for the flow of ideas of the interviewee to be followed and avenues of inquiry to be pursued as they arose. Interview length varied from 50 minutes to 1.5 hours. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Transcription was basically verbatim but did not include non verbal responses (e.g., mmm, um) or specify pause lengths.

Analysis process.

Thematic analysis of interview transcripts was undertaken based on the six steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) which are: familiarising yourself with your data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and finally producing the report. Transcription and multiple readings of transcripts were undertaken to develop a high level of familiarity with the data. Concurrently, initial ideas and reflections were noted down and gradually these were formed into a rough list of initial codes that clustered similar ideas or types of

comments together. At this point, the qualitative data analysis software NVivo8 was used and each transcript was initially coded within NVivo8. Following this first full sweep of the data, initial codes were reviewed and refined and transcripts were then recoded into this refined list of initial codes. At this point, codes were collated into potential themes using tree nodes in NVivo8. The process of identifying themes was a combination of inductive and deductive. While no specific themes were anticipated the observation of selection meetings and my own background knowledge undoubtedly guided my approach to the data. In particular my clinical training around risk assessment would have impacted on the language I used in interviews and the way in which I grouped data during analysis. Following the initial identification of themes there was a process of reviewing and refining themes in relation to each other and the data set as a whole. Part of this was differentiating 'categories' of themes from themes themselves and grouping themes into a coherent 'map' of the data set as a whole (see Figure 12). Overall, this process aimed to provide a summarised account of the current situation including the perspectives of those within this situation.

Results / Themes.

Figure 12 lists the themes grouped by category. Themes are grouped into three categories: 'purpose', 'challenges in making good decisions' and 'perspectives on the survey'. The category purpose relates to stakeholders understandings of the rationale behind having exclusion at all and also having a specified process and criteria regarding exclusion. The category of 'challenges' includes the realities of the situation that mean making reliable and valid decisions about exclusion is difficult. Finally, 'perspectives on the survey process' is included as stakeholders expressed strong views on the self-efficacy survey despite the fact that this was not actually a focus on the interview. Participant quotes are attributed to either programme directors (PD), guidance counsellors (GC), Foundation for Youth Development staff (FYD staff), or school staff.



Figure 12: Categories and themes based on stakeholder interviews

Purpose of the exclusion process

While the purpose of exclusion is not directly outlined in the written documentation, Project K, FYD and school staff frequently referred to what they understood as the reasons for the practice. Two key themes were identified in this category, first, ‘ensuring the right fit’ and second ‘preventing unnecessary exclusion’. These understandings of the purpose of exclusion directly inform programme directors decision making.

Ensuring the right fit.

On a broad level, the theme ‘ensuring the right fit’ can be conceptualized as matching the needs of students with the strengths and competencies of the Project K programme. Several of the considerations PD’s identified in making decisions (presented below) directly relate to this theme including safety and the potential for benefit. As one Programme Director stated:

“I guess ultimately I see it as coming down to whether we can offer this student what they need. If we can’t do that, and do it safely than Project K is not for them. I know the staff we have, and you know there are limits to the programme and the way it works over all, but at the end of the day there is a whole bunch of students out there that Project K really fits for, it’s the right time, the right intensity and the right people”. (PD)

Preventing unnecessary exclusion.

This theme appeared to be particularly emphasised by FYD staff and perhaps underlies much of the official outline procedure. Participants discussed that by have a clear process and specifying criteria that must be met in order for students to be exclusion from participating so that personal biases or opinions would not be used as basis for unfairly or inappropriately excluding a student who would benefit from the programme:

“It’s also important to make sure people who could benefit from PK aren’t being unnecessarily excluded. It’s not about whether the teacher thinks they deserve it, whether they’ve been good or not, and that’s why we need the criteria there... and also why the PD makes the actual decision after the meeting – there can be a lot of pressure to exclude students so it’s important that the PD is independent and away from this.” (FYD)

“Even though there might be some risk, sometimes I think the greater danger is them excluding a student that shouldn’t necessarily be excluded. (GC)

Challenges in making good decisions

The bulk of the data coded related to challenges in making good (valid and reliable) decisions regarding exclusion. Challenges identified ranged from relatively concrete issues including

the themes 'there is not enough time / opportunity for discussion' and 'there is not enough information' to more complex difficulties including the themes 'it's hard to get consensus', 'the process is too rigid' and 'the guidelines still require judgements'.

There is not enough time / opportunity for discussion.

The first theme related to challenges was the lack of time and opportunity for discussion. While in many ways decisions about exclusion are complex, they are generally made with either no or extremely limited discussion. This issue links to the observation noted previously that the context in which the selection meeting occurs – during a lunch break in the school day – limits the time available for discussion. This was seen as particularly problematic in situations where large numbers of students need to be screened.

"These decisions are quick. In or out, you know, like there isn't a lot of time to get into the details or to debate it" (PD)

Another factor that limited discussion was the unavailability of some staff. As one participant noted:

"I was concerned at our last meeting, that one senior management member had excluded quite a lot of students but wasn't present at the meeting to give the reasons, and that bothered me." (GC)

There is not enough information.

Another theme in the category of challenges related to limited available information – in making decisions about exclusion, Programme Directors are reliant on what is known and reported by staff. This is a fundamental constraint on making good decisions. There is no formal process of collection information regarding the exclusion criteria prior to the meeting and Programme Directors have no prior knowledge of the students which means decisions are based solely on the information those present at the meeting already have. As one participant noted:

"I think we try and stick to the exclusion criteria but so much of it is coming down to the teachers side of things, the teachers opinion of it" (PD)

Programme directors reported instances in which further information or follow up may be required commenting that:

"In some instances we might have to go and get more information – there might be students that no-one at the meeting knows about" (PD)

It can be hard to get consensus.

This theme relates to the challenge in making a decision when there is disagreement

between staff members over whether a student should be excluded or not. PD's were clear that consensus was the ideal:

"The aim, ideally speaking, is for consensus among everyone at the meeting and usually this is achieved although it depends to some extent on the dynamics - the interpersonal dynamics - at the school ... there should always be consensus between the PD and the school liaison teacher." (PD)

While consensus is usually achieved, both Programme Directors and FYD staff referred to disagreements occurring between members of staff – particularly between guidance and other members of staff. For example:

"Now we're often in a situation where the GC will bat for one of the students, but the staff will consider that we should exclude, and the GC who's had a huge amount to do with this particular student might think that PK is the best thing since sliced bread for this student and is desperate for he or she to be on the programme. Now we've stuck that quite often and the other staff will just say no. And pretty much majority rules, but sometimes I get caught in between you know, because, well it depends on how strong the other staff are ... and I think to that the guidance staff, the credibility of guidance staff with other staff members varies from school to school, some staff will see guidance as useless shrinks who sit in the office all day and do nothing – and some are – but others are actually highly effective and an integral part of the pastoral network of the school, in most cases they are actually, but in some cases other staff members don't value their position." (PD)

One important aspect of this theme relates to how Programme directors resolve situations where there is disagreement. In relation to this Programme Directors refer to the importance of the relationship and ultimately the level of trust they have in the particular staff members:

"It probably depends a bit on my confidence in the liaison staff, at that particular school, and whether they have a good handle on it ..." (PD)

The process is too rigid.

The theme 'the process is too rigid' relates to a lack of flexibility in the process for making decisions around exclusion. While FYD staff viewed exclusion criteria as a way of ensuring the students who did not need to be excluded were not, some school staff commented that in instances where the criteria were applied without flexibility students that they felt did not need to be excluded were:

"The criteria for exclusion were so inflexible that we just didn't even really pay attention to it, if we had probably a lot of the kids wouldn't have gone if we had have applied it to strictly." (GC)

Two key subthemes were identified in relation to this issue: 'some legitimate issues are not covered by the existing criteria' and 'staff should have more input'. The subtheme 'some legitimate issues are not covered' is one specific example of how the inflexibility of the exclusion process could be problematic. Several participants referred to situations where there were what they considered to be legitimate reasons for exclusion that were not clearly covered by the existing criteria.

"We just found the whole thing really rigid and I mean it's not exactly exhaustive these are people after all, so there are a whole lot of issues that don't really fit into one of the available boxes" (GC)

One specific example of problems not covered by the existing criteria related to the poor English language skills of some international students. Programme Directors noted that:

"There are some schools that have a high percentage of paying international students ... they actually assist in the funding of the school - big time, so ... they'll [management] make some concessions, even though they may really have some difficulties with language and socialising so I think now, when we go through they also categorize according to number 5 [cognitive and learning difficulties] because they are limited in language they do have learning difficulties and perhaps didn't understand the questionnaire" (PD)

Another situation related to problems not covered by the criteria was students who did have some issues related to each of the criteria but none significant enough to warrant exclusion. Programme directors described dealing with this by excluding students based on the most relevant criteria. Programme directors' perspectives on the acceptability of using different criteria influenced which criteria they would use in such instance. Programme directors noted that there were often students with a combination of learning and behavioural issues that were not well captured by the criteria who would be excluded based on criteria 5 (cognitive and learning difficulties) as it was seen as more concrete or identifiable.

"So they know that this person is not suitable for Project K and they know that they have to put a hat on it, and so they decide you know well - it's not really a violent person, yeah they're into substance, but probably no, not necessarily abuse, they don't know about suicide attempts, counselling, they've probably had the odd bit of, but nothing that you could say is in the extreme category but they know that this person is not suited for PK because of a combination of things that are not extreme and they also are very limited in terms of their ability to learn in school ... so they'll put them, rather than put them in 1 – 4 they'll put them in 5 because, it's factual, you know they would consider, they'd back their decision that it was a cognitive and learning difficulty, although it's a blend of other reasons often" (PD)

Similarly, criteria 6 – guidance counsellor recommendation was seen as a 'no questions asked' out for those who did not fit other criteria:

"In relation to 6, it's almost like there's no questions asked, it's just real simple, if the guidance counsellor says no, then it's no discussion, they're out." (PD)

The second subtheme was 'staff should have more input'. This theme was emphasised by school staff, particularly those who felt they could provide valuable input in terms of advising whether a student would be suitable for the programme or not:

"It's how big your school is and whether you know your students and whether you think you can actually provide them with that extra support, I guess I'm just pragmatic about it, about what I say because as a counselor I wasn't really allowed a say, officially I mean, there was no room for my input – that could be improved" (GC)

"Well we didn't get any input, we weren't allowed, if they'd had any issues, say around drugs and alcohol, even if it was in the beginning of year 9, then they were excluded" (School Staff)

The guidelines still require judgments.

This theme refers to the concept of a degree of judgment and discretion that is inherently required in all decisions regarding exclusion. Participants noted that despite there being specific criteria on which to base decisions about exclusion, within each criteria a judgment was required as to what degree of the behaviour should be defined as meeting the specific criteria:

"PD's really shouldn't be including someone if they meet the criteria but of course there is always a subjective component in deciding if they [students] really do meet the criteria." (FYD staff)

The concept of a threshold was frequently cited by programme directors particularly with regard to the criteria of violent behaviour and substance abuse:

"At the beginning of the selection meeting we have a list of all the criteria - the exclusion criteria - we then go through it again, and say and really discuss that it needs to be at a certain threshold - like in the extreme category, rather than experimentation, so it's a judgement call." (PD)

Programme directors emphasised that despite criteria being specified, variability in the specifics of each case made deciding whether individual cases met criteria difficult and cases had to be considered as they arose. As one programme director noted:

"Yeah it's quite hard because every case is different and every situation, I mean I'd like to say that it means this and it means this and it means this, but when you haven't had to define it in those terms for that specific instance, it's hard ... like for this student, in this context, does this behaviour constitute substance abuse? So I guess, for me, I kind of have to work it out as I go along" (PD)

Although decisions were made on a case by case basis there was notable variation in the way that criteria were understood. The definition of severe cognitive and learning difficulties was

particularly problematic; an example of two different understandings of this particular criteria is given below. First, one programme director noted:

"I think this is the criteria I have the least clear picture of. Yeah, I mean I kind of always see it in terms of ... they miss quite a bit of school while they're on the wilderness and the community challenge... a week and a half on the WA then 8 days for the community challenge so it's quite a bit of school that they're missing out on ... but I guess it's whether that will just impact on their schooling." (PD)

Conversely, another participant suggested that to be excluded under this criteria a student would need to be well below mainstream and someone who 'would struggle' with Project K in teachers knowledge of the programme. This was similar to the rationale for this criteria outline by FYD staff:

"I'm not exactly sure what kind of issues this might be, it could be students still functioning in a normal classroom but I think the main thing is their ability to follow directions, just that basic level is so important in terms of their safety on the WA. I mean I wouldn't expect a student to be excluded just for ADHD well not that alone anyway." (FYD staff)

The theme 'the guidelines still require judgment' was a key issues for participants, and a considerable portion of the data dealt with how Programme Directors made these judgements. Five subthemes that essentially reflect a variety of considerations taken into account in making these decisions were identified: 'safety is the number one consideration', 'one off behaviour is not enough to exclude', 'the student's context must be considered', 'potential to benefit may tip the balance' and 'potential group dynamics must be considered'.

Safety is the number one consideration.

The most frequently cited subtheme was safety. In this sense Programme Directors assessment of the risk posed to the student in question, other participants and staff on the programme was a key consideration in making judgements about exclusion:

"I mean I always just basically say, we're ultimately thinking about the safety of that student and the rest of the students, particularly when they're out on the WA, so if there is going to be any risk when they're out there then we should exclude them, that's basically what I see the criteria being there for..." (PD)

The Wilderness Adventure stage of the Project K programme was often cited as a stage where safety was going to be a particularly important issue.

"The wilderness experience is by definition an intense and challenging experience, so it's a time that can really bring it all out – people become particularly vulnerable when they are challenged like that so safety – of staff and students, is a really important thing for us to consider. " (FYD staff)

One off behaviour is not enough to exclude.

In relation to the theme 'the guidelines still require judgements' another key subtheme was that 'one off behaviour is not enough to exclude'. This subtheme refers to the way in which participants identified the importance of considering issues like the frequency, recency and severity of the behaviour in making decisions about exclusion.

"So once again, somebody that was on a regular, I'm not sure what you would define as regular.... Once wouldn't worry, twice, might raise, I guess once again I'd look at the time period that it's been over, if it's been twice in one school term, I guess even then... I'd probably look at the severity of it." (PD)

"It was a very one off sort of incident, don't expect that to be a problem, it's not something that happens regularly so we allowed him in because it was deemed more one off, not a regular behaviour that would affect his involvement in Project K" (PD)

Potential to benefit may tip the balance.

A third subtheme linked to the inherent need for judgement related to considering the potential benefit for the student from participating in Project K. Participants talked about balancing the potential benefit to the individual against the potential risk to the group.

"Say there's someone that displays very violent behaviour, regularly in trouble for it, but the staff ... [believe] that if they get on PK, they'll be transformed, this will be the opportunity of a lifetime for them. I mean, those factors come into it ... they might put someone ... forward, who is more violent than someone else, but [for] that other person that's less violent they could consider that Project K would be a waste of time. So when you get towards that threshold there are some judgements made by staff where they consider, 'would this person benefit?' 'would this person not benefit?'" (PD)

As noted above the potential for benefit was particularly relevant when liaison teams when there were few places remaining and many students in the same self efficacy band.

The student's context must be considered.

The next subtheme relates to considering the wider context in which the issue of concern was occurring within. Such consideration was particularly relevant in instances where a behaviour specified by the exclusion criteria was occurring at a level near the threshold of what would be considered reason to exclude:

"Like someone who gets trashed every Friday night - that could be an element but they'd need to be a bigger picture with that individual – and there always is, I mean what tends to happen is that an individual displays more than one of these exclusion criteria. And that bigger picture is what would lead to someone being excluded. Where that threshold lies probably depends more on other issues rather than just the [single criterion behaviour]" (PD)

With regard to violence, the context in which the behaviour occurred and in particular provocation was frequently cited as a consideration:

“Yeah if it’s just a one off incident, in a provocative situation, we wouldn’t even consider it” (PD)

“There’s a lot of kids who’ve had a bit of a tussle, there is not too many that would walk away if they were dragged into a fight. I mean I think the teachers get a pretty good feel for the students, whether they are somebody that would initiate a fight.” (PD)

A final issue with regards to the wider context in which the issue occurs related to existing professional involvement. Specifically, it was felt that for some people additional involvement of professionals would not be beneficial:

“You have to consider the fact that there are already professionals in the young person’s life and you don’t want to overload them with more and more people trying to help” (GC)

In this sense the wider context can be considered to impact both the risk that a behaviour might pose to the individual and group should they be accepted to Project K, and also the potential that the individual will benefit.

Potential group dynamics must be considered.

Finally, this subtheme relates to participant’s observation that it is important to consider the functioning of the group as a whole and the way in which the individual would affect the dynamics of a group:

“Thinking about the group dynamics, rather than just solely safety. There’s a practical element that anyone who’s involved with that, in running groups in that intense situation for 17 days, we very much value that issue being addressed.” (PD)

“There are situations where you’ve got two friends, two buddies who actually, you know, they continue to be really strong within the group and sway the group, so that, and so sometimes they’ll just flick one off and have one in there, and then that would be the one that would benefit the most. That happens as well” (PD)

“Consideration is also given to how the group will function – like if there is a bully-victim pair. And you know, this is really difficult in evaluated programmes where random selection of control/Project K group happens” (PD)

Perspectives on the selection survey.

The category ‘perspectives on the selection survey’ is very much based on the fact that the survey was something participants raised repeatedly in interviews – especially as interviews focused on the process of exclusion which occurs subsequent to and independent of the self-efficacy survey.

School staff opinions of the survey varied widely, two key themes were identified in this category: ‘the survey identified invisible students’ and ‘the survey did not highlight our students in need’. The first of these referred to the idea that the survey based selection process identified students who were in need of support but would not otherwise be identified:

“I think that often the youth who get included in programmes are those who’ve experienced trouble that’s then caused them to act out, those who get other programmes as a result of surveys are often the students who are carrying their pain quietly and internally, which is what is so wonderful about a survey situation” (GC)

Conversely, the theme ‘the survey did not highlight our students in need’ reflected views of the survey as being an ineffective method of highlighting the students staff expected it to and that they considered would be ideal participants for Project K:

“Our kids that we thought would be highlighted weren’t, by the survey, we were like, what? Yeah there was about probably the top 10 kids we were sitting there going, why are they there? Really very surprised. And they [the students] were surprised as well. But you know that’s how it is.” (GC)

Related to this, school staff were sometimes unhappy at not having more input on the selection of students at the stage of the survey:

“I don’t have a problem with the kids who get excluded for behavioural issues and drug and alcohol issues, I actually don’t have a problem with that because I understand that and they’re kids that we would look after anyway, I do have a problem with not being allowed any input in picking any kids, and they sort of, we kept saying to them, well we actually know our kids, and they said well other schools like the survey, well I have problems with the survey as well, I think it’s absolutely flawed.” (GC)

These comments highlight the inevitably inter-related nature of selection and exclusion from the perspective of staff. For at least on participant this very much overshadowed any concern that might otherwise have had about exclusion

Summary and Implications of Qualitative Perspective

The analysis of qualitative data highlighted the complexity involved in the issue of exclusion. The procedure and process around selection and exclusion is the current focus of the evaluation manual; while an important aspect of the issue, this level of description is only the most superficial. All stakeholders referred to the fact that exclusion serves an important purpose: first, in enhancing the efficacy of the Project K programme through ensuring a good fit between the students selected and the strengths and capabilities of the programme, and second, clear guidelines and process were seen as important to prevent unnecessary or arbitrary exclusion. Programme Directors and liaison

staff face several challenges in making valid and reliable decisions about exclusion, many of which arise in relation to the social and physical context in which the issue is embedded. Challenges include: limited time / opportunity for discussion, limited information on which to make decisions, a perceived lack of flexibility in the process, and finally the fact that deciding whether an individual's behaviour meets a specific criteria requires judgement and discretion – variability in the manifestation of issues which means that each case must be judged on its own merits. Programme Directors identified a variety of factors that they considered in making decisions about exclusion showing that such decisions are in fact a complex process that take into account a variety of factors relevant to the individual in question including factors related to context.

The analysis presented so far in this chapter provides an account of stakeholder perspectives on selection and exclusion within the specific Project K context that this research was based. At this point I would like to propose a more general account of selection and exclusion decisions. While this was not the primary aim of the research - which focused on understanding and improving practice around this issue within Project K - given the lack of existing theory surrounding selection/exclusion decisions in the PYD field my sense is that it is worth articulating these ideas even though they are based on research in one specific setting. Note that this more general theory of exclusion is the result of discussion, reflection, and feedback on the material presented in the rest of this chapter as much as it arises from the data itself.

As discussed previously, participant exclusion is difficult to separate from participant selection - both conceptually and in terms of stakeholder perspectives accessed through this research. Therefore, I propose a theory of selection/exclusion decisions rather than relating to exclusion only. A core and recurrent concept in thinking about participant selection/exclusion decisions is the idea of tensions or dilemmas. This is reflected in the discomfort that seems to surround this issue – emotions of outrage, anxiety, and guilt in particular seemed to be common reactions amongst my participants. My sense is that this unease is one reason why such a common practice has gone largely unexamined. While the inherent tension in selection/exclusion decisions was recognised from the outset of the research (e.g., Fisher, 2001), the process of this research provides an opportunity to more clearly articulate what these tensions are. I propose that, selection/exclusion tensions can be thought of as involving three core dilemmas (see figure xx).

The first proposed dilemma is at the level of participants and involves tension between the needs of the individual and the needs of the programme. This can be related to several themes identified earlier in this chapter. In particular in discussing the purposeful nature of exclusion the theme 'ensuring the right fit' relates to balancing the needs of the individual with the needs and

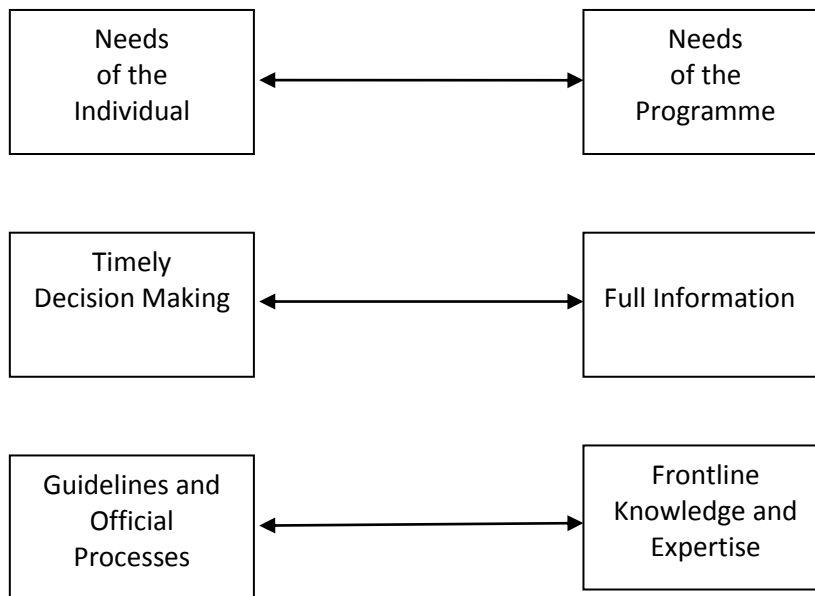
capabilities of the programme. This dilemma also relates to themes such as safety, potential to benefit and group dynamics which are all essentially determined by the match between an individual's needs and the programme's purpose and capabilities. Resolving this dilemma requires thorough assessment of the individual and knowledge of the programme and in this sense relates to the third dilemma proposed below.

The second dilemma is at the level of the programme staff and involves tension between following guidelines or official processes and utilising frontline knowledge and expertise. This tension is likely to be familiar to many organisational settings. Like all of the dilemmas I am proposing it is important to acknowledge the importance in both sides of the dilemma while at the same time recognizing that neither is 'enough'. The official processes vs. frontline knowledge dilemma relates to many of the challenges the previous analysis highlighted including 'the process is too rigid' and 'staff should have more input' and 'some legitimate issues are not covered'. These themes are essentially on the side of utilising frontline knowledge or expertise end of this dilemma. In contrast, the theme 'preventing unnecessary exclusion' relates to the other side of this dilemma with the idea being that clear and set guidelines and processes will help prevent instances of exclusion that are based on personal judgments or misjudgments.

The third dilemma involves tension between the need for timely decision making versus obtaining full or at least fuller information. In many settings decisions about access need to be made based on limited information. While it may be possible to do further assessment, the dilemma occurs when there are time constraints or other constraints that prevent this from being a feasible option. It is also worth noting that 'full' information is difficult to access and that even young people themselves may not be able to identify more complex aspects of their behaviour (e.g., the function of the behaviour). Identified themes that relate to this dilemma include 'there is not enough time' and 'there is not enough information'. Less obvious, but related nonetheless, is the theme 'it can be hard to get consensus' while this may be due to different perspectives in relation to dilemma one, it may also be more related to a lack of information.

This theory of selection/exclusion decisions has implications for how an organization might go about making these decisions, the kinds of questions that need to be asked and the challenges that are likely to arise. They are not dilemmas that can be 'solved', instead, they are inherent tensions that are likely to affect any process around participant selection. My hope is that making these dilemmas transparent is helpful in increasing the clarity of thought and reducing the polarisation that can occur around this issue.

Figure 13: Tensions in Selection/Exclusion Decision Making



Conclusion and Limitations

This chapter has detailed the process of developing a more thorough understanding of exclusion by accessing basic descriptive information about exclusion, investigating the current process and practice around exclusion, and accessing stakeholder perspectives on exclusion. There are several limitations that should be noted. First, it must be noted that both qualitative and quantitative data focused on one specific region. For the quantitative part of the analysis, data from 86% of programmes in this specific Auckland region was available. Caution must be taken in generalising to Project K programmes nationally. Second, it should be noted that programmes that were included in the analysis are particularly closely connected (to each other and to NSO) and it may be that other programmes are even more different from each other. Even within this region the number of programmes observed and the number of guidance counsellors talked to was small. With regards to participant selection, there was an element of self selection bias in the selection of school staff and guidance counsellors. It may be that those who participated had more interest or concern in either exclusion or some other aspect of the programme. Thus the opinions and understanding presented within the research may be specific to those participants. The qualitative analysis conducted in this part of the research is inevitably somewhat subjective. Presenting the findings back to participants (discussed in later chapters) was the primary process for checking the validity of findings, however, it must be noted that it is entirely possible that another researcher

would have presented a different but equally valid account that would have been equally accepted by participants. With regard to the quantitative components of the research, there are a variety of limitations related to how the data were handled. The procedure for coding ethnicity allowed comparisons between groups to be made but also obscured potentially valuable information in terms of cases where an individual identified with more than one ethnic group, the way in which groups were prioritised does not necessarily reflect individuals preferences in terms of whether there is one ethnic group with which they more strongly identify or not. Finally, there is a fundamental limitation to the quantitative part of the findings in that while they do provide some information on how exclusion is currently working in the programme, it is not always possible to fully explain the reasons behind the findings, for example, it is difficult to say exactly why some programmes exclude more students than others, or why more Maori and Pacific students are being excluded. These limitations very much reflect the point made in the previous chapter, that social science research often represents a process of generating successive approximations of a reality, rather than actually uncovering the incontrovertible truth.

Reflections moving forward.

The investigation of exclusion described in this chapter was undertaken in view of the need to understand an issue and its context in order to be able to take or even recommend useful action or change within that context. Throughout this process the assumption that there was a need for some sort of action (and in particular with the idea of some sort of 'programme' specifically for excluded youth) was held clearly in mind. The greater understanding of exclusion gained through the investigation detailed in this chapter had an impact on the thinking about what kind of action might be useful and appropriate in relation to the issue of exclusion in Project K – something that is further developed and explored in subsequent chapters.

One impact of the findings presented in this chapter, particularly those related to the variability in the number of students excluded in different programmes, was an increase in concern about how exclusion was working in current practice. In particular, there was concern that variability in the number of students excluded could be due to differences or inconsistencies in decision making – especially in view of the more nuanced understanding of the complex and semi-discretionary nature of the judgement that decisions about exclusion require. Thus, while possibilities for supporting excluded students remained one focus for potential action, optimising current practice around exclusion began to represent a second possible area for action or change.

Another way in which the findings and process of the research in this phase had implications in terms of the research moving forward relates to differences in the way exclusion was viewed by

different stakeholders. In my discussions with different stakeholders it became clear that there were differences in the nature and levels of concern about exclusion. While there was a more or less consistent view that exclusion is important to the functioning of the Project K programme, there were differences in the reasons behind this. To put these as extremes (for purely illustrative purposes, stakeholders did not in reality fall neatly into these extremes) one could consider two groups: 1) stakeholders who saw exclusion criteria and process as being important in order to prevent programmes from unnecessarily and / or arbitrarily excluding students; and 2) stakeholders who emphasised the importance of being allowed the flexibility to make professional judgements and exclude students who were not suited for Project K - particularly those whose needs went beyond what the programme could safely provide. In this sense (and something which did exist in reality) there was a degree of tension between different stakeholders. Those aligned more closely to the latter group (usually stakeholders more actively involved in running the programme) sometimes expressed concern that their decision making process would not be seen as acceptable by those more aligned to the former (usually stakeholders more involved in the organisation and evaluation of the programme). One outcome of an 'outsider' coming in and asking people questions about exclusion was an increase in the attention focused on exclusion and degree to which thinking about exclusion was articulated. My hope and intention in moving forward from this point is that the research process may potentially act to improve communication and understanding between these 'groups'.

There were also differences in relation to stakeholder's levels of concern about excluded young people and perspectives on how and who should act to support these young people. Participants in this research were uniformly busy people, and as organisations both Project K and FYD had gone through significant growth and expansion. This impacted the priority with which excluded students and their potential needs were viewed, for some participants concerns about other issues in Project K (reflected in the thematic area related to views of survey based selection) took precedence. Having said this, on the whole there was some level of concern about excluded students and, although at different levels, some enthusiasm about the concept of supporting these students in some way. As such, while the focus of potential action had broadened to include improving current practice around exclusion there remained a level of (admittedly somewhat tempered) interest in considering how FYD could potentially support the young people currently excluded from Project K and more specifically in the concept of a 'programme for excluded youth'. The following chapters will describe the process of exploring the needs of excluded young people and the dissemination of this information to key stakeholders that informed the collaborative

development of plans for change based on this more detailed and complex understanding of exclusion.

Chapter 5: Identifying the Needs of excluded youth: Expert perspectives

The previous chapter described the first phase of the research which focused on gaining an in depth understanding of exclusion as it was practiced at the time the research was conducted. This chapter deals with the second phase, considering possible responses to the issue of exclusion. There were two key questions relevant to developing possible responses to exclusion: First, 'What are the needs of excluded youth?' and second, 'How might the FYD contribute to best meeting these needs?' The current chapter deals with the first of these questions, detailing the method and results from a series of interviews with experts focused around identifying best practice, while chapter 6 deals with the second question.

Expert Interviews

Rationale.

While the exclusion criteria themselves identify specific problem behaviours, these problems do not consistently imply a specific set of needs – there are multiple issues that may lead to young people exhibiting such behaviour, and the context and meaning of the behaviour varies in every case. An obvious approach to assessing the needs of excluded youth would be gathering information directly from excluded youth and their families. However, the challenges this posed in terms of the ethics of accessing this vulnerable potentially unsupported group who are otherwise unidentified, as well as the practical issues of recruitment and ensuring non-tokenistic participation, it was decided that directly involving excluded young people was not feasible within the current research. Expert perspectives were also seen as providing more of a generalisable overview of needs rather than a description of individuals needs in a specific situation.

Another strand to the rationale behind conducting expert interviews was an interest in understanding best *practice*. As a service provider FYD is interested in understanding 'what works' in a practical sense. Literature is one source of information on best practice; however, it has limitations in terms of relevance to the New Zealand context and in this case the diversity of issues represented by the Project K exclusion criteria. Therefore, it was decided to focus on the perspectives of practitioners in order to access knowledge based on experience in working with young people in the New Zealand context.

Participants.

Interviews with 11 expert participants were undertaken. Participants were nominated by the FYD and were seen as having knowledge and experience that would be relevant to excluded youth. The rationale for using this method of selection was to ensure that the information provided would be viewed as relevant by the FYD. Participants came from a broad range of settings including schools, other youth development programmes, and organisations who worked with at-risk youth in both community and residential settings with both governmental and non-governmental affiliations. Participants were drawn from a variety of professional backgrounds including youth workers, social workers, counsellors, psychologists, psychiatrists, family therapists. All had experience in clinical roles and some were also involved in either the management or development of their organisations. Table 19 further describes expert participants. I will not attribute extracts to identified participants as the small number of the youth development professionals in New Zealand means participants responses could potentially be identifiable to those familiar with this field.

As well as these 'expert' participants, this analysis also included extracts from the stakeholder interviews conducted in the previously chapter were included. In the previous round of coding a small group of extracts emerged that focused on what stakeholders saw as the needs of excluded youth and the challenges they envisioned in meeting these needs - rather than on current practice which was the focus of the previous chapter. These extracts were collated and used in the current analysis.

Table 19: Description of Expert Participants

Gender	Current role
Male	CEO of an NGO offering residential and community based support and intervention young people and families with serious behavioural or mental health issues.
Male	Clinical director and practicing clinician in an NGO offering family based interventions for conduct disorder.
Male	Psychologist working within and NGO that deals with conduct disorder.
Male	School guidance counsellor with expertise in experiential group work for young people with conduct or mental health problems
Female	Social worker for an NGO that runs residential homes for young people (male and female) under state care due to either care and protection issues or youth justice issues.
Male	Psychologist with specialisation in child and family work.
Male	Founder and clinical director of a multi modal (including experiential, individual and family based interventions) programme for young people who have come to the attention of police.
Male	Social worker in a youth justice residence
Female	Youth worker in a youth justice residence
Male	Group facilitator and programme developer in an experientially based programme for young people with conduct disorder
Male	Founder and board member of a trust that runs community and residential programmes for young people with either behavioural or mental health difficulties.

Procedure.

Interviews took place either at the university or at a venue of the participant's choice. Interviews were semi-structured (see Appendix C for interview schedule) and ranged from 1 hour to 2 hours in duration. A semi-structured format was chosen to provide flexibility and allowed for the flow of ideas of the interviewee to be followed and avenues of inquiry to be pursued as they arose. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Transcription was basically verbatim but did not include non verbal responses (e.g., mmm, um) or specify pause lengths.

Data analysis.

Interview data was analysed using Thematic Analysis as described in Chapter 4.

Results.

Analysis of expert interviews identified three categories of themes: activities, qualities and challenges (see figure 14). In combination, the categories of activities and qualities describe best

practice for working with young people displaying the risk behaviours identified by the exclusion criteria at its broadest level. Activities refer to concrete content or actions, and qualities describe the nature of the usually relational process or the particular values or emphasis of an intervention. In this sense, activities can be thought of as the 'what' while qualities refer to the 'how'. The third category, challenges relates to difficulties or obstacles to effective practice. Themes relating to each of these three categories are outlined below.

Exerts are attributed to either a numbered participant or in the case of extracts drawn from stakeholder interview the stakeholders role is given – e.g. 'Project K programme director'. The frequency with which themes are cited will not be stated as it cannot be assumed that the frequency with which participants' responses were coded as a particular theme is an accurate reflection of the degree of value that participant placed on that particular theme. Greater degree of importance is only one of several potential reasons themes may be more frequently cited. Other potential reasons include: the complexity and abstractness of different themes, the fluency with which participants' are able to discuss particular concepts, and the degree to which different responses are perceived as being socially sanctioned by the researcher and/or the wider context. Having said this, it should be noted at the outset that there were two themes that were referenced with markedly more frequency than the other. In particular, the themes of 'family work' and 'people rich' were cited by all participants. All themes were cited by a minimum of 25% of participants.

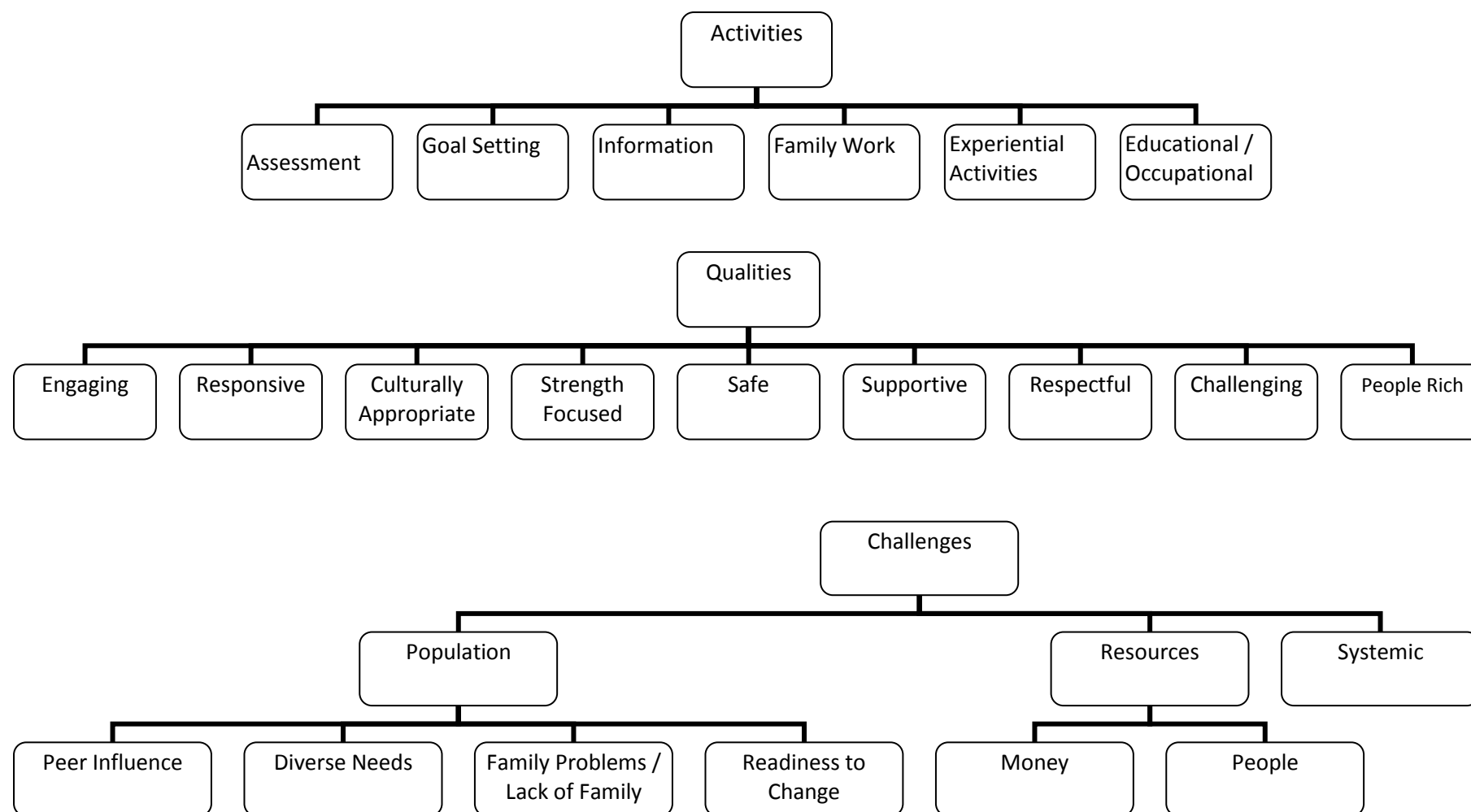


Figure 14: Key thematic areas and themes identified in the analysis of expert interviews regarding the needs of young people currently excluded from Project K.

Activities.

Assessment.

The importance of a thorough assessment as the starting point for any intervention was emphasised. Experts described good assessment as potentially involving multiple people, including the young person themselves, their family and other relevant people such as teachers. Additionally, assessment was seen as something that needed to go beyond describing the current problem to also generate understandings of development of the behaviour over time and the ways in which it is currently maintained – in this sense a psychological formulation was seen as an essential basis on which to develop intervention plans. Experts emphasised that intervention needed to be adapted based on the information gained during assessment, and in fact that interventions should ideally arise out of this assessment.

“A really good assessment process whereby you attend to how your programme - that’s designed and package - is able to meet the needs of these particular people because they’re all going to have different needs” – Participant 6

“It’s about understanding how the behaviour came to happen and how it continues to happen - how it’s maintained.” – Participant 2

“I’d want to ask the young person themselves, figure out what their interests and needs are.” – Participant 9

Goal setting.

Another activity identified by expert participants was the importance of working toward identified goals. Having agreed upon ‘SMART’ goals (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely) was seen as useful in terms of motivation and ensuring the relevance of interventions to those they are designed to benefit.

“Another thing would be I’d say goals, which are the juices of keeping kids motivated for getting places ahead, instead of going backward or down in a spiral. Goals are really important and they are well tuned and well monitored so, the goals may be a whole range of things but they need to be kept in mind.” – Participant 4

Information.

Information giving or psycho-education was identified as another important activity.

“Chances are expanded. Information is given, and I think chances and information are the lifeblood of change because people can then make decisions if they’ve got more information and more options out there. They don’t know of those options either because they’ve been

just overwhelmed, just emotionally overwrought, the family is just totally preoccupied with the problem, so it frees them.” – Participant 4

However, it should be emphasised that experts noted that information was perhaps necessary for change, but not sufficient in and of itself:

“But I’ve got to say, information is not enough. In my view, what’s really needed is some decent family therapy.”— Participant 2

Family work.

Family work was the theme most frequently discussed by participants and it was emphasised as being absolutely central to effective intervention with at risk youth. Experts comments on family work covered a very broad range of issues, ranging from the importance of family work generally, to identifying particular models of family therapy, to identifying particular issues in families, to discussing the way in which family issues related to adolescents risk behaviours.

“I think you’re missing the point if you only address the kids... I mean where are these kids going? They’re going home to their families and the motto here is really blood is thicker than therapy.” – Participant 2

“Ultimately youth will end up with their families, so it makes no sense to think outside of this context, because if you don’t address the problems then ultimately nothing will change in the long term. And once you realise that you realise that family therapy is efficient and economic.” – Participant 1

An analogy put forward by one expert participant (below) further develops the idea that more often than not issues in the family are at the root of problem behaviours and to not address them is a sure path to failure.

“You’re sitting in the all blacks stadium, and there is this guy is on his hands and knees looking for something. A policeman comes by, it’s 10pm at night, and he says to this guy, ‘what exactly are you doing?’ And the guy says, ‘I’m looking for my keys.’ So the policeman asks him, ‘where did you lose them?’ And he says, ‘I lost them over there.’ Well why are you looking here? Well the lights better here. It’s a lot easier to work with the kids, they’re cute, they’re available, they’re poignant, who doesn’t want to help a kid? But where the keys are lost is over there. This family that we saw, with the kid I told you about where the father is completely passive, you can imagine the ethics, you can imagine the other things that are going on in this household, no wonder the kids a wreck when he’s there.” — Participant 2

Specific models of family therapy identified as effective by experts included Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) and Functional Family Therapy (FFT):

“Well, I think what is needed for good practice is, I mean it’s out there and we all know about it, you need to have the resources to be able to have family based or family focused programme. And I don’t think you can get away with not doing that ...Now, there’s a lot of

evidence for MST, and Functional Family Therapy, I think you can actually look at what works in those models, and adapt them into kind of a New Zealand context, there's some debate about whether people should just be trained in those models, or whether you can actually be as effective using the components that they put forward, I mean intensive, low number of cases for therapists, you know making sure you're working with all the systems, I think you can actually pull from that what's really important." – Participant 7

Family strengths and the potential for families to help their children were also emphasised. In particular it was noted that even if families are not the cause of problems, more often than not they are the most likely solution.

"Some families may feel like it's not their problem, that they had nothing to do with what the young person has done, but you know even if they're right they are hugely powerful and there are things they can do to be the solution." – Participant 1

Family stress and triangulation were identified as key issues relevant to adolescent problem behaviours:

"Because if there's not much money coming to the household and people are already on the breadline, you know things at home are not going to work out. And who are the people that are going to be affected the most? Children. And that will always be the case. Then you get situations where there are issues with drugs and alcohol, abuse, the really tough stuff, and that's when they go out on the street." – Participant 5

"Nobody addresses the split in the family, that's what generates the problems. Kids are getting directives that are contrary, mum and her new boyfriend, or mum and dad, they're split, and the kid is what's called triangulated, caught in between, dammed if she does and damned if she doesn't ... what's killing these kids psychologically is the parents battling, that's what destroys kids, I mean even divorce, in and of itself, sure it's a different system, but it's when the kids, when mother says, you know you're father is worth nothing, it is that, so that's our goal of treatment." – Participant 2

Finally, experts suggested that family focused work is always relevant, even when the family is not actually present:

"... if the kid hasn't got the family out there [in the world], he's got it in his head, so they're playing out some of the role modelling that's going on in the absence of the family, no matter how disconnected they are from that family there is probably issues or models played out in their behaviour, modelled on some stuff that was taught to them before. So it's quite critical that family work be done, and that any association with family be freshened up and possibly strengthened, and if they can't be strengthened then it's about being able to help the person process the grief of loss ..." – Participant 4

Experiential activities.

Experiential or adventure activities were noted by some participants as being a useful activity. Such activities were seen as being appealing to young people and thereby providing an

opportunity to build relationships, facilitate engagement, and also develop new skills. However, it was emphasised that without changes happening in the young person's everyday context, any improvements were unlikely to be maintained.

"Having an outdoors component, doing adventure stuff often they get quite interested in that, so they are hooks, see I mean I personally I don't think change happens because you go white water rafting, you go white water rafting and young people seem to me to get more motivated to change, so I see it as only a context, where young people can actually be prepared to listen, to pick up the skills, that you know you use in CBT [cognitive behaviour therapy] and that sort of stuff. It opens the door a lot, I think if you spend time with young people and you do things that are really exciting, they do become engaged and you develop a different relationship." – Participant 7

Educational / occupational opportunity and support.

A final activity identified as important by expert participants was providing either educational or occupational opportunity, and supporting young people to take up such opportunity. Experts identified the fact that without developing a young person's realistic options for a future the context of their life essentially remains unchanged and thus it was unlikely that any behavioural change would be maintained.

"It's really important to have some component that looks at education, or work and employment - opportunities for training or tertiary education." – Participant 9

Qualities.

As well as these activities, experts described a variety of qualities seen as crucial to best practice. Many of these qualities were described in relational terms and can be considered a description of the way in which a person would need to relate to a young person in order for that relationship to be therapeutic. This is consistent with the emphasis in the literature about the importance of relationships in any youth – or indeed people – focused work. Other qualities referred to the values, orientation or emphasis that a programme might have.

Engaging.

Experts talked about the importance of engaging effectively with young people as a prerequisite to effective intervention.

"Really engaging young people - just basic skills, be respectful, listen, don't push them into corners, don't judge, be consistently available. Be a role model - don't try to be a friend, be empathetic but professional, be brave sometimes – challenge their unacceptable behaviour. Don't get into an argument – cool and calm. But at the end of the day, they have to come to the party to some degree." – Participant 1

Responsive.

Being responsive by adapting to individual needs or context was seen as important. This quality directly links to the activity of assessment in that ways of relating or intervening need to be tailored based on an ongoing assessment of the issues and the situation, which is dynamic.

"I mean it's really individualized, so it's difficult to say what's needed in general, because I think what's needed is a really individualized approach." – School Guidance Counsellor

"It's about 'whatever it takes' - that's a term pinched from MST - because it's difficult to come up with an a priori strategy ... it's really just whatever works at the time, at that place. You have to be responsive to the needs of the particular situation" – Participant 3

Culturally appropriate.

Another key theme closely related to responsivity is culturally appropriate approach. Essentially effective intervention was described as being grounded in culturally relevant knowledge, skill and experience. In this sense experts identified a need for the integration of clinical and cultural skill.

"If you're going into the cultural kind of family, for example if I go to a Tongan family, you know the oldest girl is the highest person in the family, in a Samoan family they have structures where the chiefs or the Matais are the people, so you need to really know your stuff before you even go in there to deal with it. You'll have to consult with your colleagues but I won't just consult with anybody who can speak Samoan, I have my own kind of pool of people where I've seen them practice clinically but also in the culture side of things, and those are the best people for me to go to, because they've done the work and they can walk in both worlds, like me I can kind of do the Nuiean side of things, but I also can do the clinical side of things because you know I have done my homework. Again it comes to people, and who those people are ... you have to be aware of what you don't know. Your limits." – Participant 5

Strength Focused.

Many participants from a wide variety of backgrounds, including those working with very high risk groups, identified a strength based focus as being important. Seeking out existing strengths and building on them, either with the young person individually or in a family context, was emphasised. It was noted that as well as being beneficial in itself, building strength was often a critical factor in changing the 'life path' of at risk youth.

"If you go looking for negative stuff on anybody you'll find it, but it's about turning it around and trying to look for the positive, find the positives in that young person and draw it out, and make the person believe that they've got something positive about themselves, and it's not all negative." – Participant 8

“One of the most interesting things in the literature is not why kids are naughty in the first place but why they stop being naughty - to use the technical term - so I think any initiative to work with you know at risk kids has got to be very mindful of those factors, which are not terribly well researched ... but it does seem to have something to do with finding a positive path in life, you know in terms of friends and courses and vocations, and kind of gradually moving away from antisocial influences and putting oneself in a position in life where it's just not productive, or there are sort of real and meaningful consequences to engaging in antisocial behaviour because you know you can't stay out all night tagging if you've got to go to work the next day. But I suppose consciousness of those sorts of factors in building whatever intervention is put together.” –Participant 3

Safe.

Experts emphasised the importance of creating a safe environment for young people. There were a variety of qualities that were seen as being related to this including being firm and consistent, ensuring a stable and predictable environment and also maintaining appropriate professional boundaries.

“Consistency, it's important that staff and young people are aware of the expectations and that these are consistent and ongoing. Communication, between different staff and between the staff and the young people is really important.” – Participant 9

Supportive.

The importance of a supportive, warm and caring environment was also considered to be important.

“Being there with them at critical moments; like at board meetings, court hearings, writing letters on their behalf. The advocate role, it convinces them you're not just doing your job, you're there for them when it matters.” – Participant 4

“Having somebody there, you know, of course kids being kids they gonna fall flat on their faces, but I think when you have someone there to pick you up and say dust yourself off, start again. You know, having someone there telling them, encouraging them, that it's ok to make mistakes. The difference between success and failure is your ability to get up so many times dust yourself off and keep going, knowing what your goals are that you've set for yourself.” – Participant 8

Respectful.

The quality of respect including being honest and direct with young people and judging on what you see in front of you rather than what other people have reported about a person.

“Seeing them for who they are, kind of really having the respect for them, that you don't kind of see them as a problem, see them for whom they are, yeah that respect is really huge for me, I show them respect, they show me respect, that how I build the rapport with them.” – Participant 5

“You don’t tell adolescents something and then do the opposite. You have to follow up, to deliver, or they will hold you to that for the rest of your life, they will remember and they’ll come back to you. It’s the same right across with young people, but I think the honesty is really important, the follow up, just saying this is what I’m going to do and this is what I can’t do.” – Participant 6

Appropriately Challenging.

Another theme identified by some experts was the importance of balancing support with challenge. In this sense, good timing in terms of knowing when to push for change and when to focus more on validating the current difficulties was emphasised.

“Giving them some encouragement that they’re doing some things right, that’s really critical, but then also challenging in a gentle and non-derogating way, what they are attempting to do and that maybe they need to just fine tune it slightly, so you’re empowering people not taking the power away not saying look there is a new deal here you’ve been doing it all wrong that sort of thing would be stupid, but it’s trying to find those moments, those parts of the power and leading them into a much more effective way of dealing with young people.” – Participant 4

People rich.

Both the qualities and activities described above essentially relate to people - things people do and things people are. The centrality of people is well described by the popular Maori proverb quoted by one participant:

“He aha te mea nui? He aha te mea nui o te ao? Maku e ki atu, He Tangata, He Tangata, He Tangata – that’s what you have to remember: [translation] What is the most important thing? What is the most important thing in the world? I will say to you, It is people, It is people, It is people” – Participant 6

Experts emphasised the importance of having staff that were appropriate, skilled and well qualified as well as these qualities as individuals, the function of the staff team was also seen as important.

“Choosing the right people to do it, people that are pretty adept socially and can walk into any household and be friendly and open and establish rapport with virtually anybody, and just be pleasant to have around – they don’t lecture the parents or anything like that, and maybe, from the kids perspective I guess you want somebody who’s kind of on the youngish side but from the parents perspective you don’t want them to be too young, because if you know a grey haired professional turns up to do the work with the family, the parents might think, oh yes, this person has been around and knows a bit but the kids will think I don’t want to work with granddad. The choice of person is really important.” – Participant 3

“I think you need to have, certainly a synergy of working together as a group, that know each other and are going to complement each other.” – Project K Programme Director

Challenges.

As well as identifying the key activities and qualities that effective intervention might involve, experts identified a variety of challenges. These challenges related to the population, resources and the systems surrounding youth focused work in New Zealand.

Population: Peer influence.

The potential for peers to have a negative impact in a group situation was highlighted by expert participants. This was particularly noted as an issue if an intervention was to be a 'modified Project K' that involves significant group interaction. Other participants identified the inevitability – and importance of peer relationships in adolescence – and noted that rather than trying to avoid contact with peers, such contact should be managed in terms of coaching families and young people and recognising that a positive peer group may have a beneficial influence.

“Because of this macho image that they portray a lot, most of them tend to, um, get the pack mentality, you know you have some of them that, like for example, we’ll be sitting in a room and somebody will make a smart comment, taking the mickey out of the other person, and if it’s not challenged, or dealt with straight away you get the other ones joining, you know, he’s getting a lot of laughs, so then everyone else will start picking on the same person.” – Participant 8

“Sometimes the only way out for them is the next best thing, is to latch onto their peers, and those peers, also, I do believe are important, it’s important to support the young person with their peers and parents need to kind of overcome some of their own kind of anxieties about young people mixing together – that they’ll influence each other and do bad things. But really there are some that are really good influences on other young people, and those you need to look for and support those relationships, those people, that’s another arm for the young person, especially young women.” – Participant 5

Population: diverse needs.

Another key challenge identified by experts was the diversity of needs that were likely to be relevant to excluded young people. Such variety was seen as partly due to the fact the behaviours identified by exclusion are diverse, and also that even those with similar behaviour may have different needs. This was seen as particularly challenging with regard to developing a programme as different strategies would be relevant for different youth.

“The thing is they’re all going to have really different needs, and that makes things difficult when you’re thinking in terms of a programme.” – Participant 6

Population: Family problems or lack of family.

As noted above family work was identified as central to effective intervention. A challenge related to this identified by experts was problems with the family that were entrenched and not amenable to change, or instances where the young person may no longer have a family as such.

“I think there are families who are beyond that. Until the adults, or the people in the child’s life, are prepared to make some changes, want to, then it won’t work, we can pour in resources as well but if people don’t want to do it, nothing will change, it’s just a total waste of money ... and there are some, where it’s not so good unfortunately, again the break down of the system, the breakdown of the family, you know and these kids, who, well they have no family, no connection to anyone, apart from the CYFs worker or the house parent, they’ve been to or the 40 placements they’ve been in. And that’s so sad.” – Participant 5

Population: Openness to Change

Experts emphasised the importance of engagement and building motivation with young people and with families, however, it was acknowledged that there were some instances where at that point in time, with that modality, there may be a lack of readiness to change.

“Sometimes you may have to exclude the person if it doesn’t work, I mean after all you’re resourceful people and you try your hardest and you’re well intentioned and all of that, so the culmination of skill and well intention and love and passion is if it doesn’t work well the kids not there at that stage, and at that stage nothing is going to work of that sort, so maybe that person needs to go back into something else” – Participant 4

“And we have had cases, with a lot of cases it’s like that, some of them will only go to therapy because somebody tells them to go so they just go, and when somebody tells that to you, that it doesn’t come from here [indicates the heart] it’s just not going to work. That’s another thing, when you want to make change I can work with that, but if you just want to come because your social worker wants you to be here then we need to talk about that because it’s not going to work, it’s a waste of every bodies time.” – Participant 5

A challenge identified by a programme director was that a lack of openness may translate into difficulties recruiting participants to take part in any intervention.

“I think that engaging, individuals and families will be a challenge, because you know as I mentioned with some of our schools we have 30 we invite to our information evenings and 12 will choose to come eventually and sometimes a lot of encouragement has to go on for that to happen, now I think in those particular schools too there is a lot, a high exclusion rate, so the difficulty is going to be getting compliance and non-resistance from the young people and the families just to actually physically go on the programme, that’s going to be a challenge. – Project K Programme Director

Resources.

Challenges related to resources were also identified by experts. It was acknowledged that the type of intervention seen as being effective – particularly multi-systemic programmes including family work over a significant period of time – were expensive. However, challenges related to resources were not only about money, finding appropriate staff – particularly family therapists, and also staff with both clinical and cultural expertise – was also seen as a critical challenge.

Money.

Getting adequate, predictable, and sustainable sources of funding was seen as a major challenge. Participants highlighted that while funding might be made available for new programmes, often there was no certainty with regard ongoing funding which significantly impacts programmes ability to function.

So in essence that's the issue, so the idea is when CYFs leaves, or when the programme leaves, these kids go home to their families, and this is the last time that there is funding for it, and you look at the research for this group, and these are the kids that go to jail. Which is really expensive. But there is not the funding for family therapy. There is the money to spend a 1000 a week for somebody in jail, but there is not the funding to deal with this destroyed family. – Participant 2

People.

Additionally, finding qualified and dedicated staff with the appropriate skills was also identified as a challenge regardless of available funding:

It's not only lack of resources, but also lack of, I suppose, people, people with skills who can go to a family and look at the whole kind of system, who's within that system, to kind of bring them in. And also I suppose the cultural aspect of things, that's another major issue, is to look at the cultural kind of background of the family, and have the... not because that person is from the same culture or because they speak the language, but also that person has to have the skills to know how to bring those people in within the family system. So, I suppose that we have to have the skilled people to do the work. And even if the resources are there, I think that the key point is also for highly skilled people to work in this field. – Participant 5

"Good family therapists are extremely hard to come by in this county"— Participant 2

Systemic.

Finally, challenges related to the structure of the current systems of governance and funding for youth focused work were identified. The competitive nature of funding, the lack of focus on family work, and the fragmentation of services were cited as particularly problematic.

“The greatest barriers are the blinders of the systems, that there is such a tremendous focus on just the kids and not the funding necessary for the families.” – Participant 2

“I mean I believe in community development not [name] development! So I’m quite focused on that. I’m quite committed to sharing knowledge in a positive way. But you know, the way programmes are funded in New Zealand makes it very difficult, usually competitive, even though we all pretend we’re not. We’re very good at that. We all want to work collaboratively but you know, it’s difficult.” – Participant 7

Limitations

There are a variety of limitations relevant to this part of the research that should be kept in mind. A key limitation relates to the lack of direct input from young people and in particular the lack of direct contact with excluded young people and their families. Clearly, this group is best positioned to identify their own needs. Furthermore, there was a relatively small number of participants involved in interviews. The method of participant selection employed – which drew on ‘experts’ from an extremely wide variety of settings – led to a high level of diversity. While this was in some ways a strength, it can also be considered a limitation in terms of the impact it had on analysis. In particular there was a lesser degree of convergence across participants in terms of what they identified as important – not all themes were endorsed by all participants, there were two notable exceptions to this: the quality ‘people rich’ and the activity ‘family work’. The reduced convergence is probably at least partly due to the fact that experts’ understandings of the population that excluded youth represented were informed by the populations that they currently worked with. Another limitation was the fact that interviews were undertaken over a long period of time – almost ten months – and over this time my thinking and probably my interview style changed and developed which is likely to have had some effect on participants’ responses. It is also apparent that responses tended to be framed in terms of an outside intervention – reflective of the ‘programme solution’ thinking that guided this phase of the research.

Summary

Results from expert interviews highlighted a variety of needs that can be conceptualised in terms of intervention qualities (responsive, integrated, strength focused, people rich, engaging, safe, supportive, respectful and challenging) and intervention activities (assessment, information/education, goal setting, family work, experiential/adventure activities, and educational/occupational opportunity). Experts also highlighted challenges related to working with at risk young people within a youth development framework, these included challenges related to the population (diversity of needs, family difficulties, negative peer influence and readiness to change) and challenges related to resource (scarcity of skilled/appropriate staff, lack of knowledge,

and expense of appropriate interventions). Overall, expert interviews supported the utilising a positive youth development strategy, but also emphasised the need to assess and address risk in addition to building on strengths — within a multi-systemic (including individual, family, community and societal level) individualised framework.

Chapter 6: Evolving approaches to action: from ‘fixing problems’ to ‘addressing issues’.

This chapter focuses on the implications of the current research for FYD and Project K and particularly the way in which thinking about an appropriate response to the issues of exclusion changed over the course of the research. In addition, the process of disseminating findings and the collaborative development of recommendations will be outlined. As observed in Chapter 1, ‘the word exclusion has negative connotations and the exclusion of any student is an uncomfortable reality for many Project K and FYD staff’. Indeed the core impetus at the outset of the research was a shared sense that exclusion was problematic, in that a group of young people who needed help were not being supported, and that this situation required some sort of response. Over the duration of the project, as more information came to light, there was an evolution in thinking regarding what might constitute an appropriate response. Initially, the development of a programme targeting excluded youth was a focus. This reflects the sentiment of many Project K and school staff that ‘it would be great if all students could experience a programme like Project K’, and furthermore, a belief that students exhibiting behaviours specified by the exclusion criteria may be particularly in need of the positive influence the Project K affords.

Although there are merits to these sentiments, when conceptualised with regard to the context and underlying rationale (as described in Chapter 4), exclusion becomes a more complicated issue. Considerations such as safety, the likelihood that students will benefit and the resources and skills available to the programme mean that exclusion serves an important and appropriate purpose within Project K, if still in some ways problematic or uncomfortable. Essentially, a more complete understanding and careful analysis of exclusion led to a shift from away from focusing exclusively on a ‘programme solution’.

Rethinking the ‘Programme’ Solution

The initial stages of the research process raised issues that relate to both the feasibility and desirability of developing a programme targeting excluded youth. These issues lead to a gradual shift from an initial focus on developing a new ‘programme’ to a broader conceptualisation of possibilities for change. This section will outline key issues that contributed to this shift.

Numbers.

Prior to the investigation undertaken in the first phase of the research there was no objective indication of the number of students being excluded from Project K. The findings from this

part of the research had a significant effect on the thinking around exclusion. First, the high degree of variability in the number of students being excluded raised concern about the consistency of exclusion decisions across programmes. As well as being an issue that may be beneficial to address in itself, this would impact any potential programme in that it may mean that different thresholds were being applied in different Project K programmes thus increasing the variability within the excluded group. In addition, in terms of feasibility, it would pose a challenge in that the number of potential participants would be extremely variable. So for example based on the data, there were several instances where within a particular school there might be as few as four potential participants in one year but then as many as 30 the following year. Second, if the outliers at the higher end of the distribution are discounted (based on the assumption that they are the result of a change in the way decisions about exclusion are made which will be corrected) then there are relatively few students who are being excluded from Project K. In conjunction with the suggestion from expert interviews that recruitment might be somewhat challenging, there may actually be very few potential participants who would be willing to engage in any intervention targeting excluded young people.

Diverse needs.

A second relevant factor was highlighted by experts in terms of the variability of the group of excluded youth. Not only do the criteria themselves represent a broad range of issues, it appears they are applied in varied ways and even those with similar behaviours may have different needs. As a result, excluded youth as a group do not necessarily share any characteristics other than age and the fact that they were excluded from selection to Project K. The high degree of diversity would have several implications in terms of any intervention. Experts highlighted that different strategies would be required for different participants depending on the particular issues that they faced and the strengths or resources that were available within their environment. Essentially, this limits the degree of specificity a programme can have. In order to accommodate the degree of flexibility required to be responsive to these varied needs, set content and a group based format – as in Project K and other interventions run by the FYD - are unlikely to be feasible. In addition, finding staff that are skilled in dealing with such a wide variety of issues either in group, individual or family based formats would be challenging.

Best use of resources.

The ideal intervention described by experts – an individualised multi-systemic long-term intervention implemented by excellent staff – would be resource heavy. Such an intervention would

also be significantly different to that currently provided by Project K, in particular both experts and research suggest that grouping young people with problem behaviours may have a detrimental effect in terms of increasing substance use and other antisocial behaviours (Dishion et al., 1999; Dodge et al., 2006). If issues related to the inconsistency in the way in which decisions regarding exclusion are made, it is likely that there will be a relatively small number of youth being excluded. Given that some of these young people may already be accessing services – either within or outside of schools – and others are likely to do so in the near future, whether developing a programme for this group would be a good use of resources must be questioned. The lack of information about the outcomes (short, medium and long term) experienced by excluded youth is problematic in that without such information it is difficult to establish whether such resource heavy intervention would be justified. However, it is likely that there would be a range of outcomes among excluded youth. The differentiation between adolescent-onset and life-course-persistent ‘delinquents’ is particularly significant in that different strategies for intervention may be appropriate for each of these groups (Moffitt, 1993; Moffitt et al., 2002). Furthermore, mixing these two groups may have a significant detrimental impact on those in the ‘adolescent-onset’ group – who generally have better outcomes provided the influence of anti-social peers is minimised.

Another key consideration is the whether there may be other areas where the resource may produce more significant benefit. Essentially, if the FYD is interested in working with higher risk populations there is no reason that this has to be linked to exclusion from Project K – and indeed other groups may prove to provide a better cost-benefit ratio. For example, one expert suggested if such a resource heavy programme was to be established, it may be more beneficial to focus on a younger age group showing significant risk behaviours. As well as the cumulative benefits of earlier intervention, this would separate the ‘adolescent-onset’ from the ‘life-course-persistent’ groups.

Impact on Project K.

Finally, some Project K staff raised concerns related to whether establishing a programme for excluded youth that is run in conjunction with the Project K may negatively affect Project K. This is reflective of the fact that Project K was the primary concern of most participants involved in the research. As such, concerns about the current practice of Project K – such as the use of a control group in the evaluation, and the fact that there were many students who fitted the existing target profile who could not be offered a place - were often raised. As noted in the previous chapter the exclusion of at risk youth was seen as important to ensure the needs of participants did not exceed the resource, skill and competence of the programme. In this sense programme directors noted that a programme for excluded youth would need to be significantly modified from Project K and that

staff and resources were already stretched such that accommodating any further requirements would be untenable. Programme directors also raised some concerns regarding modifying the selection process – whether this be to include selecting students for another programme, or to increase the consistency of decisions regarding exclusion. Key issues raised included the possible stigmatising effect of a programme that specifically targets young people who have been excluded and the impact modifying the Project K selection might have in terms of time required by the liaison team. Essentially, any proposed changes must take into account the concerns of Project K programme directors and the workloads of staff already involved in Project K programmes.

Conclusions.

While certainly not impossible, the above discussion raises questions about the desirability and feasibility of developing and running a programme for excluded youth. Considering alternative possibilities for action that may feasibly and effectively address the issue of exclusion before committing to a ‘programme solution’ is necessary. This might include addressing issues related to problems in the way exclusion currently happens – which may considerably reduce the number of excluded youth - and alternative possibilities (other than a dedicated programme) for meeting the needs of excluded youth. These will be detailed in the following section.

Dissemination and Developing Recommendations

This final aspect of the research focused on communicating findings and developing recommendations in collaboration with Project K and FYD staff. In addition to written reports, dissemination of the results involved a series of presentations at the Project K NSO (which is based at the FYD) and a presentation to Auckland based Project K staff, a workshop focused around identifying the key issues raised by the research and coming up with possible actions to address these issues, and finally, following up from the workshop and ‘passing the reins’ such that ownership and control of the research and its implications for moving forward sat squarely with FYD and the NSO.

Presentations.

A series of presentations outlining the key findings of the research were conducted. The first presentation was held at FYD and focused on the shift in focus away from developing a programme for excluded young people toward a broader conceptualisation of the research as understanding how exclusion was currently working and considering possibilities for meeting the needs of the young people currently excluded. Following this, another three presentations at the

FYD dealt with 1) a quantitative profile of exclusion in Project K, 2) a qualitative perspective on the current practice of exclusion in Project K and 3) expert perspectives on the needs of the young people currently excluded from Project K. Presentations were one hour long with about 15 minutes of this time being dedicated to questions and discussion.

As well as communicating the findings of the research, these presentations were a way of maintaining communication and involvement with the FYD and getting feedback on the direction the research was taking. Opportunity for questions and discussion followed each presentation and sometimes questions from the research team that required further reference to, or even analysis of, the data were followed up subsequent to the presentation. In this sense the presentations offered an opportunity to check the ecological validity of the findings.

Workshop.

The next stage in the process of dissemination involved a workshop focused on developing ideas for a potential action was conducted at FYD/NSO. The workshop aimed to maximise the value of the research the FYD and Project K programme by collaboratively generating recommendations for action based on the findings from the research. Essentially, it was hoped that recommendations generated through this process would reflect an integration of the information gained through the research process and the values, needs, and capabilities of participants (and therefore FYD and the Project K programme).

An information sheet and invitation to participate in the workshop was circulated among FYD/NSO staff who had been involved in the research in some way. Seven participants attended a three hour workshop, including members of the FYD research and evaluation team representing Project K NSO, the FYD, the University of Auckland and one of the founders of Project K. The workshop was based around three key steps. First a brief review of the results of the research was presented, following this, participants were asked to identify the 'key findings' – described as "those findings that are important for FYD or Project K to look at more or work on in some way". The final stage of the workshop focused on generating ideas for possible actions that addressed these key findings. Ideas were collated on large sheets of paper, participants were asked to refrain from critiquing or raising objections to particular ideas at this stage and multiple ideas addressing the same issue were encouraged.

The process in the workshop was relatively free flowing, and participants were able to generate ideas with minimal encouragement. Although some participants were more active than others, everyone present contributed ideas to the process. At the end of the workshop key findings

and actions that related to current practice around exclusion in Project K, possibilities for meeting the needs of excluded youth, and further knowledge required were identified.

Workshop follow-up.

Following the workshop I collated the key findings and possible actions that had been identified and sent these as a draft document to participants asking them to provide feedback. Three basic questions were asked: First, whether the ideas represented in the document were a 'good enough' representation of what was discussed at the workshop. Essentially, in constructing the document I had made an attempt to clarify and carefully delineate each item on the list and also to make sure the list covered everything that what was discussed including aspects of some ideas that had not been clearly noted on paper. Second, I asked participants whether there were other ideas they wished to put forward that were not currently listed. Finally, in drafting the document I realised that there were some 'key findings' that were not clearly addressed in terms of possible actions. I did not attempt to make each action directly correspond with one key finding as actions tended to address multiple findings and findings informed multiple actions. However, participants were asked to consider whether key findings without related actions should be addressed, and if so what possible actions might address the finding in question. After receiving feedback from participants the document was edited accordingly and is presented in Table 21.

The next part of the process was to review the ideas generated through the workshop. At this stage in the research part of my focus was to begin extracting myself from the project and handing over ownership and responsibility to FYD / NSO. To this end, the next stage in the process happened at FYD without my presence. Three key participants (the PK national programme manager, the FYD research and evaluation co-ordinator, and the FYD programme development manager) were invited and agreed to get together to review the options for action identified through the workshop. Suggested criteria and structure for doing this was provided, but the actual process was left open to however the group saw fit. The suggested criteria for evaluating options were: feasibility, importance, effectiveness and ethical acceptability (working definitions were provided as listed in Table 20). The suggested structure for the workshop was for the three participants to discuss each of the options in terms of these criteria and then settle on a rating between 0 ('not at all') and 10 ('extremely') for each criterion. Space for general comments was also provided for any qualifications or other observations. Following this, it was suggested that each participant 'vote' on their preference. A system in which participants each had ten votes and could allocate these in any way they wished was suggested, for example, participants could allocate two

votes to five different options, or ten votes to a single option, or five votes to one and one to five other or any other combination.

Table 20: Criteria suggested for evaluating options for action

Criteria	Working Definition
Feasibility	The degree to which the resources (including money, skill, and time) the action requires are currently available, or, could reasonably be made available.
Importance	The degree to which the proposed action addresses issues which are significant to the FYD and Project K.
Effectiveness	The likelihood that the proposed action will in fact resolve the issue it relates to.
Ethical Acceptability	The degree to which the proposed action is ethically acceptable – this might include consideration of concepts such as non-maleficence (do no harm), beneficence (do good), fairness or equality, respect for peoples or persons and their right to autonomy, accurate information and privacy and any other moral or ethical principals seen as relevant.

Table 21: Key Findings and Possible Actions Related to Exclusion in Project K

Area	Key findings	Possible Actions
Current Practice	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Currently in the manual there is a focus on process and a lack of explicit description of the rational or purpose of exclusion or the types of things that should be considered in making decisions. 2) Lack of consistency across PD's / liaison teams in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understandings <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Of specific criteria b) Of rationale behind exclusion c) Of PK programme & target group • Expertise and experience required to balance complex considerations. This not something that is explicitly described or trained and thus relies on individuals 'practice wisdom' • The numbers of students that are being excluded 3) Currently there is very little flexibility or room for discretion in the process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PD's are unsure how to fit YP into the criteria but because they have to they make them fit. 4) Establishing whether a particular situation requires exclusion is inherently difficult, in addition, PD's and liaison teams face a number of challenges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of time • Difficulty getting the right people (GC's particularly) together to have a discussion • Lack of information 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Instructions in the manual and training around exclusion to be modified to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rationale/purpose underlying exclusion • The specific considerations PD's in this research identified (safety, pattern of behaviour, potential to benefit, wider context, impact on school, group dynamics) • More description of the current criteria, including discussion of each in terms of a continuum and pointers of any possible demarcation of thresholds for exclusion 2) Work towards a more collaborative approach (both in terms of the relationship between NSO and PK licensees and between licensees and schools) around exclusion based on a common understanding of the purpose and rationale that underlie the practice and respect for each parties expertise and good intention. 3) Communicate findings of this research and including reasoning behind any changes with PD's nationally. 4) Increase flexibility in the process and allow programme directors some discretion in making decisions in line with a common understanding of the purpose of exclusion. 5) Have additional information / guidance available to PD's and liaison teams, this could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A video describing the PK target group and the rationale behind exclusion and the processes around this. • Contacts for peer support/consultation for Programme Directors (as well as the existing option of talking to NSO). 6) Make quantitative information on exclusion available to PD's in the form of graphs/tables (N/programme graph showing all programmes and reasons for exclusion tables – total and gender split). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to decide if it should be through intranet or sent out with other information • Emphasise that some variation is expected and higher or lower numbers is not necessarily a problem.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dynamics within the PK-liaison team relationship • Inflexibility in terms of reporting required by NSO 	<p>7) Clarify guidelines (in manual and training) around who should ideally be involved with an emphasis on the importance of GC involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge difficulty of facilitating GC involvement and identify strategies currently being used i.e. flexibility around meeting with GC's at separately if unable to attending the liaison team meeting.
Meeting the needs of excluded youth	<p>1) Excluded YP are a diverse group and likely to require diverse strategies that don't fit within a single programme.</p> <p>2) At a very broad/basic level the activities and qualities of effective intervention are common to PK population and YP in general but with at risk youth, these activities and qualities become more critical and need to be more intensive and individualised based on holistic assessment.</p> <p>3) Family work is absolutely crucial to effective intervention with more at risk YP.</p> <p>4) YP excluded from PK have needs that go beyond FYD's current core competencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive intervention would require a collaboration co-ordinated approach involving other providers • FYD's role within such a collaboration would need to be very clear, something around PYD, WA, goals and mentoring (finding a positive direction is important for at risk youth) 	<p>1) Other than improving current practice around exclusion, take no action in regarding to meeting the needs of excluded youth at the current time.</p> <p>2) Work toward developing an adapted Project K targeting excluded YP (PK look alike would require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater expertise in the facilitators (e.g., counselling skills) • Adjusting the WA component to ensure safety, likely shorter • Networking with other community agencies <p>3) Include YP in the standard PK programme with some extra supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More thorough assessment – possibly by GC • Dependant on WA providers capacity – may require additional staff • WA provider involvement in selection • Priority matching and highly skilled mentors – 2nd time around • Limit on numbers (1 or max 2 per programme) and a planned focus on group dynamics to ensure the maintenance of positive social norms <p>4) Refer excluded YP to existing services either within or outside of school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility for the student stays with the school GC <p>5) A mix of 3 & 4 at the discretion of PD's with some YP unsuitable for either strategy.</p> <p>6) Work toward developing a 'programme' that FYD can offer as part of a co-ordinated and collaborative approach involving outside providers targeting medium-high risk YP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link with family based service (likely to be central provider) as source of referral to FYD for a component that focuses on PYD – in particular the use of Wilderness Adventure (possibly including a significant adult), goal setting and mentoring to facilitate motivation and the development of/engagement with a positive life direction.

Further Knowledge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Why is it that higher numbers of Maori and Pacific Island students are excluded? And why are more Pacific Island students excluded for GC? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much is explained by Maori having lower self efficacy? • Is Maori having lower self efficacy related to the cultural appropriateness of the self efficacy measure? • Is it because there are higher rates of exclusion in the schools with higher proportions of Maori and Pacific Island students? • How much of Pacific Island – Guidance Counsellor recommendation relationship is explained by the one school where there were 27 GC exclusions? • Is the way in which LT members assess risk and balance other considerations when making decisions regarding the exclusion of Maori and Pacific Island youth appropriate? 2) Are excluded YP currently accessing services? 3) What are the current responses of school staff and PD's in terms of seeking supports for excluded YP? 4) Are there any regional differences, particularly in smaller communities. 5) What services already exist and what are the gaps? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Region by region basis as well as nationally available services • Are PD's aware of the available services? 6) What is FYD's strategic direction and priorities? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Continue collecting quantitative information about exclusion via E12a's <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic analysis of information to make graphs • Regional differences in quantitative part 2) Expand information collected to include whether YP are already accessing services (either within or outside the school) and if they are referred as a result of being identified in this process. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modify E12a form 3) Seek cultural advice on changes to the manual and training to help ensure that the official procedure and the suggested considerations are culturally appropriate. 4) Investigate whether any of the questions about the reasons for higher numbers of Maori and Pacific Island exclusions can be addressed with the current data. 5) Monitor/evaluate any changes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantitative data • Seek feedback from PD's and liaison teams and adjust as necessary.
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Ratified recommendations.

The following actions were chosen subsequent to a process whereby FYD staff reviewed the feasibility, importance, effectiveness and ethical acceptability of potential actions. The process undertaken was a variation on that suggested above. Rather than rating each recommendation the process was more fluid and based on dialogue and discussion between participants. Each action was considered and discussed as a whole and then a decision was made on whether to ratify a particular recommendation. A subsequent meeting was also held to more clearly specify details and actions agreed upon.

Ratified recommendations related to findings regarding current practice:

- Modify instructions in the evaluation manual and training materials to include the rationale for exclusion.
- Communicate the findings of this research to community partners (Project K licensees) through training and putting research details / findings on the intranet.
- Review / revise the current PowerPoint presentation on the exclusion criteria used in training Project K staff.
- Ensure ongoing NSO support is available for new Programme Directors.
- Continue to collect quantitative information on exclusion and advise Programme Directors that this is available on request.

Ratified recommendations related to meeting the needs of excluded youth:

- Refer excluded young people to existing services either within or outside of the school.
 - NB: responsibility for the student would stay with the school / guidance counsellor.
- Further scope the feasibility of developing a 'programme' that FYD can offer as part of a co-ordinated and collaborative approach involving outside providers targeting medium-high risk YP and the possibility of linking with an existing family based service (likely to be central provider) as source of referral to FYD for a component that focuses on PYD – in particular the use of Wilderness Adventure (possibly including a significant adult), goal setting and mentoring to facilitate motivation and the development of/engagement with a positive life direction.

Ratified recommendations related to further knowledge / research:

- Continue to collect information on exclusion data and formalise the data collection process.
 - Format graphically and make available on the intranet.
 - It was chosen not to expand the data collection process to include whether young people are already accessing services or whether they are subsequently referred as this was seen as outside the role of the programme. It was also decided not to examine regional differences.

- Seek cultural advice on changes to the manual and training to help ensure the official procedure and the suggested considerations when making decisions about exclusion are culturally appropriate.
 - This is to be included in business plans for 2011.
 - Research and evaluation team to promote as a potential student project, supported by NSO. This project could examine:
 - Why is it that higher numbers of Maori and Pacific Island students are excluded? And why are more Pacific Island students excluded on Guidance Counsellor recommendation?
 - How much is explained by Maori having lower self efficacy?
 - Is Maori having lower self efficacy related to the cultural appropriateness of the self efficacy measure?
 - Is the way in which liaison team members assess risk and balance other considerations when making decisions regarding the exclusion of Maori and Pacific Island youth appropriate?
- Following changes to materials around exclusion policies and procedures, develop processes to monitor and evaluate the changes.

Summary

This chapter has outlined the main implications of this research for FYD and Project K with a focus on identifying potential changes that could be made with regard to the current practice of exclusion. The 'evolving approaches to action' outlined in this chapter illustrate the way in which information and enriched understanding have an impact on thinking about change. Within the current research, there was a shift in thinking about strategies for change. Initially, there was a focus on developing a programme for excluded youth as the most appropriate action. However, as more information became available on the issue of exclusion and as this information led to a more careful consideration of exclusion there was a shift toward thinking about possibilities for addressing the issue of exclusion in a broader sense. Key stakeholders from FYD / NSO were involved in a process of collaboratively identifying possibilities for action and evaluating these options to form the basis for recommendations regarding both the current practice of exclusion and possibilities for meeting the needs of young people currently excluded from Project K.

Chapter 7: Discussion

This thesis has detailed a collaborative research project focused on participant selection within the youth development programme Project K, and particularly, the exclusion of potential participants who are seen as outside the target population of the programme due to their risk behaviours. The methodology drew heavily on concepts based on engaged scholarship (Van de Ven, 2007) including action research (Greenwood & Levin, 2007) and community psychology (Rappaport & Seidman, 2000). The research was structured in two key phases, the first of which focused on understanding current practice around exclusion from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. The second phase focused on identifying possibilities for meeting the needs of the young people currently excluded from Project K. This included expert interviews focused on the needs excluded young people and the dissemination of the findings and a collaborative process for generating recommendations for action.

The implications of the findings of this research for the FYD and PK are discussed in previous chapters; this chapter takes a broader perspective on the findings of the research. First a brief review of key findings is presented before a discussion around the generally relevant implications (as opposed to locally relevant) of the research will be presented. This includes the implications this research has for the possibilities and challenges around the integration of PYD and risk focused approaches. A key starting point with regard to this is the way in which the current research builds on the recommendations of the New Zealand Ministry for Youth Development in terms of which young people are most appropriately targeted by PYD intervention (Ministry of Youth Development, 2009).

Another relevant issue is how the developmental trajectories relevant to young people with antisocial behaviour may impact on appropriate PYD intervention and in particular the implications that the 'adolescent limited' and 'life course persistent' typology would have in terms of group based PYD programmes (Dodge et al., 2006; Moffitt et al., 2002). Reflections around how holistic accounts of youth development offer a theoretically coherent way of integrating risk and strength focused approaches are emphasised. In particular the implications of a view of risk behaviours as functioning to meet relevant underlying developmental needs is discussed (Bonino et al., 2005). Following this, reflections on the methodological approach taken in this research - collaborative, local, action focused inquiry will be considered. Finally, limitations and suggestions for future research will be outlined.

Summary of Findings

In the first phase of the research, programme directors records regarding the number of students being excluded and the basic demographic profile of these students were analysed. This showed that there is considerable variability in the number of students excluded from Project K in different programmes. This is probably at least partly due to differences in the way decisions about exclusion are made. In the vast majority of cases the number of students being excluded is between 3 and 16, with more males than females excluded. The exclusion criteria in the Project K manual were indicated as the reason for exclusion in the following order of frequency: guidance counsellor recommendation, violence, cognitive and learning difficulties, substance abuse, regular counselling and suicide attempts. There are differences in the reason for exclusion based on gender. Males are more likely to be excluded for violence while females are more likely to be excluded for being in regular counselling for serious problems. With regards to self efficacy, excluded students self efficacy is not significantly lower than PK/controls but both of these groups have lower self efficacy than the remainder of the school. This is because low self efficacy is the primary selection criterion. In the overall sample, analysis showed that Maori students had lower self efficacy than other ethnic groups however post hoc analyses showed this was only significant in the 'other' group suggesting there are few Maori students endorsing the higher levels of self efficacy. In addition, both Maori and Pacific students were more likely to be excluded. There is also a relationship between ethnicity and reason for exclusion, with Maori students being more likely to be excluded for substance abuse, Pacific students being more likely to be excluded based on guidance counsellor recommendation, and less likely to be excluded for being in regular counselling for serious problems, and finally New Zealand European students are more likely to be excluded for being in regular counselling for serious problems.

To further build a thorough understanding of exclusion the next stage of the research involved semi-structured interviews with programme directors and school staff involved with selection for the Project K programme. These interviews highlighted the complexity of the exclusion process. Essentially, the analysis provided a conceptual model with three key categories of themes – purpose, challenges in making good decisions and perspectives on the survey. The procedure and process around selection and exclusion is the current focus of the evaluation manual; while an important aspect of exclusion, the criteria given need further interpretation when considering individual students and no guidelines should be blindly followed. All participants referred to the fact that exclusion serves an important purpose in enhancing the efficacy of the Project K programme - by ensuring a match between the strengths and competencies of the programme and the needs of

students - and also by preventing unnecessary exclusion to ensure the programme reached an appropriate range of young people. This need to balance such factors is likely relevant to any PYD programme considering incorporating at risk young people in the target population. Project K programme directors identified multiple factors that they considered in making decisions about exclusion, however, these can be summarised generally relating to two areas: 1) issues related to safety of the individual and the group, and 2) the potential for the individual to benefit from participation. This can result in a complex process of weighing up a number of considerations in the case of some individuals. Programme directors and liaison staff face several challenges in making valid and reliable decisions about exclusion. Challenges include: that the variation in terms a young person's presentation means that deciding whether an individual's behaviour meets a specific criteria requires judgement, as such, each case must be assessed on its own merits; that programme directors and liaison teams have limited information on which to base their decisions; that there is limited time and opportunity available for discussion and deliberation; and finally, that there are a variety of relevant issues that programme directors saw as making students unsuitable for participation but that either did not fit easily into one category (i.e. sub threshold issues across criteria) or issues that are not covered by the existing criteria including students who had a low level of English language ability and students whose parents had refused participation in the programme following the self efficacy survey.

In the second phase of the research which related to identifying responses to exclusion, expert interviews were conducted and analysed in conjunction with relevant extracts from interviews with other stakeholders to address the questions 'what are the needs of excluded young people' and 'how can the FYD contribute to best meeting these needs'. Results highlighted desirable intervention activities (assessment, information/education, goal setting, family work, experiential/adventure activities, and educational/occupational opportunity) and intervention qualities (responsive, integrated, strength focused, people rich, engaging, safe, supportive, respectful and challenging). Experts also highlighted challenges related to working with at risk young people within a youth development framework, these included challenges related to the population (diversity of needs, family problems, the potential for negative peer influence and readiness to change) and challenges related to resources (scarcity of skilled/appropriate staff, and money in terms of securing reliable funding for appropriate interventions) and finally challenges related to the wide systemic context. Overall, expert interviews supported utilising a positive youth development strategy but emphasised the need to assess and address risk as well as working to build strengths within a multi-systemic (including individual, family, community and societal level) framework.

Integrating Young People At-risk as a Challenge for PYD

From the outset the tension between PYD and risk focused approaches was recognised as relevant to this research. PYD represents a shift away from emphasising the prevention and treatment of adolescent risk behaviour to focusing instead on more broadly preparing young people for adulthood (J. V. Lerner et al., 2009). Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) note that goals centred around promotion young people's abilities and competencies are one of three factors that differentiate PYD programmes, the other two being the programmes activities and atmosphere. Project K's goals fit clearly within this definition of PYD, with an overarching aim of 'maximising youth potential'. The focus in the current research on young people who are excluded due to their problem behaviours also clearly relates to a more risk focused way of thinking and working. The exclusion of certain 'at risk' young people in Project K is not unique, in fact representing a wider pattern in which there has come to be a separation between the approach taken to young people perceived to be 'at risk' and that with those who are not (Pittman et al., 2001). Karen Pittman articulates the divide between PYD and risk focused approaches that has begun to develop in stating that "there is an implicit double standard: fix those in trouble, develop those who are not" (Pittman et al., 2001, p. 33). Thus, the fact that dealing with young people with problem behaviours is a challenge for the PYD approach is well recognised. The issues identified for Project K through the in depth consideration of exclusion that took place in this research, and the possibilities and challenges associated with the concept of broadening the target population of the programme, are relevant to the wider context of PYD as a whole considering a similar shift.

As noted above, throughout the research participants referenced ideas about the purpose of exclusion. The idea that there is a function to exclusion (i.e., reasons why exclusion is necessary) essentially highlights the gaps between what Project K (and perhaps PYD programmes generally) currently offer and what would be needed if the programme (or the PYD 'movement' as a whole) were to serve a more at risk population. The first issue participants identified was safety, this included both physical and psychological safety related to the participant themselves, the safety of the other participants in the programme, and the safety of staff. Safety is clearly referenced as important in PYD. It is listed as an external asset that contributes to PYD in the Search Institute's reviews (Leffert et al., 1998) and as a quality of positive development contexts by Eccles and Gootman (2002). However, it may be that PYD programmes would need to adapt so as to further emphasise strategies to maintain safety within the setting of a programme if they were to serve a more high risk young people. A second issue related to the likelihood that potential participants would benefit from the programme; essentially there are some participants who may not pose a

safety issue but may be unlikely to benefit from the programme. A third issue that in some ways encompasses the previous two relates to the match between the needs of the potential participant and the scope of the Project K programme including skills of the staff. A mismatch between needs and competencies is likely to underlie situations where safety concerns emerge or there is little benefit to young people completing the programme. One expert participant talked about the need to acknowledge the limits of a 'designed and packaged programme'. Essentially exclusion is made more necessary the more rigid and the more narrowly targeted a programme becomes. While it is true that this limited version of PYD may be "either irrelevant or too insignificant" (Pittman et al., 2001, p. 32), it is not the case that this must or should be so. Rather, the challenge lies in practically realising the theoretical sophistication of the PYD approach.

Within a New Zealand context, the MYD has recognised the need to strategically review the ongoing place and relevance of PYD programmes reflected in the report on structured youth development programmes published in September 2009 (Ministry of Youth Development, 2009). The functions of exclusion identified in this research relate directly to the principals identified by the Ministry of Youth Development (2009). There are several points of agreement between the findings of this research and the recommendations made by MYD. First and foremost is the recognition that there is a need for PYD programmes to be targeted in some way and that part of this is likely to be excluding particular groups of young people. While PYD as a whole is relevant to all young people (Barton & Butts, 2008) there is a difference between PYD and PYD programmes. MYD identifies limited resources as one reason for this and also the concept that PYD intervention is likely to have more impact for certain groups of young people in this sense targeting 'at risk' young people may provide greater overall benefit. In terms of targeting those 'at risk' it is important to consider what it is that is being risked, Project K identifies young people unlikely to fulfil their potential as a target population, similarly MYD focuses on those young people unlikely to make a successful transition into adulthood. In both MYD and FPD approaches there is also recognition that some young people have adequate skills or supports to reach these goals without participation in a PYD programme. Another area of agreement between MYD and FPD approaches to the issue of participant targeting is that a range of considerations, including safety and risk, mean that exclusion may be necessary. MYD identifies the following as potential criteria for exclusion: young people who may be struggling but whose needs are more specific than those targeted by PYD (e.g., predominantly around employment, training or education), young people with established and significant offending habits (including violence), young people with serious drug and/or alcohol habits, young people who pose a safety risk to themselves, other participants or the programme, young people who have no desire or intention of participating in a meaningful way, those who are likely to create group negative/anti-

social norms, those who for physical, mental health or psychiatric reasons are unlikely to cope with the demands of the course (in which case it may be appropriate to exclude from components rather than the whole course), and finally those whose physical, mental health or psychiatric support needs exceed that which can reasonably be met by programme staff.

Again, both the FYD approach in the Project K programme and the MYD paper identify the idea that there are likely to be cases where inclusion in a PYD programme is 'conditional'. The challenge becomes making judgements in the case of young people who meet the criteria to be targeted by have some degree of the behaviours identified as potential criteria for exclusion. It is in this area that the current research provides further information on the issues that arise around this in practice. The description of programme director decision making in Project K provides a case study of how such a process happens and illustrates the need to go beyond lists of criteria. While the process does involve the application of specific procedures including the criteria stated in the programme manual, it also includes the balancing of a variety of considerations related to the young persons behavioural presentation and social context all with an underlying understanding of the purpose of exclusion within the setting and a high degree of knowledge of the specific programme and staff competencies. This reflects an understanding of youth development as ecological or multi-systemic (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and a recognition of the inter-relatedness of positive development and risk behaviours through the concept resilience (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000; Rutter, 1985). In order to make good decisions around exclusion there is a need to integrate available information - including having an overall understanding of the programmes purpose and competencies and a good understanding on presentation of risk behaviour in young people - rather than applying criteria in a rote manner. For example, the MYD identifies that young people likely to pose a risk to the safety of themselves or others should be excluded. In order to adequately address the question of risk a broad variety of factors need to be considered. For example, there needs to be adequate knowledge of any previous risk behaviour, the context of this behaviour where context is considered in the broadest sense as including both internal (e.g. attitudes, intentions, emotional states or skills) and external factors (e.g. social support, peer relationships) in which the behaviour occurred in the past and the similarities and differences between this context and the current context. In situations where there is inadequate information, which there often is, or where the people involved in making decisions are unfamiliar with the causes and course of risk behaviour in young people there is a risk of such decisions being overly cautious.

In the MYD conceptualisation of those young people for whom participation would be 'conditional' there seems to be a focus on mental health issues rather than the more antisocial spectrum of behaviours (e.g. violence, substance use). Within Project K, challenging decisions

tended to be more related to the latter group with decisions related to the former often being based on the recommendations of professionals involved in the care of that young person (e.g. guidance counsellors or mental health professionals) as recommended in the MYD paper. It is important to note that within PYD programmes there is variation in terms of the intensity of the intervention offered, and the programmes referred to in the MYD paper are on the more intensive end to the spectrum. The level of intervention offered by the programme is clearly an important consideration in making decisions in the 'conditional' category that is not emphasised in the criteria proposed in the MYD paper. As touched on earlier, having a wider theoretical foundation on which to base such decisions is also important. In the case of antisocial behaviours an important part of this foundation is an understanding of the different life course pathways that antisocial behaviour in adolescence may be part of (Moffitt, 1993; Moffitt et al., 2002). A relevant aspect of this is differentiating 'life course persistent' and 'adolescent onset' delinquent behaviour and recognising that these groups may have differing needs. Furthermore it may be that group based intervention of any sort may be inappropriate for adolescents in the 'life course persistent' group due to the potential 'deviant peer influence' (Dishion & Dodge, 2006; Dodge et al., 2006). More intensive intervention, and greater attention to addressing risk behaviour in addition to strength based programming, is likely to be necessary for this group.

Expert interviews offer another perspective on the potential for the integration of risk focused and PYD approaches. Experts appeared to endorse the option of integration to different levels but it is notable that even those working in explicitly risk focused settings (e.g., youth justice) acknowledge some of the defining goals, activities and qualities of PYD as outlined by Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003). These interviews also begin to provide some perspective on practically how the integration of PYD and problem focused approaches might be achieved. Essentially the key to integration proposed by experts was thorough assessment and a responsive approach to intervention based on this assessment. Thus, there is no single overarching principle for how risk and strength focused approaches should be combined. Having said this there are a few points of general relevance that can be made. First, findings from this part of the research were consistent with literature in stating that building strengths including positive activities and the potential for meaningful engagement in society is often an integral part of moving away from more antisocial attitudes, connections and activities (Harvey & Delfabbro, 2004).

Understanding the relevance of a young person's risk behaviour in terms of their wider development is important to the way programme directors made decisions about exclusion and has relevance for the targeting of PYD interventions in general. As noted at the outset of this research, adolescence is a period of transition involving both challenges and opportunity (Steinberg, 2005).

The multitude of changes (psychological – cognitive, emotional and behavioural - physical, and social) in this period and issues such as identity development, and increasing autonomy / shifts in relationships to others (family and peers) and complexity of cognitive process are relevant to all young people. This is regardless of whether they engage in risk behaviours (which most young people do to some extent) or the ‘life course pathway’ of those engaged in risk behaviours (Arnett, 1999; Steinberg & Morris, 2001). The potential for PYD to be of benefit to young people becomes clearer when risk behaviour is conceptualised within a developmental context that emphasises the *function* of such behaviours in terms of gaining personally, socially, and developmentally meaningful objectives (Bonino et al., 2005). If PYD interventions can offer feasible and adaptive alternative means for a young person to achieve these objectives they are likely to reduce risk behaviour. Experts highlighted the additional benefit of more positive approaches in terms of being more engaging to young people than approaches based solely on risk avoidance. Given that motivation and engagement is a significant challenge for both prevention and intervention this is no small benefit. This conceptualisation offers a theoretical premise for the integration of risk and strength focused approaches. In fact within this view it becomes nonsensical to consider addressing risk behaviours without considering how to replace the developmental functions they serve. In terms of programme targeting what needs to be established, likely on an individual basis, is whether the intervention in question can in fact offer feasible and adaptive alternative means for a young person to attain the function served by the risk behaviour in question. Answering this question brings us back to the need for thorough assessment and a degree of flexibility in order to be responsive to the needs of each individual young person.

The statement that thorough assessment and responsive intervention are what is required to successfully integrate risk focused and PYD approaches has implications for the skill set required by those involved in an integrated approach to intervention. There is currently a broad range of training and experience in those involved in administering PYD programmes in New Zealand and within Project K. This was reflected in some degree of variability in the level to which practitioners were able to explain their decision making processes and also in the complexity of those processes. In general many PYD practitioners would likely require significant support and perhaps further training in order to be competent in making ongoing individualised decisions about how to balance risk management and PYD interventions. The ‘professionalisation’ of youth work is a topic under discussion in New Zealand at this time and the issue of qualifications and training is significant source of controversy for a workforce that includes a significant proportion of experienced but untrained workers or volunteers (National Youth Workers Network Aotearoa Inc., 2008b). A significant development around this is the development of a code of ethics (National Youth Workers

Network Aotearoa Inc., 2008a). Another notable implication of expert interviews with regards to integrating PYD with more risk focused approaches is that there was a high degree of continuity and similarity in the concepts discussed by all participants despite the broad range of settings in which they worked. Moreover, many of the concepts they identify in working with more at risk groups are generally relevant and easily fit within PYD, perhaps reflecting a convergence in thinking similar to that found in the more modern articulations of thinking on prevention, resilience, and PYD (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Hamilton, 2006).

Reflections on Methodology

The methodological approach used in this research is somewhat unusual compared to that typically adopted in social science and academic research more generally. Concepts drawn from action research and community psychology were incorporated, and most essentially there was a broadening of the focus usually taken in research from not only producing reliable, valid and novel ‘knowledge’ but also ensuring the process through which this knowledge is produced, and the knowledge itself is useful and in particular useful to the specific group of people involved in the research. This represents a shift away from a model in which the production of knowledge and its application are separate and sequential processes to a more integrated approach that aims to bridge the ‘research-practice’ gap. The current section will discuss some of the unique opportunities, challenges and insights related to using such an approach.

The importance of avoiding assumptions about appropriate or ideal action before thorough understanding the issue being addressed or the complexities of the context in which it is occurring are understood is well recognised in action research (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). An important process in this research was my own shift in thinking regarding exclusion. More specifically shifting from viewing exclusion as a ‘problem’ and the related assumptions that were made about how best to solve this problem to taking a more contextually embedded view of exclusion as a ‘issue’ that first needs to be understood. It is interesting to note that although the need to carefully examine the assumptions guiding the research was recognised as an important from the outset of the research – reflected in there being a planned phase of the research focused on ‘understanding’ – certain assumptions were not recognised until well into this phase. This is possibly due to the fact that those involved in the early parts of the research shared similar assumptions and it was not until later when there was greater contact with a broader range of stakeholders that differing views around exclusion became more apparent. The emergence of underlying assumptions and fluidity of understandings around the issues being examined throughout the research process necessitated

ongoing reflection and openness to re-examining the planned directions for the wider research project.

Another methodological challenge that relates to the issue of needing to have a thorough understanding of the issue prior to developing strategies to address it is that perceptions of exclusion differed widely within the different groups of stakeholders. In this sense the wider organisational dynamics impacted the participants' perception of exclusion and whether it was a problem or not, and also of myself as a researcher and the purpose of the research. In this sense one role I found myself and the project occupying was that of facilitating communication between different stakeholder groups. It is well known that changing the flow of information in a social system has an impact on that system (Checkland & Poulter, 2006). In this sense the role of facilitating communication also became one of facilitating change. One concrete example of this process related to the part of the research focused on how programme directors were making decisions about exclusion. Programme directors were sometimes uncertain about how NSO or FYD would view their practice, and although it was not actively concealed it was also not something that was openly discussed. The positive and legitimising response from FYD and NSO regarding how the PK programmes involved were functioning in this regard provided affirmation for programme directors and a greater freedom to use their own discretion and knowledge to make decisions and discuss the thinking behind the decisions they were making with others.

As well as changing the flow of information between stakeholders, the process of directing attention to the issue of exclusion also had an impact on the system. This included adding information into the system by analysing and presenting data as well as simply raising the issues as something worth discussion and thought. In many senses this can be related to the model of feminist action research Reinharz (1992) refers to as demystification or the process 'consciousness raising' which can be understood as developing participants levels of awareness through collaborative inquiry and ultimately thereby empowering participants (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). In the current research there was also an extra dimension to this in that exclusion is an issue that had, arguably, been avoided due to the tensions inherent in the process. One part of the research was thus reporting 'uncomfortable truths' and encouraging constructive engagement with the issues at hand. As well as exclusion itself being a sensitive topic there were also questions raised by the research related to other potentially sensitive issues such as the ethnic profile of excluded students and the differences in the criteria cited for exclusion among different ethnic groups. One important example of this was the finding that Pacific Island students were less likely to be excluded for being in 'regular counselling for serious problems' but more likely to be excluded on guidance counsellor

recommendation. This may suggest that Pacific Island students are often known to staff involved in the selection process but are perhaps less likely to be receiving formal support.

A major challenge in the current research was the focus on a population that was explicitly outside of that currently served by the Project K programme or in fact the FYD. While there was clearly relevance to the PK programme in optimising participant selection and some interest in considering how the best serve excluded young people this positioning meant that especially in the latter stages of the research some participants essentially were more interested in optimising the Project K programme than extending already limited resources to serve a broader population. Different stakeholders also had different priorities which likely affected their participation in the research.

Another significant challenge related to the balance between and timing of the knowledge producing and change focused aspects of the research. As I have outlined above, the increased availability and salience of information around exclusion to stakeholders involved in the research had impacts on participants thinking, practice, and in fact the reality of the issue under study. This can be viewed as a form of action research. In this sense the research is not so much about 'solving a problem' but about an ongoing process of inquiry that through transactions with the situation and constructions of the frame through which the problem is understood brings about evolutions in the issue under study. Thus, "the proper test of a round inquiry is not only "Have I solved this problem?" but "Do I like the new problems I've created?" (Schön, 1995, p. 31).

Limitations

In relation to the research as a whole (as opposed to more specific limitations identified in previous chapters) there are several features that can be considered both limitations and strengths. The degree to which the research was responsive and embedded in the local context reduces its generalisability but increases their relevance and utility in the local setting. The research focused on the Auckland region rather than the programme at a national level and as such caution must be used in generalising the findings even to other Project K programmes throughout New Zealand. Generalising findings from this research to other PYD programmes in different contexts (e.g., time, country, community) must be undertaken with even greater caution.

While the research purposely aimed to focus on a specific local context it must be acknowledged that within this there are limitations in that only certain stakeholders within the wider system that are involved in or affected by how Project K chooses participants were engaged in the research. In particular, engaging participants at higher levels of the system (e.g., at the FYD and at the level of Project K programme director) was easier than engaging participants involved in the

selection process through schools. Some particularly relevant examples of this broad limitation include: that there were very few guidance counsellors involved in interviews, that the stakeholder group involved in the workshop / dissemination and planning part of the research was particularly narrow – restricted to FYD and PK staff. In addition, the lack of involvement of young people and their families who are currently excluded from the programme was precluded due to ethical considerations and must be acknowledged as a very significant limitation. The expert participants were a small and selected sample whose views may differ from a wider group. Overall, the research took a very programme centric approach rather than focusing at broader community based level which might be more consistent with some conceptualisations of PYD. This is a significant limitation in that effective integration of PYD and risk focused approaches is likely to require a broader community based changes.

As has been emphasised throughout the research, exclusion is a sensitive and complex issue. This has implications in terms of the reliability of the self report and observational data utilised in the research. It is likely that the researchers perceived attitudes toward exclusion and the wider systemic context of the issue including participants assumptions about what ‘higher’ levels of the system expected from them would have impacted participant’s responses.

Another area of limitation is the relatively minimal scope of the ‘action’ focused parts of the research which reduced considerably from initial expectations. The timeframe of the research and the time spent on building a collaborative understanding of exclusion meant that it was not possible to follow the development of the practice around exclusion as recommendations were implemented and evolved. This may have in part been due to overestimating the capacity and resource available to engaging in the project, and underestimating the complexity of the issue at hand. Continued iterations of action, reflection and planning would likely have yielded more information and also enabled examination of some of the questions raised during the research process and in particularly optimisation of recommendations. Having said this it is also important to acknowledge the importance of ‘handing over’ control of the project and extracting the research as the key driver for change as some point. A related limitation is the lack of explicit measurement of the changes and development in stakeholder understandings of and practice around exclusion.

Future research

There is very little research examining participant targeting in PYD programmes. As such there are many opportunities for further research. This could include research both examination of the theoretical justifications and practical applications of policies around targeting PYD interventions. Experts in this research suggest a theoretical mix between risk and strength focused

approaches as ‘best practice’; however there is a lack of outcome research examining the effectiveness of such approaches. Essentially, the strongest justification for including at risk youth in PYD programmes would have to come from evidence that it is an effective form of intervention – both in terms of reducing problematic behaviour and building strengths. One hypothesis that such research could particularly examine is whether there are differences between the effectiveness of integrated intervention for young people within different life-course pathways of antisocial behaviour. More specifically it may be that young people with an adolescent onset of antisocial behaviour may be particularly well suited to intervention from a PYD perspective. Further research into the function of adolescent risk behaviours and the potential efficacy of PYD programmes (or PYD communities) in enabling young people to meet the developmental needs served by risk behaviours in adaptive ways would also be beneficial.

Conclusion

This research highlights both the challenges and potential associated with broadening integrating PYD and risk focused approaches. In many ways there is a surprising degree of overlap and continuity between these approaches, particularly among experienced practitioners as well as within the more sophisticated versions of resilience, prevention, and PYD. However, maintaining the holistic and responsive nature of such approaches in practice is a challenge that requires highly skilled practitioners and significant resources, and as such is perhaps not often achieved. To realise the potential of integrating our practical and theoretical knowledge requires thorough understanding of youth development and the inter-relationships between problem and positive behaviour, developmental trajectories, and the factors that influence them.

A key part of this research has focused on the need for participant targeting, and using the above factors as a foundation for such targeted intervention. Participant targeting and exclusion is something that many programs or services working with people do. But questions of who should be included and therefore who should be excluded, and *why*, are not often closely examined. Despite its ubiquity, exclusion is a very sensitive issue, raising tensions between practitioners desire to help those in need and their awareness of the limits of the programme, service, or even entire approach in question. I believe the FYD’s openness in examining their approach to this issue is commendable. A well considered approach to participant targeting is essentially about matching the skills, resources, and motivation of the programme and the people who run it, with the needs, motivations, and desires of those whom it serves in order to ensure optimal outcomes for all involved.

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Appendix A: Project K Documents



Self Efficacy Survey

DATE: _____

CODE: _____

SCHOOL: _____

YEAR IN SCHOOL: _____

CLASS: _____

Please tick one circle

MALE: ☐

FEMALE: ☐

ETHNICITY/CULTURE: (Please tick the circle for the ethnic group(s) you belong to. You may tick more than one.)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> NZ Maori | <input type="radio"/> NZ European/Pakeha |
| <input type="radio"/> Tokelauan | <input type="radio"/> Other European |
| <input type="radio"/> Fijian | <input type="radio"/> South-East Asian |
| <input type="radio"/> Niuean | <input type="radio"/> Indian |
| <input type="radio"/> Tongan | <input type="radio"/> Chinese |
| <input type="radio"/> Cook Islands Maori | <input type="radio"/> Other Asian (e.g. Japanese, Korean) |
| <input type="radio"/> Samoan | <input type="radio"/> Other (e.g. African, South American) |
| <input type="radio"/> Other Pacific Islands | |

A code number is used to protect your privacy. This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. Your opinions are important to us. Your answers will help guide the development of a programme which is designed to help young people.

It is very helpful if you please answer every question. You will be asked to check your questionnaire to make sure it is complete before handing it in.

Please rate how well you can do the things below by ticking one circle for each question, using a pencil or black pen. '6' means you can do it very well and '1' means you cannot do it at all well. We are interested in your honest response. There are no right or wrong answers.

1. How well can you study when there are other interesting things to do?

Not well at all			Quite well			Very well
1	2	3	4	5	6	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

2. How well can you express your opinions when your classmates disagree with you?

Not well at all			Quite well			Very well
1	2	3	4	5	6	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

3. How well can you study for a test?

Not well at all			Quite well			Very well
1	2	3	4	5	6	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

4. How well can you become friends with other people?

Not well at all			Quite well			Very well
1	2	3	4	5	6	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

5. How well can you get adults to help you with a problem?

Not well at all			Quite well			Very well
1	2	3	4	5	6	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

6. How well can you succeed in finishing all your homework?

Not well at all		Quite well		Very well	
1	2	3	4	5	6
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. How well can you have a chat with an unfamiliar person of your age?

Not well at all		Quite well		Very well	
1	2	3	4	5	6
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. How well can you pay attention during class?

Not well at all		Quite well		Very well	
1	2	3	4	5	6
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. How well can you cooperate with your classmates?

Not well at all		Quite well		Very well	
1	2	3	4	5	6
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. How well can you get the information you need from adults?

Not well at all		Quite well		Very well	
1	2	3	4	5	6
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. How well can you remember information given in class?

Not well at all		Quite well		Very well	
1	2	3	4	5	6
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. How well can you take part in class discussions?

Not well at all		Quite well		Very well	
1	2	3	4	5	6
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. How well can you motivate yourself to do school work?

Not well at all		Quite well		Very well	
1	2	3	4	5	6
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. How well can you participate in class activities?

Not well at all		Quite well		Very well	
1	2	3	4	5	6
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. How well can you get teachers to help you when you get stuck on school work?

Not well at all		Quite well		Very well	
1	2	3	4	5	6
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. How well can you finish school assignments?

Not well at all		Quite well		Very well	
1	2	3	4	5	6
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. How well can you succeed in staying friends with other people?

Not well at all		Quite well		Very well	
1	2	3	4	5	6
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. How well can you succeed in satisfying your teachers with your school work?

Not well at all		Quite well		Very well	
1	2	3	4	5	6
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. How well can you work in a group?

Not well at all		Quite well		Very well	
1	2	3	4	5	6
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. How well can you get school staff to help you, when you have a problem at school?

Not well at all

Quite well

Very well

1
○

2
○

3
○

4
○

5
○

6
○

PLEASE CHECK THAT YOU HAVE ANSWERED ALL THE QUESTIONS. THANK YOU.

Do not write participant's name on Survey.

11a



Maximising Youth Potential

Teacher's Screening Survey

School:

Date:

Class:

Teacher Code:

Using a black pen or pencil, for each student in the class please tick one circle. Please rate each of the listed behaviours according to how well you think it describes the student.

Student Name:	Student code:	Not well at all		Quite well		Very well	
	1. Is self-motivated and consistently works close to ability levels.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	2. Is able to communicate positively with teachers, i.e. is comfortable expressing their ideas, questioning and challenging in a mature way.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	3. Interacts positively with peers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student Name:	Student code:	Not well at all		Quite well		Very well	
	1. Is self-motivated and consistently works close to ability levels.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	2. Is able to communicate positively with teachers, i.e. is comfortable expressing their ideas, questioning and challenging in a mature way.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	3. Interacts positively with peers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student Name:	Student code:	Not well at all		Quite well		Very well	
	1. Is self-motivated and consistently works close to ability levels.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	2. Is able to communicate positively with teachers, i.e. is comfortable expressing their ideas, questioning and challenging in a mature way.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	3. Interacts positively with peers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student Name:	Student code:	Not well at all		Quite well		Very well	
	1. Is self-motivated and consistently works close to ability levels.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	2. Is able to communicate positively with teachers, i.e. is comfortable expressing their ideas, questioning and challenging in a mature way.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	3. Interacts positively with peers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

E12a

Maximising Youth Potential

Liaison Team Exclusion Form

This form is to be completed by the Project K Programme Director and forwarded to NSO.

The Project K exclusion criteria are the only criteria to be applied to the exclusion of students.

Liaison Team Names:

The following students have been excluded from final selection:

1.	Student code (On which decision to exclude is based)	Exclusion criteria number
1.	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____
8.	_____	_____

Programme:

Signature of Programme Director:

For student/s that have been excluded by recommendation of the Guidance Counsellor (exclusion criteria 6), a completed and signed 'Guidance Counsellor's Exclusion Form' (E12b) should be attached.

E12b



Maximising Youth Potential

Guidance Counsellor's Exclusion Form

This form is to be completed by the Guidance Counsellor and forwarded to NSO by the Programme Director.

Student privacy is important to Project K. Only student codes and exclusion criteria numbers are written on forms; no names are used. All documents are handled by Programme Directors and NSO staff only. Following the selection of Project K students, code lists are shredded and all forms kept in a locked cabinet at NSO.

I understand Project K's exclusion criteria to be:

A student who has exhibited recent or active problems related to

1. Violent behaviour
2. Substance abuse (alcohol, solvents or drugs)
3. Suicide attempts
4. Regular counselling for serious problems
5. Severe cognitive or learning difficulties

Applying Project K's exclusion criteria, I certify that the following student/s should not participate in the Project K programme:

Student code _____

Student code _____

Student code _____

Student code _____

Student code _____

Student code _____

Name:.....

School:.....

Signature:

Appendix B:

Programme Director / School Staff / Guidance Counsellor Interview Guide

- In your own words can you explain to me what the exclusion criteria for Project K are?
- What kind of issues led to the development of the current criteria? Are there any particular difficulties/concerns that you can recall?
- What is really meant by 'x' criteria? How do you decide what constitutes meeting that criteria? What wouldn't meet it?
- Does it ever happen that PD's are aware that students meet a particular criterion but offer them a place anyway? Can students be excluded for other reasons i.e. without meeting these criteria?
- If there are other factors taken into account in deciding to exclude a student what are they?
- What's the rationale behind having the current criteria?
- What is it that makes these students unsuitable for Project K?
- How effective do you think the policy and process regarding exclusion is? What works well? What works not so well? How could it be improved?
- What happens if there is a disagreement between those involved in the meeting? Is this something that happens very often? How is this managed?
- Who is at the meeting? How well do the people making the decision know the students?
- I understand students may also be excluded if they or their parents disclose certain information in the background information forms, is this something that happens very often? How is this managed? What difficulties are there with this process?
- After the decision to exclude a student has been made, what happens for them from there? Referral to other services?

Appendix C:

Expert Interview Guide

- If you were designing some sort of intervention or supports for at risk youth similar to those currently excluded from Project K what would be some of the key things you would want to include?
- What would be the goal of the programme? How would you know you'd succeeded?
- How are the needs of youth with the kinds of behaviours or problems that lead to exclusion from Project K different from the needs of the average young person? How are they the same?
- In your experience what are some of the key ingredients that enable young people with problematic behaviour to benefit from programmes / interventions? What do they need?
- What kind of setting do you believe is most effective for youth at-risk programme? (who, where and what?)
- What are some of the key strategies that are important for maintaining safety of staff and participants in programmes that involve high risk youth?
- What are some key things that make a youth development initiative engaging for young people / families?
- Is there anything else you'd like to add?

