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**HEAR OUR BOYS' VOICES: WHAT HINDERS AND
ENHANCES THEIR ACADEMIC SUCCESS.**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Massey University, Albany, New Zealand**

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2007**

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this university or to another institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

Michael R Irwin
.....

Michael R Irwin

ABSTRACT

Many boys in New Zealand are having difficulty at school and are not reaching or achieving to their potential. Over the last 30 years there has been an increasing gender gap in education with girls outperforming boys in most curriculum areas. More boys are likely to be disciplined, expelled from school, placed in special education programmes and leave school without qualifications, than girls of the same age and ability.

The aim of this research was to develop a clearer understanding of boys' learning needs and in the process to develop some strategies for improved pedagogy. To achieve this aim and ensure that boys' voices were heard and accurately recorded, boys were trained to be student researchers and consultants within the study. Schools tend to practice a strategy of silence by denying students voice. However students can be valuable collaborators in research and school improvement when given the opportunity.

This thesis recorded the voices of boys from Year level 9, 11 and 13 of three culturally and geographically dissimilar secondary schools. A diverse and broadly representative sample of boys was crucial for the study to establish a boys' perspective on school issues. The methods used to collect boys' experiences and perceptions were individual semi-structured interview, boys' only focus groups and a student motivation measurement. Over 400 boys were involved.

This research established that boys could be taught the skills and abilities to make a valuable contribution as researchers and consultants to the research process. The boys were astutely aware of the issues of education within their school and were able to process information in a responsible and honest manner. There was a uniformity of viewpoint between boys from the three schools and Year levels on ways they perceived factors enhance and hinder their learning. In particular, boys love activity and challenge and require it to engage their body and their mind. A key component to teaching boys is the teacher/boy relationship that establishes a mutual respect, individual care and consistency of expectations. A disturbing revelation is that a number of boys believe that teachers and schools do not expect them to achieve as well as girls. This attitude must be addressed by all concerned with boys' education and well being.

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Boys have been part of my life for 40 years as I worked with them in education, scouting and community youth organisations. These boys, plus my two sons Hamish and Alistair have taught me a lot about fun, laughter, quirky sense of humour, taking risks, accepting a challenge, being loyal and looking after mates. Boys have strong emotions and they express and share these in different ways. I have been privileged to be part of this time with many boys. Without these boys, and the boys in this study I would not have the richness of memories that I cherish. I wish to thank my sons and all these boys.

I owe a particular debt to the three schools who willingly participated in the study. Their interest, support and knowledge of teaching boys (and girls) made this research possible. In particular I would like to thank Anne, Chanel and Chris who gave of their time and support in organising the in-school logistics of the research. Bobbie Hunter, friend and colleague, Professor Michael Townsend, Head of School, and the staff at the School of Education, Massey University in Auckland who have shared, encouraged, supported and inspired me to finish. I thank them all.

This was a huge challenge for me; studying for a doctorate was never one of my goals in life. This is especially so when considering my biggest achievements at school was on the athletics track. School Certificate was a 'just scraped by' mark. I often felt lost and disorganised with school work and unmotivated with study and homework. To this end I must acknowledge the valuable contributions made by my supervisors Associate Professor Ken Ryba and Dr Julianna Raskauskas who have challenged my thinking, extended my knowledge and supported me through to the end. They had a difficult task working with such raw material.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Be careful how you think, your life is shaped by your thoughts.

Proverbs.

1.0 The Beginning

This thesis examines boy's perceptions of their learning at Year 9, Year 11 and Year 13 by using student voice and the use of students in the research process. The research aims to be as open and objective as possible in recording and interpreting boys' voices; to do this, boys became an integral part of the research process in both consultative and research roles. As the above proverb states, our life is shaped by our thoughts; this study aims to listen to boys' voice, their thoughts so to gain a greater understanding of boys thinking about their education.

On numerous occasions while working as a classroom teacher and principal I observed boys who were disengaged from learning. The more I observed and talked with boys the more I became aware that many of them found much of their classroom learning activities boring and irrelevant and yet, they had enthusiasm for many of the activities they did outside of school. As a school principal, I found that many of the referrals I made for additional support and learning assistance were largely for boys. A study of the Special Education Services Report for 2001 showed that referrals to all specialised pupil services averaged at 80 percent boys and only 20 percent for girls. This aroused my interest and a need to seek answers for this apparent gender gap in education.

Boys have captured the attention of media, politicians and the academic world with headlines such as "The Trouble with Boys" (Herald on Sunday, March 6, 2005) or books titled "Failing Boys?" (Epstein. D, Elwood. J, Hey. V, Maw, J. 1998) and numerous reports commissioned by governments from around the world. The boy has been observed, discussed and analysed and at times even redefined if you read Martino

and Pallotta-Chiarolli's book "So what's a Boy?" (2003). Along with this interest, the last ten years have seen the accumulation of a huge amount of research data regarding boys' academic underachievement and social behaviour. Boys have been put through rigorous scientific observation and testing by educational researchers throughout the world. However, very few researchers have taken the time to actually listen to the voices of boys. This study does that.

1.1 Background to the study.

New Zealand has a compulsory education system for children from the age of 6 years to 16 years. However, most children start at 5 years. As at 1 July 2005, the number of schools in New Zealand was 2580 with a total of 368,498 female students and 382,923 male students attending (Ministry of Education Attendance Report, 2005). Schools in New Zealand, like schools in most developed countries, have changed their administrative structure and pedagogy over the last twenty years to meet the requirements of a standards-based education model. This model can be simply summarised in terms of accountability, benchmarks, exemplars, standards of achievement and testing; this has driven education reform in New Zealand. However, there is more to education than assessment, test-taking and teacher-school accountability; students need to be thinkers, risk-takers and independent learners to succeed in the world of today.

As Sadowski (2003, p.1) argued:

If we want students to succeed – not just as test-takers but also as thinkers, as learners, and as people who make valuable contributions to our society – we need to know more about them than their scores on standardised measures of achievement.

In New Zealand, standardised measures of achievement have become part of our education system. For the past 10 years, the National Education Monitoring Project (NEMP) has monitored the educational achievement of students in Years 4 and 8 in New Zealand primary schools. This monitoring covers 15 curriculum areas over a four-year period. It has been shown that if the results are averaged across these curriculum subjects they show that boys and girls performed similarly at both year levels, with only modest differences in most subjects. The only area showing a strong difference was

writing, with girls performing markedly better than boys (Crooks, 2003). However, an earlier analysis of NEMP argued that it showed significant gender differences that favour girls. (Alton-Lee & Praat, 2000)

The secondary school system (Years 9 to 13) in New Zealand has relied heavily on a national assessment system for many decades. For generations, School Certificate at Year 11 and University Entrance at Year 12 was the norm for pupils. This has been replaced with the phasing in of the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA), which sets achievement standards for pupils to achieve. Every standard is worth a set number of credits and when a student has gained a total of 80 credits, 16 of which must be in numeracy and literacy, they have then achieved Level One. This is usually achieved in Year 11. In Year 12 students achieve credits for Level Two and in Year 13 credits at Level Three. To qualify for entrance to a New Zealand University students require 42 credits at Level Three or higher in the learning area that is to be studied.

In examining NCEA, combined Level 1, 2, and 3 results for 2004, girls gained 247,189 more credits than boys. In the ten curriculum areas compared, girls outperformed boys in all but Technology (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2005). Even in the traditional subjects of mathematics and science, girls are gaining more standard passes than boys. At secondary school level when studying other aspects of schooling and success show an even bleaker image emerges. The suspension and stand-down figures shows 75% are boys and the number of pupils given exemptions to leave school early shows a disproportionately high ratio of young males.

I accept Sadowski's (2003, p. 1) argument that we "need to know more about our students than their scores on standardised measures of assessment." Standardised tests give a narrow view of what is happening to our students in our schools. Teachers in the classroom use a wide range of assessment tools to get to know their students and do not just rely on a band of narrow assessment tasks. Crooks (2003) claimed that on the results of NEMP assessment results boys and girls are achieving quite similarly in primary schooling in New Zealand. However, in studying just two reports from the Ministry of Education (2005) a different scenario emerges. The referrals of students to Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour show that 74% boys and only 26% girls

make up the referrals in 2004. The percentage of referrals to Reading Recovery has similar statistics. The Annual Monitoring of Reading Recovery reports, as in previous years, nearly two thirds (66.5%) of the students in Reading Recovery in 2003 were boys. Studies of gender statistics across a spectrum of educational and social issues indicate that boys in New Zealand are not achieving as well as girls. (For further discussion see Chapter 2).

1.2 Research Assumptions

The intention of this thesis was to listen to boys' voices in order to document their experiences and perceptions concerning schooling. The aim was to develop a clearer understanding of boys' learning needs, and in the process to identify some pedagogical and whole school strategies that could aid boys' academic success.

This research was based on a number of assumptions that:

- boys are not as academically or socially successful as girls at school.
- there is a gender gap in our education system.
- boys are influenced by their school's culture in a variety of positive and negative ways.
- boys can be change agents within their school if they are given voice.
- boys are honest and insightful and can be used as student researchers.

1.3 A Preliminary Study

Before the main research project began in 2005, a preliminary study was undertaken with a selected group of boys from a provincial city boys only school to explore the success of a school developed mentoring programme and their perceptions of motivation, learning and school. A *Student Motivation Scale* (Martin, 2003), in-depth interviews and boys only focus groups were used with 50 boys from Year 9 and 13 to obtain information on the boys' school experiences and perceptions on learning and motivation. The *Student Motivation Scale* was trialled, as it identifies factors that enhance and inhibit motivation in an academic setting. Once a student's motivation profile is complete, areas of strength and weakness can be identified.

The *Student Motivation Scale* proved a useful data collection tool during the pilot study. The administration of the Scale to students was simple and took 15 minutes and gave

valuable information on 10 different factors of motivation. The factors measured were self-belief, the value of schooling, learning focus, planning, study management, persistence, anxiety, failure avoidance, and low control and self-sabotage. The raw score from each factor can be converted to a percentage, which makes for straightforward comparison. (Chapter 9 discusses this fully.)

The results from the *Student Motivation Scale* showed that the boys valued school and the majority also believed they were capable and able to do the work set at school. The motivational factors of planning, study management and self sabotage were where the boys in the pilot study showed a general weakness. Planning and study management, when fully utilised, leads to more effective learning and is an area where the boys needed more development and ongoing skill maintenance. A strategy that the boys used fairly frequently to give them a reason for not succeeding or reaching their potential was self-sabotage. To self-sabotage, a student does things that can reduce their chances of success at school. For example, putting off doing an assignment, wasting time during study, taking on extra after-school employment or increasing the sports training close to exams and when major assignments are due.

Focus groups and individual interviews were used in conjunction with the *Student Motivation Scale* to obtain the necessary data. It was found that the information gained from the two qualitative collection methods gave in-depth narrative information to complement the data from the *Student Motivational Scale*. The focus groups were boys only, no researcher or teacher being present, and consisted of eight boys. The intention for being adult free was to achieve a more open and honest discussion that was not influenced by adult presence. It was an opportunity for developing the use of student researchers and giving students freedom of voice. All focus group conversations were audio-taped and analysed later by the researcher. The aim of the individual interview conducted by the researcher was to probe, clarify and gain more in-depth information on specific factors and findings identified from the *Student Motivation Scale* and Focus Groups. The interviews were semi structured but with the opportunity for boys to talk about any aspects of their schooling or outside influences they felt affected their schooling. These interviews were audio-taped for transcribing and further analysis.

The results from interviews and focus groups gave greater detail and narrative, building

and extending on the knowledge gained from the *Student Motivation Scale*. The data indicated that the teaching practice within the classroom has a profound affect on, not only the boys' behaviour, but also their motivation to learn. Boys at Year 9 indicated they require more offerings of sport and physical activity, less curriculum transitions and teacher change so that positive pupil teacher relationships can be established and an activity based inquiry teaching model used in the classrooms. At Year 11 they want teachers who can explain and teach so they can achieve NCEA. Their biggest fear is not knowing what to learn and therefore failing to achieve a pass in the exams. Year 13's have many pressures placed upon them and want the school to consider the timetabling and stresses they are under. The boys at this level know their school well and believe that they should have a greater role in the consultation process before changes are made.

Their mates are a huge factor in their life, both supporting them socially and assisting and motivating them educationally. "Hanging out with mates" was perceived to have a positive educational effect on boys and became an important part of the main research. The boys were honest and frank and very astute about what was happening in the school. The interviews and focus groups revealed that boys could think deeply about the school and their education. The pilot study showed that boys could be given research roles and act in a responsible manner.

The success of the pilot study led to the development of the main study. The pilot study was an opportunity to test, develop and refine methodologies that were later used on boys from three diverse schools in the main study. The present study used a broad and randomly selected group of boys with the aim of establishing if there were a uniformity of viewpoint at Years 9, 11, and 13 across three culturally and geographically diverse secondary schools. The aim was to answer this main question: "Would boys' perceptions of what enhances or inhibits their schooling vary in differing school cultures or would boys' views be similar across the different school cultures?"

1.4 Understanding Boys' Voice.

Critical to this research is obtaining the voices of boys. There has been a growing body of literature concerning student voice since the early 1990's (Hattam et al. 2000; Smyth, 2000; Soo Hoo, 1993; Trent, 2002) and the use of student voice in school improvement

and change (Fielding, 2001, 2004; Rudduck, Chaplain & Wallace, 1996.). This research showed that there tends to be an absence of student voice in schools with the result that students do not have a formal way of expressing their concerns or even offering solutions to a problem. I believe that schools do not think of including the students in the change or consultation process for two main reasons: (1) Traditionally schools have not considered the consultation of students as part of a schools' change or administrative process; and (2) many school leaders and teachers do not consider students have the maturity or awareness of school processes to make valuable contributions. This is a rather ironic situation because school change and improvement is largely instigated for the enhancement of student academic achievement and learning environments. Smyth et al. (2000, p.18), argued that the absence of student voice is naturalised in the school because "that's the way things have always been in secondary schools." This study wanted to use boys' voice, to give boys the opportunity to speak as freely as possible in regard to their schooling. A boy's schooling experiences has a dramatic effect on his attitude to teaching and learning; to ascertain possible causes for what might hinder or enhance their education it would be a logical step to listen to their views and opinions on the subject.

The students in this study had a number of opportunities in which to have their voices heard and to participate in discussion and research. During the pilot phase of the study boys assisted in the construction of the types of questions asked during the individual interviews. Due to the boys' input, questions were refined, others deleted and new questions created. The focus groups gave opportunities for boys to give voice to their school experiences without an adult being present. Senior boys with leadership or mana¹ were given instruction on how to ask questions to gain and clarify information and chair a group. This put the senior boy into a student-as-researcher role (Edwards & Hattam, 1997; Egan-Robertson, 1998). Data were collected from focus groups using two methods. The first was a written brainstorm chart of ideas constructed at the start of the session and the second was an audiotape of focus group discussion. When all the data were analysed and tentative trends and conclusions reached, a random selected group of

¹ Mana in this situation means a person who is recognised to possess prestige, leadership and/or power. A person with mana is looked up to and respected.

boys was used to discuss the findings to ensure data were interpreted correctly and that the boys' voices were correctly heard by the researcher.

1.5 Using Voice in Methodology

Language and culture is important to the way our mind is shaped. It allows us to construct our understanding of our world and our self-beliefs and image (Bruner, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). To gain a greater understanding of boys' perceptions of schooling this research relies on boys' narrative. Bruner (1996) argued that:

A system of education must help those growing up in a culture find identity within that culture. Without it, they stumble in their effort after meaning. It is only in the narrative mode that one can construct an identity and find a place in one's culture. Schools must cultivate it, nurture it, and cease taking it for granted. (p.43)

School has a profound effect on its students. It is within the culture of the school that boys, largely through narrative, construct their identity and a place for themselves in their larger culture. This research uses boys' narrative to gain a greater understanding of boys' perceptions of their schooling. The pilot study also identified the importance of "the hanging around with mates" culture, which is largely about "telling stories" and creating an identity, a self. Mates play an important role in a boy's schooling through support and narrative.

1.6 School Cultures

Three secondary schools from different locations were selected to be part of the main research. The point of using three secondary schools with totally different school cultures was to provide the opportunity to question if there is a uniformity of viewpoint among boys at the different Year levels within the schools. Cole (1996) argued that due to the important role of culture as a behaviour determinant; research is needed that makes multicultural comparisons to gain a clearer picture. These three schools are situated in three quite different cultural and environmental settings. As Bruner (1996, p. 28) argued "Education does not stand alone, and it cannot be designed as if it did. It exists in a culture. And culture, what ever else it is, is also about power distinctions and rewards."

The three schools will give this study the variety needed to make valid comparisons. The use of three culturally diverse secondary schools would also add greater creditability and reliability than data from just one school.

The schools involved were:

School K. A private co-educational school.

School M. A multicultural co-education state secondary school.

School W. A boys' only state secondary school.

(See Chapter 4 for greater detail)

1.7 Statement of Research Purpose

The overall purpose of this research is to gain a greater understanding, by the process of giving boys' voice, on how boys see their secondary schooling in terms of factors that enhance or hinder their learning and academic success. Over the last two decades there has been much debate and research concerning the causes and effects as to why girls were outperforming boys in virtually every subject at school. Such issues as why so many boys were being labelled special needs, or were truant, being expelled or leaving school without qualifications was the basis of much of the debate. This research attempts to document the perceptions and opinions of boys on what they see as the issues, causes and possible solutions. There have been many programmes developed to 'help' or 'fix' the problems boys have without actually asking the boys what they think or how might they solve the problem. A key purpose in this research was to use boys wherever possible as co-researchers and participants rather than as subjects of study.

The research objective was not to judge the practices of teachers or the cultures of schools, nor to identify strategies for successful teaching of boys, but simply to listen and learn from the collective experiences and wisdom of boys who have been in the education system for nine or more years with little voice.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into 10 chapters.

Chapter 1: presents an overview of the research and explains the background as to why boys' education has caused such debate. A previous pilot study by the researcher is

explained and discussed to explain the setting and motivation for this study.

Chapter 2: presents a comprehensive literature review in three parts. Part one presents the evidence of a gender gap in achievement, part two explains a number of possible contributing factors to the present underachievement of boys and part three presents a number of strategies that research has claimed as being successful at raising boys' academic success.

Chapter 3: describes in-depth the concept of student voice and students-as-researchers, examining benefits and difficulties of implementation into research, classrooms and schools.

Chapter 4: describes the research objectives and questions and examines the main theoretical paradigms that shaped the practical research methods in the field.

Chapter 5: provides a detailed account of the method and procedures used throughout each phase of the data collection and analysing of data.

Chapter 6: presents the findings of what boys like doing and the influences of mates and other factors on a boy's learning. Concluding this chapter is discussion and interpretation of the findings.

Chapter 7: presents the findings of boys' perceptions of how they like to learn and the types of teachers that they believe they learn best from. The chapter is concluded with an interpretation and discussion of the findings.

Chapter 8: presents the findings of boys' perception of their school culture and curriculum, what they enjoy about their school and what they would change. This chapter concludes with an interpretation and discussion of the findings.

Chapter 9: presents both quantitative and qualitative data on boys and motivation. This chapter examines factors that enhance and hinder boys' motivation and concludes with an analysis and discussion of the findings.

Chapter 10: discusses the findings in relation to the main question and a summary of the main points established from boys' perceptions on their schooling, including the implications of the study for teaching practices, school cultures and educational policy makers.

1.9 Summary

This chapter has introduced the purpose for this study and some of the concerns and assumptions within the debate on boys' academic underachievement and the perceived growing gender gap in academic success in New Zealand schools. A strong emphasis is placed on the use of boys' voice in this study as well as the use of boys as co-researchers in the study. The focus is clearly on the words of boys and what they think enhances or hinders their schooling and academic success at secondary school.

The following chapter reviews the literature on boys' academic and social behaviour in schools that informs the background and purpose for this study.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

'Of all the animals, the boy is the most unmanageable.' Plato 428-348 BC

2.0 Introduction

Is there some truth in what Plato said all those years ago? This chapter examines literature and research evidence that may contribute to an understanding as to why Plato may have made such a statement all those years ago. It examines some of the root causes and possible strategies for the “unmanageable boy”. This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part asks the question, do boys have significant problems? It examines both the New Zealand and International evidence to answer this question. The second part asks the question, why are boys underachieving and subsequently discusses some possible contributing factors. The chapter concludes with an examination of possible research based strategies and programmes that have the potential to improve boys’ school achievement and social behaviour.

Part one: The evidence.

2.1 Do Boys have Significant Problems?

It’s a BAD TIME to be a boy in America, claimed Christina Sommers (2000) in her book ‘The War Against Boys’. The New Zealand Herald ran with the headline “The problem with Boys” (March 6, 2005). Is there any justification for these headlines that give dire warnings regarding the academic and behavioral failings of boys? Can such claims be supported or are boys’ problems just another educational “catch phrase” of the moment as the pendulum swings away from girls and the dramatic claims made by Gilligan (1990) that girls were in danger of “drowning or disappearing” in our Western culture? The language of educational inequality has dramatically changed over the last three decades. In the 1970s, the dominant discourse concerned girls’ educational disadvantaged position, whereas from the mid-1990s boys’ underachievement has become the prominent discourse.

Epstein et al. (1998, p.4) argued:

That it is unhelpful to set up a binary opposition between the schooling of girls and that of boys, according to which, if one group wins, the other loses; and that questions around equity and differences among boys and among girls, as well as between boys and girls are key to understanding what is happening in schools.

The debate on boys' underachievement takes two quite different tracks. The first argued that it is not so much boys' achievement compared to girls but rather which boys and which girls are failing. The need is to identify the failing boys and girls and give adequate attention to ensure their success (Alton-Lee & Praat, 2001, Epstein et al. 1998.). Socio-economic factors are a reliable indicator of performance for both boys and girls. Students from schools with the highest degree of socio-economic disadvantage (decile 1-2 schools) are over 5 times more likely to leave school with little or no formal attainment than students in the highest decile² schools. A number of researchers (Epstein et al. 1998; Ministry of Education, 2005; Skelton, 2001) have claimed that the underachievement of boys at school is a strongly classed phenomenon. This is clearly demonstrated in a study of achievement, truancy and retention statistics of low decile schools from the Ministry of Education. Maori boys living in low socio-economic areas are at more risk of failing in our schools and communities than any other group.

The other track of the debate argued that all boys are underachieving in our schools and that boys are not doing as well as girls. Ministry of Education statistics show that Maori girls do better than Maori Boys, that Pacific Island girls do better than Pacific Island boys, and that New Zealand European girls do better than New Zealand European boys (Aitken, 1999; Alton-Lee & Praat, 2001). This is evident also between single sex boys' and girls' schools, where performances are very similar until comparison is made at the

² All schools in New Zealand are given a decile rating, depending on the socioeconomic rating of the area they serve. The indicator is based on census data (household income, parents' occupation, education qualifications, household crowding, income support payments) for the families of school age children in the areas from which each school draws students, along with school ethnicity data. After combining the data, all schools are ranked into deciles.

Schools in the lowest decile (deciles 1 to 3) draw their students from communities with the highest levels of socioeconomic disadvantage, while those in the highest deciles (deciles 8 to 10) draw the least students from these communities.

higher achievement levels (e.g. New Zealand Scholarship, NCEA, International Baccalaureate) where the 2004 results showed twice as many girls achieved at the highest level than did boys. The picture regarding boys' achievement becomes even more complicated by the debate that biological gender differences influence learning and that these need to be considered when creating the ultimate learning environment for either gender. Moreover, some researchers and writers claim that boys need to be taught differently to girls because they learn and use their brains in different ways to girls (Gurian, 2001, 2005; Moir & Jessel, 1989).

The 'All boys' verses 'Which Boys' debate can be unhelpful as it takes the focus away from what is happening to boys in the school and in the community. Instead, the view advanced in this thesis is that schools should not enter this debate but engage in it by collecting reliable school based research data and changing pedagogy and school cultures where it is deemed appropriate. Moreover, it is apparent that schools are only one of the communities to which a boy belongs. The debate needs to be widened beyond the school in order to determine the policy and action that is required to improve boys' achievement. Underachievement is not merely the responsibility of the school. Rather, the issues are multi-faceted and reach into every level of the community.

2.2 The New Zealand Evidence: Primary Education

In the State School Primary system there are 913 Full Primary Schools, 748 Contributing Primary Schools, and 121 Intermediate schools catering for 206,840 boys and 193,693 girls. (Ministry of Education, 1 July 2005).

New Zealand research concerning boys in school is scarce compared with literature from Australia, United States, the United Kingdom and elsewhere. Fergusson and Horwood (1997), in a longitudinal study, examined the gender differences in educational outcomes in a birth cohort of over 1000 Christchurch children from the point of school entry to the age of 18. They found that throughout their school careers males in this cohort generally performed less well than the females. Differences were evident in standardized testing, teacher ratings of school performance, and in school leaving outcomes. Gender difference in academic achievement could not be explained by gender differences in intelligence. However, Fergusson and Horwood believed these

differences may be explained largely by males being more prone to disruptive and inattentive classroom behaviours. In other words, boys misbehaved at schools more than girls.

There have been two official government agency reports released on boys' education in New Zealand. The first, *The Achievement of Boys* (1999), with a follow up analysis of 416 school reviews completed in 1999 entitled *Promoting Boys Achievement* (2000) released by the Education Review Office (ERO). The Ministry of Education commissioned a literature review covering the period from 1989 to 1999; entitled *Explaining and addressing gender differences in the New Zealand compulsory school sector* (Alton-Lee & Praat, 2001). In July 2004, the Minister of Education, Trevor Mallard, at a Boys Education Conference at Massey University announced an External Reference Group was to be established to advise the Ministry of Education on Boys Education. He stated:

I am looking forward to the contribution this group will make to the development of policy to improve outcomes for boys in New Zealand. The work I have commissioned will improve our knowledge base and help us clarify what needs to be done to improve boys' performance. I anticipate that we will have some clearer evidence as to what is working in terms of boys' achievement in schools towards the end of the year.

The Reference Group met, heard submissions from individuals and groups and reported to the Ministry of Education. No report or policy has been released as a result of the work of this group. The Ministry of Education and Education Review Office Reports have been released for over five years and there is urgent need for new research in the area to inform the development of policy.

2.3 Education Review Office

The Education Review Office Report *The Achievement of Boys* (1999) stated in its summary that:

Girls currently outperform boys at school against most measures of achievement. Boys have lower rates of participation and success in School Certificate and University Bursary examinations than girls, have lower rates of school retention and are more likely to leave school with no qualifications (p.6). Boys present the majority of behavioral problems in

school and are over-represented in special education, truancy, suspension and expulsions statistics (p.10).

The Report, in its conclusions, declared that there is underachievement by boys at all levels of schooling in New Zealand and to improve achievement levels for boys the Report suggested a number of steps that schools could take:

- Adopt a wide range of teaching approaches that cater for individual differences.
- Encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Create quality school and classroom management and school discipline programmes that set high behavioural standards.
- Create a supportive school environment that provides positive role models.
- Encourage students to seek own goals and take responsibility for their actions.
- Offer a wide range of programmes, including subjects of particular interest and relevance to boys.

The *Achievement of Boys* Report concentrated to a large extent upon achievement of boys in secondary schools. During 1999, ERO included in their school evaluations issues relating to the underachievement of boys in its regular review of schools. The report *Promoting Boys' Achievement* (2000) is based largely on data collected from primary and intermediate schools (N=376 schools). "Of the schools reviewed nearly half had implemented evaluation programmes to identify the extent of underachievement, with a small group of schools developing innovative and multi-faceted approaches to raising boys' standards" (p. 6).

The Education Review Office (2000) stated that it was critical that primary schools had the ability to detect and address underachievement in boys because the development of literacy and numeracy during the first years of school is paramount to the boy's future learning and academic success. However, as noted, only a small minority of primary

schools were developing programmes to raise boys' achievement.

2.4 Ministry of Education Gender Differences Review

A review of research literature was commissioned by the Ministry of Education to investigate gender differences in compulsory education for the period 1989 to 1999. The review was conducted by Alton-Lee and Praat and the subsequent report *Explaining and Addressing Gender Differences in the New Zealand Compulsory School Sector* was released in 2000. The Review had a particular focus on Maori and Pacific students, disparities by gender in participation, and achievement and social outcomes.

The Review found significant gender differences at primary level, especially in speaking and reading. In particular, Maori and Pacific students, on average, were found to be performing poorly. Alton-Lee and Praat (2000) found the gender gap to be a complex issue.

Evidence from this review demonstrates the importance of attention to issues of gender, difference and equity. While a focus on gender is necessary in considering the needs of girls and boys, the research makes it clear that relational issues of gender, ethnicity, social class, sexuality and identity are inter-linked (p. 311).

One of the most effective ways to address the complex issues is through effective educational practice. Good teaching is fundamentally related to equitable practice. Alton-Lee and Praat claimed "national and international literature has increasingly addressed the finding of teachers' lack of sensitivity, awareness or understanding of issues of gender and ethnicity as contributing factors" (p. 310). The review highlighted the need for teacher education in gender and ethnicity related issues.

2.5 National Education Monitoring Project

In New Zealand it is difficult to find national data at the primary school level other than results from the *National Education Monitoring Project* (NEMP). This assessment project was established in 1995 to provide detailed national assessments of the knowledge, skills and attitudes of primary and intermediate students at two levels: Year 4 (ages 8-9) and Year 8 (ages 12-13). On average, 31 assessment tasks per subject have been used during the assessment cycles. Table 1 compares the performances of boys and girls on these NEMP tasks administered to individual Year 4 and Year 8 students

between 1995 and 2002.

The results in Table 2.1 show Year 4 boys performing significantly worse than girls in five of the curriculum areas, Art, Music, Writing, Reading, and Speaking. By Year 8, girls are outscoring boys in ten of the fifteen curriculum areas, and in the traditional “boy subjects” of mathematics and technology there is no significant difference between gender. In writing, reading, and speaking there are significant differences. In summarizing the NEMP results, Alton-Lee and Praat (2000) also found significant differences at primary level between boys and girls achievement.

Table 2.1 NEMP Cycle 2 (1999-2002)

Subject	Year 4 (ages 8-9)			Year 8 (ages 12-13)		
	G>	=	B>	G>	=	B>
Science	0	72	28	0	73	27
Phys Ed	23	27	50	26	31	43
Mathematics	0	88	12	13	70	17
Technology	0	89	11	4	93	3
Social Studies	7	76	17	9	85	6
Graphs/Tables/Maps	0	94	6	11	89	0
Info Skills	0	100	0	11	89	0
Viewing	6	94	0	14	86	0
Health	11	89	0	16	84	0
Listening	14	86	0	17	83	0
Art	15	85	0	23	77	0
Music	17	83	0	28	72	0
Writing	39	61	0	29	71	0
Reading	53	47	0	46	54	0
Speaking	54	46	0	88	12	0
Mean for Cycle	14	78	8	22	72	6

The results are expressed in percentages and display Year 4 and Year 8 tasks on which girls scored statistically significantly higher than boys (G>), there was no significantly difference between boys and girls (=), or boys scored statistically higher than girls (B>)

Table 2.1 constructed from statistics taken from Crook (2003).

2.6 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)

PIRLS is an international 4 yearly cycle of assessment designed to measure trends in reading achievement at the middle primary school. In 2001, New Zealand was one of 35 countries involved. This study found that the differences between the mean scores for girls and boys was one of the largest observed internationally, at 27th. The spread of scores for New Zealand was wider than the spread for students in most other countries. The PIRLS scores showed there is a significant difference between our top and bottom students and between our boys and girls. In New Zealand the mean differences between boys and girls was above the international mean.

2.7 Literacy

National and international research and statistics show that boys struggle with reading, writing and speaking. It is in these curriculum areas that the largest gender gaps occur. (Refer to Table 2.1 and 2.6 PIRLS).

In New Zealand, there are a number of reading and literacy specific programmes designed to assist those students who are underachieving or failing. Reading Recovery, Resource Teachers of Literacy (RTLit) and Speech Language Therapists offer programmes or specialist help that assist students. Each has an over-representation of boys. (See Table 2.2)

Table 2.2 Referrals of boys and girls to specific educational programmes in 2004.

	Boys	Girls
Reading recovery	66%	34%
Speech-Language	72%	28%
RT (Lit)	76%	24%

These referral trends have stayed constant for a number of years. A ten years trend study conducted as part of PIRLS 2001 found that girls have been significantly out performing boys in reading for the last ten years both nationally and internationally. (PIRLS, 2001)

2.8 New Zealand Secondary Education.

In the New Zealand State School Secondary system there are 53 Secondary Year 7 – 15 Schools and 211 Secondary Year 9-15 Schools and 79 Composite Schools. These secondary schools cater for 122,140 boys and 119,206 girls. (Ministry of Education, 1 July 2005 Returns)

2.9 National Certificate of Education Achievement.

In New Zealand secondary schools (Years 9 to 13) the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) is the standards based qualification which is used to assess achievement of students. Learning is assessed using national standards, which describe what students must know or be able to do within a particular topic.

Each standard achieved is worth a set number of credits. There are three levels of NCEA and students typically begin studying for their NCEA in year 11 and continue through years 12 and 13. To obtain NCEA qualifications students must achieve credits, (level one requires 80 credits) to obtain a pass. These credits are assessed either externally by examination or internally by the school.

Since 2004, students have been able to sit all three levels of NCEA. Table 2.3 shows the number of credits that were achieved by gender in the major curriculum areas for 2004. The NCEA results clearly show that across the three levels girls earned 247,012 credits more than the boys. An examination of each curriculum area shows that girls outperform boys in all areas except Technology. In NCEA students may obtain an Achieved, Merit or Excellent pass. In 2005 girls gained 75% more Excellent passes at Level 1, 75% more in Level 2 and 50% more Outstanding Scholarships than boys (Baker, 2005). A further examination of statistics shows more girls gain NCEA level 3 or above with University entrance requirements than boys (7604 boys to 10,246 girls). More girls are gaining the qualifications to enter university than boys. In NCEA results there is a definite gender gap.

2.10 Tertiary Institution Enrolments

The trend of more girls gaining higher qualifications is reflected in the New Zealand tertiary education sector. There are now substantially more women than men enrolled in

tertiary education and this has been steadily on the increase over the last ten years (Callister, Newell, Perry, & Scott, 2006). In 2004 enrolments showed 219, 284 men to 294,439 women at tertiary institutions.

Table 2.3 Curriculum learning area passes by gender

National Qualifications Framework Statistics 2004

Learning Area	Gender	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Total
Language and Languages	All	357518	221501	96665	675684
	Female	201982	131613	61398	394993
	Male	155536	89888	35267	280691
English	All	309952	196747	81351	588050
	Female	170520	114900	51194	336614
	Male	139432	81847	30157	251436
Te Reo	All	10437	5295	2692	18424
	Female	6286	3250	1692	11228
	Male	4151	2045	1000	7196
Other Languages	All	37129	19459	12622	69210
	Female	25176	13463	8512	47151
	Male	11953	5996	4110	22059
Mathematics	All	490973	192459	111421	794853
	Female	250442	96850	52666	399958
	Male	240531	95609	58755	394895
Science	All	239773	179331	96852	515956
	Female	119133	91662	49435	260230
	Male	120640	87669	47417	255726
Technology	All	165871	145867	35437	347175
	Female	81917	64889	16875	163681
	Male	83954	80978	18562	183494
Social Sciences	All	208929	177040	79588	465557
	Female	114487	112336	48240	275063
	Male	94442	64704	31348	190494
The Arts	All	74162	57506	33965	165633
	Female	48796	39824	24531	113151
	Male	25366	17682	9434	52482
Health and Physical Education	All	148422	95871	34916	279209
	Female	77266	47379	17989	142634
	Male	71156	48492	16927	136575
Specialist Studies	All	7127	18614	10824	36565
	Female	3449	4984	5679	14112
	Male	3678	13630	5145	22453
Totals		1,692,775	1,088,189	499,668	3,280,632
Female		897,472	589,537	276,813	1,763,822
Male		795,303	498,652	222,855	1,516,810
		1,692,775	1,088,189	499,668	3,280,632

In analyzing the fields of study Callister et al. (2006) found that in 11 of the 19 study areas there were more women enrolled; it was only the areas of architecture, building, engineering and agriculture that there were more men. Women enrolments now exceed men in the traditional study areas of medicine such as surgery, dentistry, and optometry.

There are also important ethnic differences. For example, in 2004 there were 77% more Maori women than men under 30 years enrolled in a bachelor's degree. These gender and ethnic trends shown at tertiary level are a reflection of what is happening at the primary and secondary levels of education.

2.11 Pupil Retention

Baker (2006) argued that the gender gap in New Zealand is much larger when lower male achievement rates and school retention rates are combined. Boys have a lower school retention rate than girls. By the end of Year 12, forty three percent (43%) of boys have left school compared with thirty five percent (35%) of girls. What is even worse is that by the end of Year 10, 1325 students have officially left school without any formal qualifications, 846 boys (64%) and 479 girls (34%). Table 2.4 below gives a breakdown by age, gender, and ethnicity those children who left school in 2004.

Table 2.4 Number of students leaving school in 2004

Year of Schooling	Ethnic Group										Total
	European /Pakeha		Maori		Pacific Island		Asian		Other		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Year 9	33	18	39	23	5	1	3	1	1	1	125
Year 10	423	216	255	183	56	22	19	10	12	4	1200
Year 11	2526	1587	1183	1193	287	189	89	70	38	30	7192
Year 12	4789	3804	1525	1540	463	386	327	238	115	88	13275
Year 13	9783	11174	1962	2335	1152	1345	1824	1966	360	326	32227
Year 14	428	331	154	153	101	57	100	60	24	23	1431
Year 15	51	50	18	20	9	7	10	13	4	2	184
Total	18033	17180	5136	5447	2073	2007	2372	2358	554	474	55634

Note: Excludes international and adult students.

Ministry of Education, (2005)

2.12 Before NCEA

The National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) replaced School Certificate, Sixth Form Certificate and Bursary starting in 2002 with the implementation of Level 1. Baker (2006) analysed the results of School Certificate for the last thirty years and found that in 1970 there was already a small gender gap of 2.3% favouring girls. Girls led in 12 subject areas and boys in nine. In 1993 the gender gap was 6.1% favouring girls with boys ahead in only four of 21 subjects.

Both systems of assessment, the old and the new, display a gender gap. Boys were not achieving as well as girls in any of the national assessment systems in place in our secondary schools.

2.13 Programmes for International Student Assessment (PISA)

PISA seeks to measure student achievement in reading literacy, mathematics literacy and scientific literacy at the age of 15 years, near the end of compulsory education. This three-yearly survey is commissioned by the *Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development* (OECD). In 2003, New Zealand participated with 41 other countries.

Girls within each of the participating countries recorded a significantly higher average (34 points) performance in reading. This was evident also in the New Zealand data. In mathematics, the boys on average scored 14 points higher than the girls, with similar results for science. New Zealand had one of the widest distributions of achievement scores in the areas of reading, mathematics and science, having a relatively high proportion of students at the highest and lowest levels of proficiency. (Ministry of Education, PISA, 2003)

2.14 Stand-Downs and Suspensions

A stand-down is defined as “the formal removal of a student from school for a specified period of five days or less” (Ministry of Education, 2005). Following stand-downs, students may automatically return to school if they choose to do so. There were 20,447 stand-down cases during 2004, at a rate of 27 per 1,000 students. Notably, stand-downs comprised 71% boys.

Suspension is defined as “the formal removal of a student from school by the principal until the Board of Trustees decides the outcome at a suspension meeting” (Ministry of Education, 2005). Boards of Trustees may decide to lift the suspension, extend the suspension or expel the student. There were 4774 suspension cases in 2004, at a rate of 6.56 per 1000 students. Again, it is notable that suspension cases comprise 71% boys.

The most common reasons for stand-downs and suspensions are continual disobedience, physical assault on other students, drugs and verbal assault on staff. The peak age for stand-downs and suspensions is in the 13 to 15 age group. Students who are male, Maori or 14 years of age are over-represented in suspension and stand-down statistics.

2.15 Resource Teachers Learning and Behaviour (RTLBs)

Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour provide itinerant specialist support to, and work with, students and teachers in order to improve the education outcomes for students with moderate learning and/or behaviour needs. In the 2004 Annual Report on Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour it was reported that the gender breakdown for referrals to RTLBs was 74% male and 26% female.

2.16 Crime and Prison

Boys and young men are over-represented in crime and prison. Youth offending is 22% of the total number of apprehended offenders, of which 80% are male. In 2006 there were 30,451 arrests of people in the 14 to 16 age group. As at June 2006 there were 551 young men and only 32 young women under 20 years of age in New Zealand prisons (B. Carland, personal communication, 15 June, 2006).

At a 2006 Conference on Boys Education Judge Andrew Becroft, Principal Youth Court Judge of New Zealand described the small group of serious youth offenders as:

“Aggressive, impulsive, truanting, teenage boys (disproportionately Maori), often alcohol and/or drug dependent, and who have personality disorders, from disadvantaged and dysfunctional families with anti social friends” (Becroft, 2006).

2.17 Overseas Evidence

Overseas research evidence strongly paralleled what is happening in the New Zealand context. For instance, Australia has recognized the widening academic gap between boys and girls at both Federal and State levels. This is evident in a range of reports and initiatives specifically aimed at improving boys' academic success. Cresswell et al. (2002) summarised the Australian research and identified a number of areas where Australian boys were not performing as well as girls.

- Boys were significantly more disengaged at school.
- Boys were more likely to be at risk of academic underachievement especially in literacy
- Boys exhibited significantly greater behavioural problems in the classroom and at home.
- Boys reported less positive experiences and enjoyment of schooling.
- Boys were more likely to drop out of school prematurely.
- Boys were subject to more disciplinary action during schooling and expulsions.
- Boys are four to five times more likely than girls to suffer from depression and commit suicide.
- Boys have a higher prevalence of auditory processing problems.
- 50% of consultations to pediatricians are referred for behavioural problems and a further 20% for learning difficulties. The referral ratio is nine boys to every one girl.

The same trends reflected in Australia and New Zealand can be seen in many countries. In 2000, thirty-two countries participated in the OECD *Programme for International Student Assessment* (PISA). In every country that took part, girls did significantly better than boys in reading literacy (OECD, 2001).

In the United Kingdom it has been reported that the performance of girls is superior to that of boys. The differences between boys' and girls' performance in academic tests has been recognised for many years and the gap has been getting larger. In O Levels,

GCE, GCSE³ girls have been more successful than boys since 1975. Standards have risen for both girls and boys. In 1975 the gap between boys attainment was only 0.8 per cent, by 2000 it had grown to 10.6 per cent. It is claimed that such gender differences are an aspect of the majority of tests and examinations that pupils sit in England and Wales today. (Noble, Brown, & Murphy, 2001)

Part Two: Why are Boys Underachieving?

2.18 Boys in Decline?

The gender gap between boys and girls educational achievement has widened over the last three decades and has caused a great deal of debate. This decline can be seen particularly in the deteriorating performance of boys in reading and literacy; and in girls' improved performance in the sciences and mathematics, as programmes have been implemented to motivate and engage girls in these curriculum areas. Changes in school management, course content, curriculum standards and assessment methods have also contributed to the growing gender gap (Buckingham, 1999; Hawkes, 2001; Noble et al. 2001; West, 2001). The statistical evidence of a decline in school performance of boys when compared with girls is clear, but the reasons behind it are not. There are many pieces to the puzzle as to why boys are underachieving. In part two, some of these pieces will be explored.

In a time when girls were being classified as the educationally deprived and underprivileged, Southern (1978) was claiming that boys were being treated in a disadvantaged manner in Australian primary schools. He viewed boys' disadvantage in terms of contextual sexism, the feminization of the teaching profession, gender-based biological differences and the effects of self-fulfilling prophecy on performance and

³ The General Certificate of Education or GCE is a secondary-level academic qualification, which was used in Britain and continues to be used in some former British colonies. It is often divided into two levels: Ordinary level (O-level) (replaced in 1986 by GCSE) and Advanced level (A-Level), although other categories exist

achievement” (Southern quoted in Barron, 2004, p. 8). The claims he made thirty years ago still hold validity today and are some of the factors that contribute to boys being the more troubled gender in our education system and society today.

2.19 Boys Model of Change.

In a relatively short period of time the male in our society, whether boy, young man or adult male has had to contend with an overwhelming number of change factors which has effected their schooling, employment, role in family, and place in society (Epstein et al. 1998; Noble et al. 2001). These factors have challenged the core values and identity for many men. This study would argue that most men can handle one or two change factors, but when there are numerous changes occurring over a short period of time, it can be overwhelming. There is no single contributing factor that has caused the gender gap to occur; rather, it is the occurrence of multiple contributing factors that has largely occurring in a relatively short space of time.

The model as presented in (Figure 2.1) portrays the factors as blocks. These blocks can build up until they have overwhelmed men. Men presented with these change factors or demands can react in a number of ways:

- Run. Men cannot handle the changes or challenges placed in front of them and react by leaving one or more of their present responsibilities such as family, employment, and or position in society.
- React. Male reaction is often violent or of a risk taking nature which can result in criminal activity, jail or death.
- Lost or overwhelmed. Men do not know what is expected of them.
- Struggle. They struggle to cope with one or two of the new change factors, trying to re-establish a new role or position for them. They deal with what they can and ignore the rest.
- Ignore. The male contends there is no need for change. A ‘Bury your head in the sand’ attitude or adopt a macho ‘I’m alright, mate’ attitude.

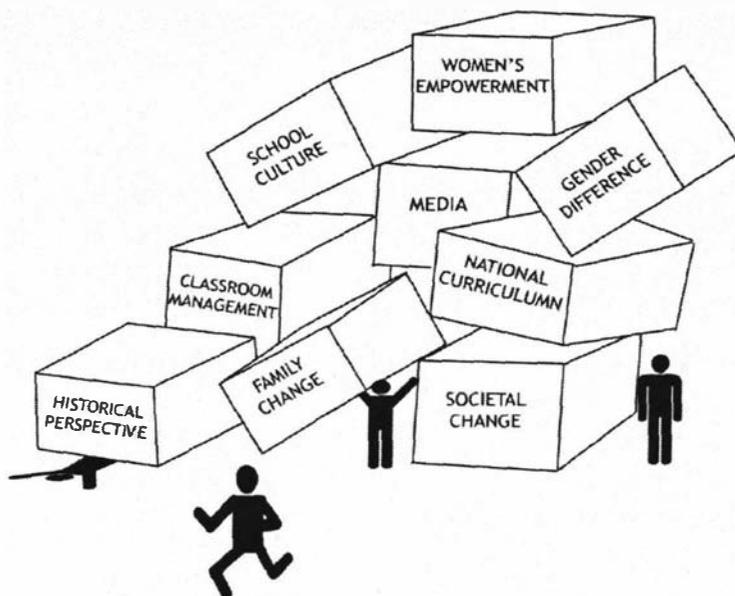
2.20 Contributing Factor: The Historical Perspective

A review of historical data indicates that this gender differential in achievement has

been evident for the past century. Alton-Lee and Praat (2000, p. 295) claim that “the gender gaps favouring girls’ achievement are most marked in speaking and reading. Gaps in performance on reading, literacy and English have been evident in New Zealand assessment data for over a hundred years.”

Historically, education has not been equal. In the past, educational opportunities favoured the boys, especially those from wealthy or titled families. Boys’ significant advantage in schooling represented the way society viewed boys’ and girls’ roles at that particular time. Society’s thinking in that era restricted women’s education. For instance, in the late 1780’s there was a common belief that there was a link between body and mind; a female’s greater weakness of body was reflected in her mind as was the male’s superior physical strength reflected in his mind.

Figure 2.1 Factors contributing to gender gap.



A hundred years later the discussions concerned a body’s overstrain. In other words, a body’s energy had to be managed, and energy was finite. Doctors were concerned with the stress intellectual endeavors might have on women’s capacity for healthy maternity (Cohen, 1998 p. 27). There was a distinct role and place for woman in society but that role was not side-by-side with man. Women could not cope with the same physical or intellectual rigors as men.

Cohen (in Epstein et al. 1998, p. 28) argued that boys have always underachieved.

The underachievement of boys can be, and always has been, masked by cultural constructs like “gentleman, “character”, “potential” which have been essential to the construct of English masculinity since the turn of the nineteenth century. (p. 30)

It was not academic achievement but “character” that was at the heart of education in the Victorian public schools. (p. 28)

Schooling for boys was not about academic achievement but concerned more with the development of good character and gentlemanly attitudes. In this historical school system the masculine code of behaviour was developed. Boys were encouraged to be the strong silent types. *Boys' Own Annuals* and related stories reflected the adventure hero who was strong, loyal, reliable, and who protected or saved those weaker than him. This is evident in the writing of Lord Baden-Powell, the founder of the Scouting movement, who summed up the expected character of the boy in *Scouting for Boys'* (1900). “A scout whistles and smiles under all difficulties.” The English Public School system was duplicated throughout England's colonies, so countries such as New Zealand developed the same boys' ethos of the strong male character. “Play the game hard and play the game fair” were typical school mottos of the day. The prowess on the rugby field, athleticism, school prefects and competitive School House systems were what was considered to be important within the boys' school. These systems within the schools were deemed to contribute to character building and assisted in the construct of masculinity and the desired behaviours of a gentleman.

Mac an Ghail (1994) carried out a three year ethnographic study that investigated social construction and regulation of masculinities in an English state secondary school. He identified four contrasting masculine identities within his research: (1.) the ‘Macho Lads’, (2.) the ‘Academic Achievers’, (3.) the ‘New Enterprisers’, and (4.) the ‘Real Englishmen’. It is the ‘Real Englishmen’, which has important historic perspective. This group saw themselves as arbiters of culture, rejecting the school's work ethic, believing that intellectual talent was naturally inscribed to them and that achievement was effortless for them. They were critical of hardworking students, especially those from the ‘Academic Achievers’ group. Cohen (1998, p. 29) argued that the effortless achievement constructs the “Real Englishmen's natural” intellectual talent as it has the

mental superiority of the aristocrat or gentleman. This argument is supported by Power et al. (1998, p. 143) who claimed that 'Effortless achievement' is a key concept in the English aristocratic attitude to education. The Public school system, which New Zealand adopted from the 1850's, traditionally promotes the ethos of manliness, of good character and natural ability. Mac an Ghaill argued that these same attitudes were still prevalent in many schools today.

Historically, boys and girls have not had equitable opportunities in education. A 'girls versus boys', or 'boys turn; girls turn' attitude does nothing to raise educational standards. The essential point is that curriculum adaptations, school programmes and support should not be developed that meet the needs of one at the expense of the other (Weaver-Hightower, 2003). The emphasis needs to be placed on ensuring that learning conditions are created for all students, which creates gender equitable outcomes of the highest standard.

2.21 Contributing Factor: Changes in Society

There have been a number of dramatic changes over the last thirty-five years within our society, especially in the area of employment and the traditional role of the male in the work place. Jackson (in Epstein et al. 1998, p. 79) outlined:

The social upheavals of the last 25 years – feminist challenges, unemployment, the collapse of the male breadwinner and the traditional father as head of the household, the emergence of HIV/AIDS and de-industrialisation – have unsettled the traditional models of dominant, white, heterosexual masculinities.

The large traditionally male workplaces that offered labouring, semi-skilled and skilled work with stability of employment have either down sized or disappeared. Large employers based around agricultural, engineering, and machinery have basically disappeared, for example freezing works, coalmines, railroads, post office and ship building. The disappearance of such large work places has reduced the opportunity for young men to leave school and gain an apprenticeship, a trade, and secure employment for 40 years. It is now difficult for many boys to become respectable, working men with a sense of status, pride and security in their job (Jackson, 1998).

As the work place has changed, so has the type of employment, which requires a different set of skills with a less stable employment environment. Large manual and

semi-skilled machinery industries have been replaced with new service industries such as commerce, finance, tourism, and communication and computer technologies. These new service industries require employees with communication, keyboard and interpersonal skills. As Hawkes (2001, p. 29) argued, “boys have found employment prospects declining given that many boys lack the attributes necessary to be considered an asset to an organisation.”

Males find they are now faced with new employment conditions, lack of job security, and a change from traditional work skills. The male can also find himself not being the sole family breadwinner or in some cases the lesser paid of the two breadwinners. All this is a challenge to the traditional male image, as well as to their sense of status, pride and security.

2.22 Contributing Factor: Changes in Families

There have been a number of significant changes within family structure, which has had major effects on all involved.

Table 2.5. Demographic Indicators for Women

	1971	2001
Percentage married	65	48
Median age of first time brides	21	27
Divorce rate	5.1	12.2
Remarriages as percentages of all marriages	16	37
Average number of births per woman	3.18	1.97
Median age of first birth to married women	23	30
Percentage of births outside marriage	14	43
Percentage of married women in full-time labour force	26	38
Percentage of households that are sole parents	5	15
Percentage of households that are two parent	41	49

Statistics New Zealand (2005).

Key social and demographic trends in recent decades have brought about increasing diversity in families and households. These trends include a movement to later marriages and childbearing, an increase in women living in non-marital partnerships,

increase in solo parenthood, more births occurring outside of marriage, and more women in the workforce (Statistics New Zealand, 2005). These social and demographic changes also impact on boys (and girls) as more children are raised in single parent families or families where both parents are working or a family where divorce has occurred.

As a result of these changes there have been dramatic effects on families. Noble et al. (2001) claimed an increasing number of families are cash rich and time poor as a result of fathers working longer hours per week or both parents working full time. As a result fathers in particular have less time with their children. Biddulph (1997, p.19) stated, “from the age of six to the fourteenth birthday – is the major opportunity for a father to have an influence on and build the foundations of masculinity in his son.” If the father is not present, boys do not get positive male identity models, male social referencing and a trusting, secure relationship with a male, all things a boy requires. Biddulph (1997) claimed many boys suffer from DDD, Dad Deficit Disorder.

The majority of New Zealand children live in two-parent families. However, over recent years there has been a rapid increase in solo-parent families; 23.6 percent of all families are now solo-parent parent families (Statistics New Zealand, 2005). The increase in solo-families, largely headed by the mother, has important implications for children. Those children in solo-parent families are disadvantaged in terms of employment; education and housing when compared with two-parent families. Solo-parent families are more likely to rent a home, be in the bottom two-income quintiles, and have fewer educational qualifications. Add to these disadvantages the absence of fathers or positive male role model contact and boys can be really struggling. However, as Buckingham (1999, p.10) pointed out, “when we look closely at the correlation between socio-economic status and school performance, family income *per se* declines in importance, and family structure, parental competence and parental influence come to the fore.” Children in solo-parent families only have the influence of one predominant parent in their life and the result is greater challenges and pressures for the parent and the children

2.23 Contributing Factor: School Curriculum

The school curriculum and assessment practices have gone through considerable change in the last few years. New curriculum were introduced in the early nineties, followed by the replacement of external School Certificate and University exams with the National Certificate of Educational Achievement for secondary schools. Noble (2001, p. 24) in the United Kingdom claimed “the new curriculum tends to be more hostile to boys and has had an effect upon their attitude, behaviour, effort and achievement.” Researchers in other countries agree with Noble and give reasons of changed curriculum and assessment practices relying heavily on open type tasks and essays that do not favour boys (Baker, 2006; Buckingham, 1999; Hawkes, 2001; West, 2001). Changes in New Zealand to curriculum have seen many activities based curriculum practices changed or disappear. The junior school developmental time with woodwork and construction tables disappeared from most schools and was replaced with greater emphasis on language activities and acquisition. Hard and soft technologies replaced woodwork, metal work and cooking. In the new technology curriculums there is greater emphasis on planning and process rather than end product making.

Arnot et al. (1998, p. 26) stated, “to be fair to both boys and girls it is likely that a variety of assessment modes should be used so that all pupils have opportunity to produce their best performance.” The Physical Education and Health results for NCEA in 2005 raised serious questions concerning how students are assessed. The girls gained more credits than boys in a curriculum where boys dominate school sports academies and participation. Baker (2006, p. 11) demonstrated how assessment is not gender neutral with this example. Before 1993, Bursary Agriculture favoured girls. In 1993, there was a new examining team and the gender gap reversed. In 1997 it abruptly reversed again. In 1994, the curriculum subject Tech Drawing was revised and renamed Graphics and the gender gap went from .6 favouring boys to a gender gap of 10 favouring girls. Hawkes (in Best, 2002, p. 4) asks the question, “Are schools keeping boys in the Dark Ages by not allowing the testing of all intelligences, restricting most exams to literacy based answers and putting a premium on inert quiet behaviour?” The student results from NCEA and other examinations raise serious doubts about some assessment practices.

2.24 Contributing Factor: School Management

There have been huge changes in school management and the responsibilities of school principals since the 1990s. This goes beyond school property, resources, finances and staffing and includes the culture of the school. School culture in this research is defined as what happens within the school; it is all the systems, processes and artifacts that make the school what it is. The senior management team is responsible for the quality of teaching and learning, and support of students within the school. It should not be forgotten that schools are first and foremost, learning organisations. Rowe and Rowe (2003) believe there is a widespread failure in schools to make a distinction between structure and function, with too many schools emphasizing structure. The key function of school is the provision of quality teaching and learning experiences to meet the needs of its students.

The way a school goes about its key function and organising and implementing curriculum, pedagogy, and resources, has a huge effect on its students. Noble et al. (2001, p. 26) claimed “school managers have also a large measure of responsibility for boys’ underachievement”. The school management team can make a huge difference in handling boys’ underachievement by dealing with such problems as violence, bullying and anti-swot cultures and initiating positive behavioural and academic support systems. Too many issues in schools are dealt with by negative practices such as stand-downs and suspensions (see 2.11). Smyth et al. (2000) interviewed over 200 students who had left school or were at risk of leaving school in South Australia and reached this conclusion:

The school regime so often ignores student experience and maturity, demands compliance, punishes deviance, and generally treats them like children, rather than emerging adults. The mismatch is between the young people’s project of ‘becoming somebody’, and the school’s agenda of ‘doing what we say because we know best’. (p. 293)

Wylie, Hodgen and Ferral (2006), as part of the *Competent Learners* study in New Zealand investigated transition from primary to secondary school and found there were marked increases in student boredom and restlessness in Year 9. It is the responsibility of the school principal and management team to ensure that there is not such a mismatch between boys’ expectations and the experiences they encounter at the school they attend.

2.25 Contributing Factor: Classroom Management and Teaching.

Teachers have an enormous impact on the students in their class. What matters most “is quality teachers and teaching, supported by strategic teacher professional development” (Rowe, 2003, p. 1). The teacher’s methods of teaching and behaviour management, along with attitude to, and expectations of pupils set the classroom tone for learning and success. It is claimed by Noble et al. (2001, p. 27), “teachers have an enormous amount of discretion in their classroom management which can either exacerbate or ameliorate the motivation and underachievement of boys.” Fergusson and Horwood (1997) in a longitudinal study of 1000 children believed that the higher rate of educational underachievement they found in males could be adequately explained by their more disruptive and inattentive classroom behaviours of the boys. If this is the case the teacher should be able to establish behavioural, teaching and learning strategies to counter these behaviours.

Aitken (1999) and West (2000) were among a growing number of researchers calling for teachers to make changes to their teaching practices, to make learning more interesting and profitable for boys. There are techniques and strategies that have been tried in a number of schools successfully⁴. Such strategies such as changes to seating plans, creating a structured timetable and management plan, developing a variety of pedagogy to cater for learning styles, making tasks more manageable by ‘chunking’ them, using activity and competition creatively have all met with success.

A number of researchers report that boys find school boring (Hawkes, 2001; Irwin, 2002; West, 2000). In the research report *Raising Boys’ Achievement* (Younger, Warrington et al. 2005), it is suggested that a holistic approach is taken using a variety of interactive classroom activities, with a ‘fitness for purpose’ approach, so that both short, specific focused activities and more sustained, ongoing activities are used to meet student and classroom needs. It is the teacher that is best situated to change negative learning attitudes of boys into positive ones. Such attitudes as ‘it’s cool to be a fool’ or its ‘geeky or nerdy to learn’ in some classrooms and schools must be eliminated. This can only be done by teachers with full school management support. The importance of

⁴ See strategies developed by Lighthouse schools in Australia and Beacon schools in the United Kingdom.

quality teaching and positive teacher and pupil relationships cannot be emphasized enough. The teacher is the crucial factor that can make an enormous difference to boys' academic success (Hattie, 2003; Rowe, 2003).

2.26 Contributing Factor: Empowerment of Women

Women have gained new status, new identity and powers over the last six decades through the removal of many societal barriers that were placed upon them. There have been “gains that have been made through feminist struggle both within and beyond the school and, related to that, through changing definitions of what it means to be a woman” (Epstein, 1998, p. 5). Curriculum areas were promoted and attitudinal changes occurred through publicity, use of role models, teacher professional development and changes in resource materials until girls believed whole-heartedly the catch phrase ‘girls can do anything’. How successful these changes in education and society were can be seen in NCEA examination results, where girls score higher than boys in all curriculum areas, and out number boys in enrolments to tertiary institutions today (See 2.8 Tertiary Enrolments).

However, it is now argued that the schooling system has become too feminised, especially in curriculum, teaching practices, assessment and teaching staff (Buckingham, 2004; Hawkes, 2001; West, 2002). Buckingham (2004, p. 17) gives examples of how the feminised school “caters to the strengths of girls, for example, being able to work quietly and cooperatively in groups, to communicate effectively, to be reflective and introspective, diligent and methodical.” Schools want their students to be able to sit quietly, to listen for long periods and to be compliant. Assessment of student achievement has also changed. Increasingly, mathematics, science, technology and physical education, traditionally male subject areas, now all require high literacy skills to pass, skills which it is argued favours girls. The evidence can be seen in the mainstream subjects of the national curriculum of both New Zealand and the UK, where girls outperform boys in every curriculum area.

The New Zealand teaching staff in primary schools comprises 82% female and 18% male. In secondary schools the ratio is 58% females and 42% males (Teacher Census, 2005). Research has found no direct correlation between teacher gender and male

learning. Boys do not improve their academic standards under a male teacher; research indicates quality teaching rather than gender makes the difference (Hattie, 2003; Rowe, 2003). However, we need male teachers to model positive male identity, to display a love for literacy as for sport, to demonstrate how to regulate emotions so physical hurt is not the result, to channel power and energy constructively and not destructively. Baker (2006, p. 21) argued, “we need more male teachers, but also more teachers –male or female- who by instinct or hard graft come to understand boys, and connect with maleness. We need teachers who consider robust, collective masculinity as a force to be celebrated and positively channeled, rather than a threat to be controlled.” Boys need quality teachers who understand and appreciate their uniqueness.

2.27 Contributing Factor: The Genetic Aspect

There has been a great deal in media, books and scientific research concerning the differences in male and female thinking. The books *Boys and girls learn differently* (Gurian, 2001) and *The essential difference: men, women and the extreme male brain* (Baron-Cohen, 2003) give detailed developmental, structural, functional, chemical and hormonal differences between boys and girls. “Our whole body, including our cognitive and social abilities, is influenced by the balancing of masculinising or feminising hormones” (Fletcher, 2006, p. 37). Gurian (2001) argued these differences need to be considered in creating the ultimate learning environment. He believed that teachers must “make sure to meet the needs of boys and girls to whom one must go the extra distance in adapting to their general and gender-specific needs” (p. 71).

Nagel (2005, p. 39) explained some of the needs of boys and how teachers must accommodate boys’ differences.

Boys need to move! The physiology of their brains says as much. Researchers are discovering very real biological factors that tend to make boys more impulsive, fidgety and at times, less than efficient classroom learners. More over, when they are sedentary, boys tend to occupy greater physical space when they are learning; they spread out and often appear to be annoying others as they strive to meet their own individual biological and neurological needs. Therefore it is imperative for educators to consider the brain’s complicity in the above observations rather than attributing the actions of boys as purely behavioural and controllable. Serotonin, testosterone and spatial learning tendencies provide

a foundation for beginning to understand what might be happening in the mind and body of a boy.

Rowe and Rowe (2006) in their research discovered that boys are developmentally delayed by approximately one year in their auditory processing capacity (APC) when compared to girls. "Auditory processing capacity is defined as the capacity to hold sequence and recall auditory information accurately. This capacity to recall what is heard is a developmental capacity that gradually improves throughout childhood" (p. 1). Rowe and Rowe discovered that there are strong relationships between literacy achievements, inattentive/disruptive behaviours in the classroom and auditory processing capacity at early to middle years of primary and secondary schooling. This is another example of gender difference in which teacher knowledge and good pedagogy can assist boys overcome a difficulty.

Gender, brain, hormonal and developmental differences do play a part in the way boys and girls apply themselves to learning and thinking tasks. However, the significant discoveries in gender brain and physiology differences cannot be easily transferred into classroom teaching strategies. As Noble et al. (2001, p. 21) warns, "many boys and girls do not fit in to the biologically determined stereotypes ascribed to them." Even so, brain differences and research cannot be dismissed and it is another good reason for teachers to ensure that a variety of learning and teaching styles are utilised in the classroom. Gender differences are just another contributing factor to be considered in meeting the needs of boys but should not become the foremost reason for change to classroom and school environments or to explain the gender underachievement.

2.28 Contributing Factor: Masculine Code or Image.

Mac an Ghail (1994) explained in his research how within a school culture there can be a variety of boy groups, each group with their own pattern of behaviours and rules. However, there are also common patterns and rules amongst boys, often referred to as the Boy Code by researchers (Pollack, 1998; West, 2002). Pollack (1998, 2000), in his research with boys, discovered that the old boy code is still operating in force. "The Boy Code puts boys and men into a gender straitjacket" (2000, p. 6). Behind the Boy Code, is what Pollack referred to as 'a mask that boys wear', boys "often are hiding not only a wide range of their feelings but also some of their creativity and originality, showing in

effect only a handful of primary colours rather than a broad spectrum of colours and hues of the self”(p. 7).

The Boy Code can be summarised as follows:

- Never cry, never show emotion.
- Do not show weakness.
- Do not care
- Do not do anything ‘girly’ or ‘nerdy’.
- Be tough
- Respect power and strength
- ‘It’s cool to be a fool’
- Talk as little as possible
- ‘Stand on your own two feet’.
- Have ‘good mates’ that will stand by you.
- Enjoy sports

The Boy Code list of behaviours was created from the work of Biddulph, (1997); Head, (1999); Pollack (1998); and West, (2002).

The Boy Code is often reinforced by media images, by older male role models, by family upbringing, by school cultures and society expectations. According to Pollack (2000) boys learn to skillfully hide behind this mask of masculine bravado, conforming to society’s expectations, putting on a face of invincibility. It is this Code that contributes to boys’ academic and social behaviours, a Code that can place many restrictions on a way a boy behaves at school and in the community. The Code needs to be challenged, the mask of invincibility broken so that boys can express and show their true selves.

2.29 Contributing Factors: Conclusion

It is evident that many of the factors that contribute to the growing gender gap between boys and girls are interrelated. Peer relationships, social behaviour and school achievement are strongly correlated with each other. No one single factor contributes to a lowering of a boy’s academic achievement or for a boy to suddenly drop out of

school. There are a number of contributing factors that when combined make it more likely that a boy could experience academic failure. Jimerson, Egeland, Sroufe, & Carlson (2000), in a longitudinal study of high school dropouts, proposed a development process wherein events that occur early have an influence on subsequent events. “The proposed model of dropping out emphasised the importance of early home environment and the quality of early care giving influencing subsequent development. The results of this study demonstrate the association of the early home environment, the quality of early care giving, socioeconomic status, IQ, behaviour problems, academic achievement, peer relationships, and parental involvement, with dropping out of high school at age 19” (p. 525). Many of these factors are similar to the contributing factors identified in this research for boys’ underachievement. A ‘snowballing’ effect occurs under which the boys’ academic achievement suffers and many boys, unable to cope, leave school. The solution is to implement intervention strategies early in a boy’s schooling; the later the intervention is implemented, the more difficult it becomes to change a boy’s behaviour.

Part Three: Programmes for Boys

2.30 Specific Boy Programmes

Many schools have developed specific strategies and programmes with the aim of improving boys’ academic success, social behaviours and closing the gender gap. A number of researchers (Irwin, 2002; Younger and Warrington, 2005) have found that many schools are implementing programmes for boys, but without specific onsite data that specifically identifies needs and requirements. School strategies and programmes have to be closely monitored and assessed. Schools are generally implementing a variety of strategies in a ‘shot-gun’ type of approach that makes it difficult to assess the success of any one approach. Irwin (2002) found in his research of over 20 New Zealand schools that the approach the school adopted went one of two ways. The first approach was to isolate the boys causing concern in the school and initiate programmes

that would 'fix' the boys so that they were able to resume mainstream education. The second approach was to adopt a whole school strategy developed by all the staff and involved number of strategies being implemented consistently across the school. The first approach was aimed at 'fixing' the boy, he was the one with the problem, whereas, the second approach involved changing the school environment and culture so to meet the needs of the boys.

There are no "magic bullet" approaches that can be adopted by all schools to assist boys' to improve their academic success and behaviour. The problems encountered by boys are varied and can pertain to their local environment and school. As Epstein et al. (1998, p. 14) stated:

The issues are multi-faceted, the research complex, and it would be premature to suggest firm directions for others to follow, not least because the complexity and diversity of what is presented here indicates that much of the responses need to be site specific, and based on a thorough, sensitive collection and analysis of local data.

The Department of Education, Science and Training for the Australian Government in 2003 developed ten guiding principles for educating boys. They are:

- Collect evidence and undertake ongoing inquiry on the issue, recognise that schools can do something about it.
- Adopt a flexible, whole school approach with a person and team responsible.
- Ensure good teaching for boys, and all students in all classes.
- Be clear about the kinds of support particular boys require.
- Cater for different learning styles preferred by boys.
- Recognise that gender matters and stereotypes should be challenged.
- Develop positive relationships, as they are critical to success.
- Provide opportunities for boys to benefit from positive male role models from within and beyond the school.
- Focus on literacy in particular.
- Use information and communication technologies (ICTs) as a valuable tool.

These principles were developed from phase one of the *Boys' Education Lighthouse*

*Schools Programme*⁵ (2003) initiated by the Department of Education, Science and Training of the Australian government. The 10 principles were developed after two years of phase one and were intended to inform the development and implementation of ongoing programmes to improve the education of boys in schools.

There has been much written on strategies and approaches that schools can adopt to raise boys' standards of educational achievement and behaviour. Table 2.6 gives an insight into the types of interventions recommended for schools and individual teachers to adopt from a cross section of writers on boys' education. The strategies suggested within the Summary of Intervention Strategies for Schools have a number of common strategies. These strategies involve schools:

- Developing early diagnostic and intervention strategies;
- Establishing clear behaviour management strategies and programmes for challenging behaviours.
- Engaging fathers and other suitable male role models in mentoring and peer support programmes.
- Focusing on literacy programmes that capture boys' interest and change their attitude to reading.
- Developing a pedagogy which involves hands-on practical tasks and active learning
- Creating time to listen to boys and to involve them in collaborative decision.
- Focusing on quality teaching, which involves setting individual and class targets, explicit boundaries and structure to lessons, clear objectives and implicit criteria, raising standards and challenges and creating meaningful learning tasks.

⁵ The Boys' Education Lighthouse programme is discussed further in Lead School Projects later in this chapter.

Table 2.6 Summary of Intervention Strategies

MacDonald et al (1999)

- Focus on literacy across curriculum
- Highly structured instruction and lessons
- Clear objectives, explicit criteria
- Short-term, challenging tasks and targets
- Regular individual interviews for purpose of target setting
- Immediate and credible awards for quality work, increased effort and behaviour
- Early diagnosis, monitoring systems designed to identify underachievement in key areas
- Early intervention. Opportunities for extra tuition and revision
- Meaningful learning and work experiences

West (2001)

- Using mentoring
- Experiment with school
- groupings
- Harness Fathers' influences
- Monitor classroom behaviour
- Increase active learning
- Use more incentives and rewards
- Improve literacy skills and attitudes
- Use computers and ICT as learning tools
- Listen to boys learning needs
- Improve assessment practices
- Raise expectations
- Increase challenge
- Review the culture of the school
- Increase teacher awareness and education

Zbar et al (2003)

- Broaden the range of teaching activities
- Improve quality of teacher-student relationships
- Hands on learning and relevant
- Develop programmes to
- engage boys' in literacy
- Support programmes for 'at risk'
- Early identification of under achievement
- Include outdoor challenge and adventure
- Develop programmes to manage challenging behaviours
- Use peer mediation and support
- Positive male role models
- Develop and nurture self esteem

Buckingham (2004)

- Structure lessons. Varied tasks
- Active learning
- Explicit objectives and expectations
- Regular feedback
- Competition

Discipline

- Clear and consistent rules
- Rules establish collaboratively
- Sense of justice

Rewards and Encouragement

- Recognise good/improved
- Be consistent in praise/rewards
- Establish rewards collaboratively

School structure/Classroom composition

- Class composition
- Adapting teaching to class needs
- Homework strategies

Men in Schools

- Role models
- Mentoring programmes
- Involve Fathers
- Discuss masculinity

Reading and Literacy

- Monitoring
- Early intervention
- Tolls of phonics
- Structure of spelling and grammarDiscuss/conversation
- Boys' interest materia

It is interesting to note that no researcher advocated single sex classes within the normal structure of the co-educational school structure, yet single sex classes are a strategy many schools adopt. It is an area where more research is required.

2.31 Gender-Segregated Learning

In New Zealand gender-segregated schooling takes two approaches, the first is gender-segregated classes within co-educational schools, which are a new phenomenon to education. The other approach is one gender schools set up exclusively to cater for the different learning needs of males and females. The boy only, girl only schools have historical origins in an education system that was established to cater for boys of the upper class. Kimmel (2000) gave a number of historical perspectives as to why a segregated education system was established. Firstly, that girls were not capable of doing the same curriculum as boys because their bodies and brain were not made for such physical and intellectual demands. Secondly, educating boys and girls together would require changes to the curriculum to cater for the inferiority of girls who could not keep up with the boys. To have boys and girls integrated in the same school would result in a society of “defeminated women and demasculated men” (p. 152) with homosexuality increased.

A number of schools in New Zealand have offered classes segregated according to gender. The gender-segregated classes have been established for a number of reasons. The first are boy only classes established because the school is worried about the behaviour and academic underachievement of a select group of boys. The second are segregated classes according to gender for the teaching of particular curriculum areas⁶ where the interests and abilities of boys and girls are recognised by the school as being significantly different. Irwin (2003) warned that gender segregated classes need careful implementation and a supportive whole school environment. There is a danger with boy only classes to place all the ‘problem’ boys in the class and largely forget about them; thus allowing the rest of the school to ‘get on with it’. The whole school needs to take ownership of boys (or girls) underachievement and antisocial behaviours and develop a safe and supportive environment, fair and consistent behaviour manager structures, a variety of quality teaching approaches and high achievement standards.

⁶ Curriculum areas most commonly taught separately are mathematics, science and literacy.

Segregated gender schools and classes operate today on a number of assumptions. First, boys and girls learn differently; they respond to different pedagogy. Second, boys and girls are interested in different things and thirdly, boys and girls' differences can best be catered for in single gender classes. Kimmel (2000, p. 151) stated the problem of trying to educate girls and boys in the coeducational school.

On the one hand, the interplanetary theory of gender difference claims that... (boys and girls) come from different planets, speak different "genderlects", apply different moral standards, and know different things in different ways...on the other hand, ...(boys and girls) sit in the same classroom, read the same books, listen to the same teachers, and are supposedly graded by the same criteria.

The supporters of single sex schools and classes claim this is not a problem in their schools as they only have to provide teaching and learning for one gender.

There is a great deal of conflicting research literature on gender-segregated education. A number of researchers (Baker, 2005; Rowe, 2000) claimed that both boys and girls attending single-sex schools were achieving higher academic results than their counterparts in co-educational schools. However, even in the single-sex schools, girls schools are doing better than boys. Rowe argued that the reasons for the differences are complex but conclude that "research evidence is suggesting that co-educational settings are limited in their capacity to accommodate the large differences in cognitive, social and developmental growth rates of boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 16". (p. 1)

However, others hold contrary views and have suggested that improved resources, smaller classes, and better quality teachers may be the reasons for the differences between single-sex and co-educational schools. Kimmel (2000) claimed that the social development of girls and boys suffers at single sex schools and Hoff-Summers (2001) believed that single sex schools reinforce the traditional gender and social stereotypes. There is conflicting research surrounding single-sex classes. A great deal more quality research is required before confident claims can be made regarding the success or otherwise of gender segregated schooling.

2.32 Literacy Focus for Boys

Literacy has been the curriculum area in which girls have outperformed boys by considerable margins in every OECD country, including New Zealand. Barron (2005) discovered that much of the discussion surrounding boys' reluctance to read centers on attitude. Boys, in general do not have the same positive attitude to reading as girls. Maloney (2002) listed a number of reasons for boys' reluctance to reading. Firstly, boys do not make time to read, girls spend a great deal more time in reading books than boys. Secondly, boys believe there are better ways to spend their free time with television, electronics or mates. Boys generally see reading as a passive activity more suited for girls. Thirdly the available reading material lacks appeal for boys, despite the attempts by publishers and libraries to widen choice.

Teaching methods may also contribute to attitude and reading failure. The *Teaching Reading Literature Review* (2005) by the Australian Council of Educational Research and the Ministry for Education, Science and Training found "that many teaching approaches used in schools are not informed by findings from evidence-based research, and that too many teachers do not have a clear understanding of why, how, what and when to use particular strategies"(p. 14). The conclusive findings from the extensive body of evidence-based research are that:

Children during the early years of schooling, they must first master the alphabetical code via systematic, explicit, and intensive instruction in: phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension strategies. Because these are foundational and essential skills for the development of competence in reading, writing, and spelling, they must be taught early, explicitly, and taught well". (2005, p.25)

It is even more important for children who are having reading difficulties to receive a structured, systematic phonics programme. The Australian Inquiry into reading in 2005 should have a significant impact on boys' literacy skills if teachers adopt the recommended practices.

Hawkes (2001), a headmaster of one of Australia's prestigious boys' schools, has developed a number of strategies that have proved successful at the school. Firstly, start young; boys need to be exposed to reading and language well before they get to school. Secondly, use a range of material that appeal to boys; even using well chosen magazines

and comics that have the visual appeal which may hook boys into literacy. Thirdly, use literature, which encourages boys to do something. This could include drama, rap, radio and internet. Fourthly, reading assessment should be diagnostic and as an affirming experience as possible using a balance of reading styles and assessment methods. Fathers, mentors and peers play a key role in modeling positive literacy attitudes, sharing good books and reading attributes. Lastly, a literature based reading scheme, which uses wonder, adventure, and action that touches the emotions of boys. Hawkes, (p.121) believed that choice of reading material is critical. "It seems a pity that the natural gravitation of some authors, when writing for boys, is to make the material lewd, rude or crude. Boys and bad taste are becoming dangerously synonymous as it is without being reinforced by authors." Choice of reading material is a critical factor; teachers too often offer texts that have little or no appeal to the boy.

Many boys develop the attitude that 'real men don't read' and this needs to be changed. Teachers and parents must find ways to reject this stereotype that reading is only for girls (Malony, 2000; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). Boys need to be convinced that reading will strengthen rather than inhibit their masculinity. Hawkes (2001) suggested strategy of involving fathers, older mentors and peers in reading, sharing and enjoying books is crucial. In the home reading is generally associated with mothers; in school most teachers are female; therefore boys may associate reading as a feminine activity. In schools and the home, fathers and other suitable male role models need to be encouraged to model good reading habits.

2.33 Involving Fathers and Mentors in Schools.

Many schools are developing mentoring programmes using older students within the school or suitable male role models from the wider community to work with younger students. Research has failed to provide evidence of the precise effects of mentoring but those involved in mentoring programmes claim real benefits for mentees in developing confidence in initiating relationships, developing resilience, increasing self esteem, developing non-violent solutions to problems, developing a sense of connectedness, solving problems and improvement in academic work. A mentor has a multiplicity of roles as a guide, a support, a coach, as someone who is 'just there' when required.

For many years, parents, practitioners, philosophers, researchers, and policymakers have

agreed that every child needs a dependable, consistent, and positive relationship with at least one adult in order to achieve his or her fullest potential in emotional health, academic achievement, interpersonal relationships, and vocational knowledge and skills. (Guetzloe, 1997, p. 100)

West (2001) argued that mentoring is more important today due to the many changes that have occurred in our society. “In a time when young males are often without good guidance, mentoring has clear appeal for educators” (p. 29). In the school situation, mentoring is usually organised one of two ways, an older student mentoring younger or new students to the school. The other alternative is the school using fathers or other suitable adult males to mentor students. Often, the students who are receiving mentoring are new to the school or have been identified as ‘at-risk’ due to learning, behavioural or family difficulties. Jacobi (1991), quoted in MacCullum and Beltman (1999), identified five characteristics of the mentoring process.

- Mentoring relationships are helping relationships focused on achievement;
- The functions of mentoring include any, or all of the three broad components, emotional and psychosocial support, direct assistance and role modeling;
- Mentoring relationships are reciprocal relationships;
- Mentoring relationships are personal in that they require direct interactions between the mentor and the mentee; and
- Relative to their mentees, mentors show greater experience, influence and achievement within a particular setting.

Fathers are the ideal people to get involved in their sons schooling; however, approximately one third of children are raised without a father in the home. “Children raised without fathers are more likely to be poor, drop out of school, end up in the justice system, and contribute to higher rates of teen pregnancy and suicide” (Lue, Smalley, Smith, & Seaton, 1998, p. 300).

Fletcher (2005) believed that role models have two important contributions to make while working with boys. The first is to validate the distinctive positive ways that males

behave; the second is emotional regulation, which “encompasses the recognition of emotional states in others (empathy) and the ability to manage a range of emotions in oneself” (p. 38). Boys are developing their identity, creating who they are, and having a role model as a social reference point can be crucial to their development.

If we wish to assist boys to discover ‘who they want to be’ as men, then we also need male role models to form relationships with boys. One of the obvious reasons to have males involved in the education of boys is so that the boys can literally ‘see’ how men react to stressful or high-risk educational situations (Fletcher, 2005, p. 39).

Schools must organise and prepare well, before initiating a mentoring programme. Decisions and clarification on the purpose and structure of the programme, the participants who will be involved, and the recruiting and training of mentors must be made. Mentors need training and guidance on how to be an active listener, preparation to share of one’s self, how to establish a safe, trusting relationship, how to guide and encourage and know when and how to help. Mentors also need to be committed, to have regular contact so that a bond, a connectedness can be established between mentor and mentee. The mentee must feel trust for the mentor, to be able to share and know what is said, is confidential. Boys can benefit from an effectively planned mentoring programme that carefully matches the mentor and mentee.

2.34 International Initiatives

In England a four-year project, *Raising Boys’ Achievement*, was conducted between 2000 and 2004 in fifty primary, secondary and special schools. The aim of the project was to identify strategies that appear to have the potential to make a difference to boys’ (and girls’) learning, achievement and school engagement. Younger and Warrington et al. (2005, p. 9), in their initial research with schools found that the strategies being implemented to improve academic achievement for boys could be grouped into four different areas:

- Pedagogic: classroom approaches centered on teaching and learning.
- Individual: essentially a focus on target setting and mentoring
- Organisational: ways of organising learning at the whole school level
- Socio-cultural: approaches which attempt to create an environment for learning where students feel able to work with, rather than against the aims and

aspirations of the school.

Younger and Warrington et al. (2005, p. 14) found that for strategies to be implemented successfully, the strategies needed to be “implemented through collaboration, rather than through imposition.” They identified a set of preconditions that were necessary for any strategy to be successful. “These included leadership support and commitment by all staff, a clearly articulated ethos where high expectations were the norm, a culture which celebrated achievement in its widest sense, and an emphasis on pedagogic practice” (p. 14).

The aim of the *Raising Boys’ Achievement Project* was for an Originator School to work with members of the research team to identify the core intervention strategy which had led to improved academic levels for boys and attempt to transfer it, with contextual specific modifications to two linked partner schools. A number of research⁷ triads were established around England and monitored closely by the research team. A similar research achievement initiative aimed at boys was established in Australia in 2003 as the *Boys’ Educational Lighthouse Schools’ Programme*.

The *Educational Lighthouse Schools’ Programme* had two phases, the first was for a school or cluster of schools to apply and receive funding to document and showcase successful practices implemented to improve boys’ school success. The second phase used the information from phase one to establish approximately 30 centers of excellence, or ‘lighthouse’ schools across Australia that will champion, demonstrate and disseminate best practice in boys’ education. A summary report, *Meeting the Challenge* (2003), placed emphasis on whole school awareness, obtaining specific school data, instigating value added programmes and placing particular importance on what occurs in the classroom.

Change must occur in the classroom – unless there is change in relationships, methodology and structures then boys will not be as successful as they could be ... and key aspects to address are explicit instruction, support with personal organization, flexible assessment and authentic learning. (p. 21)

In both the United Kingdom and Australia, the strategies to raise academic achievement

⁷ A triad consisted of an originator school and two partner schools.

for boys are very similar. The programmes were based on sound research methodologies to identify schools that had initiated programmes that had made a difference to boys' academic achievement. These schools were then given assistance and money so to establish them as lead schools; around the lead school a cluster of schools were established that were keen to implement programmes to raise boys' achievement. This has proven to be a successful formula (Younger & Warrington, 2005; DfET, 2003). New Zealand has nothing like this; in fact, our Ministry of Education has not even instigated a research project or a Ministerial Report to establish the needs of boys' education, even though the statistics clearly show boys at a distinct disadvantage in many educational and social settings.

2.35 Conclusion

There has been a gender gap for a number of years in academic achievement, with girls outperforming boys. This starts from an early age in primary school and moves on into secondary school. This is especially so in reading and writing but as can be seen by NEMP and NCEA results girls are outperforming boys across most curriculum areas. More girls are gaining higher-level qualifications and entering tertiary education. Boys are overrepresented in truancy, stand-downs and suspensions, as well as in criminal youth offending. Boys are the dominant gender in all special needs programmes offered by the Ministry of Education and schools.

There is no one cause for this gender gap but a number of contributing factors that has seen the educational achievement gap between boys and girls grow wider over the last thirty years. In some countries, government Departments of Education have invested time, expertise and money in an attempt to redress the growing gender gap; this has not been so in New Zealand. Individual schools are implementing a range of initiatives and specific programmes to improve boys' academic achievement and social behaviour similar to those described in Table 2.6. It has been the enthusiasm and dedication of a few expert teachers that has seen specific boys' programmes introduced but the fact remains that very few of these programmes have been adequately assessed or researched.

There are no specific programmes or strategies that can be applied across schools that

will 'fix' boys behaviour or academic underachievement. There has been much written by researchers and the media concerning the need for schools to be boy friendly. That is, to make pedagogy, environment, assessment, and school culture more specific to the particular needs of boys. However, research by Faith and Trent (2001), Irwin (2005), and Smyth et al. (2000) have found that more important than boy friendly schools are schools that provide quality teachers. These are teachers who create a challenging, supportive learning environment; a classroom where boys feel respected and listened to. As Younger and Warrington (2005, p. 15) found: "Our research does not support the notion that there is a case for boy-friendly pedagogies. Pedagogies, which appeal to and engage boys, are equally girl friendly. They characterise quality teaching, and as such are just as suitable girls as for boys."

To find out why boys are underachieving, it is important for schools to conduct specific research with the boys. Boys know their schools; they have had five or ten years experience. There are no better people to involve in the research process. They know the language, the culture, and the issues to probe; and, working beside an experienced researcher can identify potential solutions.

Giving students voice and the opportunity to part of the research process was a crucial component of this study. The next chapter investigates the concept of giving student voice and the rationale and methodology of using students in the research process.

CHAPTER THREE

Student Voice

People talking without speaking

People hearing without listening...

'Fools' said I, 'you do not know

Silence like a cancer grows.'

Paul Simon: 'Sound of Silence' (1964 song)

3.0 Introduction

It goes without saying that students are what schools are all about and most teachers work so hard to create positive learning environments. Gray and Reynolds (1994), cited in Rudduck et al. (1996, p. 4), summarised the strategic goals of 60 UK school improvement projects. The goals most frequently cited were (1) lifting student attainment, (2) raising expectations and (3) enhancing self-esteem. Students are nearly always the main reason for school improvement or change. It is a logical step, therefore to consult and involve students in the school change process as they are well placed through their own experiences and perceptions to provide authentic information concerning what enhances their learning. Phelan, Davidson, and Cao (1992) argued that students should be included as co-conspirators in creating these learning situations. It is most often the case; however, those students' voices are not heard. In other words, a potentially valuable information source is missing when it comes to understanding how to enhance learning or improve the school environment. Klein (2003; p. 4) argued that:

Many children and young people have been consigned to a passive role at school. The government determines what is to be learned, schools determine how the learning is to be delivered and governors determine by whom.

This leaves the student voiceless and powerless.

3.1 Hierarchical Structure

In New Zealand, education is organised around a hierarchical structure with power

dispersed in a top down fashion. At the apex is the Minister of Education and at the bottom is the student, with an elaborate power infrastructure between. Students within this structure have a minimal or token say on how their school and learning is structured. New Zealand secondary schools have a student representative on the Board of Trustees and some schools also have student councils. However, in most cases this is a nominal gesture more than a genuine endeavour to include students in the full democratic process of decision making to create or improve the student learning environment.

Smyth et al. (2000, p. 51) argued, “There is a powerful culture of complacency that operates around secondary schools.” This is especially evident in schools that have a curriculum geared towards tertiary selection, as this influences the curriculum and the pedagogy within a school. The curriculum taught within schools has a hierarchical structure with some curriculum given status over others. In today’s schools, mathematics, sciences, business studies are top, with arts and technologies towards the bottom.

Connell (1999, p. 84) referred to the curriculum structure within schools as a “competitive academic curriculum.” He stated it is a curriculum marked by:

- An abstract division of knowledge into subjects.
- A hierarchy of subjects.
- A hierarchical ordering of knowledge within each subject.
- A teacher-centered classroom-based pedagogy.
- An individual learning process.
- Formal competitive assessment.

New Zealand secondary schools and an increasing number of intermediate schools, display this “competitive academic curriculum”, a curriculum and hierarchical structure that have changed little over time.

3.2 School Structure

Smyth et al. (2000, p. 3) claim that:

Schools are power structures in which the clear unfettered voice of students is rarely

heard. The school is premised on inequitable power relations and controlled through sanctions, and reinforced by moral imperatives about what should be done. In such a climate, teachers' voices are what describes and produces truth, whilst student perceptions are easily disregarded on the grounds of immaturity, prejudice, pathology or mischievous intent.

New Zealand secondary schools are organised as hierarchical power structures and have the following features:

- An administration structure with the principal at the top and 'in-charge' with deputies who ensure the school policies are implemented and organised effectively into procedures and processes.
- A structured day, time-tabled into equal segments of curriculum learning with pupils moving from one teaching cell to another to receive the different curriculum components.
- School staff are departmentalised and managed in curriculum faculty structures.
- Schools architecturally designed into single-cell teaching spaces for approximately 30 students to receive instruction from one teacher.
- Teachers initiate instruction and present predetermined segments of learning largely using didactic teaching methods.
- Students are largely assessed on mastery of selected segments of this taught knowledge by written testing methods.
- The curriculum knowledge is externally determined with schools being expected to deliver the required knowledge.
- Schools are judged on how well their students present mastery of segments of curriculum knowledge in external exams.

This type of organisational structure gives little opportunity for student-teacher learning relationships to develop, or for students to contribute to their learning or the improvement of the school environment and culture. Wallace (1996, p. 59) claimed that:

Classrooms are teachers' territories within which pupils engage with learning on teachers' terms. Those terms change as pupils' progress from year 7 to year 11⁸ through an institutionalised process of learning upon which pupils have only marginal influence.

⁸ In New Zealand Year 9 to 13.

The broad agenda is already set. Nevertheless, both teachers and pupils are active participants in an interactive situation, which has physical as well as social dimensions. Importantly, pupils' own life-historical experiences and age-related characteristics influence their attitudes and behaviours and the meaning they give to their learning. However, many teachers know little about their students' life-historical experiences, age-related characteristics or the influences on their motivation and learning.

3.3 Student Voice in Legislature

The United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, introduced in 1989, developed some far-reaching Articles concerning the rights of children to participate and be heard.

Article 12

Provides for a child's participation in decisions affecting him or her and gives the child the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, including the right to be heard in any judicial or administrative proceedings affecting them.

Article 13

Gives children the right to obtain and make known information and to be able to express their views, unless this violates the rights of others.

There are a number of other Articles within the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* that also refer to giving children voice and the right to participate in events and decisions that effect them.

In England, the Education Act of 2002 made it a requirement for schools and Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to take into account the views of students on matters that affect them. Klein (2003, p. 5) claimed, "it is the most far reaching education legislation so far in terms of addressing the role of students in the education process." The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) produced a guideline booklet to assist schools on how to listen to students and give them greater participation in the learning process. The guidelines entitled, *Working together: Giving children and young people a say* (2004, p. 2) define pupil participation as:

"Adults working with children and young adults to develop ways of ensuring their views are heard and valued and encouraging them to:

- become more active participants in their education, including planning

and evaluation of their own learning;

- participate in creating, building and improving services to make them more responsive to their needs and those of the wider community;
- make a difference in their schools, neighbourhoods and communities.
- learn from an early age to balance their rights as individuals with their responsibilities as citizens
- develop through the way they are involved, the knowledge, understanding and skills they will need in adult life.”

In a number of European countries student participation in schooling is happening to a greater or lesser extent than England. In Sweden, teachers and schools are required by law to include children in decision making on how the school is run and what is taught. Teachers also work with students when planning and evaluating their teaching. Germany and the Netherlands have regulations that require schools to include pupil participation in school management and their learning (Klein, 2003).

New Zealand has *National Administrative Guidelines* and *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework*, which all schools must follow stated:

The school curriculum will recognise, respect, and respond to the educational needs, experiences, interests, and values of all students: both male and female students...Inequalities will be addressed and recognised. All programmes will be gender-inclusive, non-racist, and non-discriminatory, to help ensure that all learning opportunities are not restricted.

(New Zealand Curriculum Framework, 1993, p. 7)

The second *National Education Goal* (NEG) aim is: “Equality of educational opportunity for all New Zealanders by identifying and removing barriers to learning.” The fifth *National Administrative Guideline* (NAG) requires the school’s Board of Trustees to: “provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students”. The NEG and NAGs give New Zealand schools reason and opportunity to consult students and allow them to participate in numerous aspects of school management. Who better to involve in identifying barriers to learning or areas of the school environment, which are physically or emotionally unsafe, than the students?

The large majority of New Zealand schools use a variety of standardised tests and teacher assessments to identify students learning needs and barriers to learning. School staff and Boards of Trustees meet to discuss the school environment and implement plans or strategies for improvement. This involves adults making decisions on what they think are best for the students. While the New Zealand government had an opportunity in 2004 to follow the United Kingdom's example and include student participation when it amended the NEGs and NAGs, it failed to do so.

In New Zealand there is limited student participation⁹ in New Zealand with the exception that each Secondary School Board of Trustees must have an elected Student Representative on its Board. Some primary and intermediate schools choose to establish Student Councils, but they have no genuine impact on the management, curriculum or teaching within the school. A UK research study surveyed 272 students and found that 205 of the students thought their School Council was ineffective. "Unless school Councils have an actual role, are truly representative of the student body and are taken seriously by other students as well as staff and parents, they are dismissed by everyone and worse, they engender cynicism and alienation" (Klein, 2003, p. 16). There is little research on Student Representatives in the New Zealand situation but one could surmise it would be similar to the UK.

Despite Articles, Acts of Government and changes in education most students in our schools have no voice. For boys in particular, who have lower participation rates in school leadership, school councils and extra –curricular activities and are more likely to drop out of school, be truant or get stood-down, their voices are heard even less¹⁰.

3.4 Silence and Voice

Bosacki (2005, p. 6) distinguishes between an 'inner' and 'outer' voice.

Voice represents ones ability to express ones identity and thoughts. Everyone possesses an "inner" and "outer" voice, in which the inner voice represents our genuine thoughts

⁹ Student participation refers to students and teachers working collaboratively in partnership to initiate enquiry, in decision making and reviews on learning, classroom and school management, structure and culture.

¹⁰ See the evidence in previous chapter.

and feelings, and our outer voice is the voice we choose to communicate with others in terms of self-presentation.

Shamblott (2005, p. 4) referred to the school voice, as the voice of learning. “That is all the ways that children can express and show who they are, what they are interested in, and what they know and can do.” The voice of learning encompasses symbols, understandings, knowledge and meanings that a child brings to the classroom as a result of previous experiences. Gee (2005) would describe this form of language expression as discourse with a capital ‘D’; voice and communication is more than just what we say.

Voice is not only a way of being seen and heard, it is a way of establishing a ‘self’ within a classroom. As Grossman (2003, p. 1) stated it is a “sense of agency that makes a child confident that he or she can be heard, and that he or she can positively impact on his or her environment.” Voice is more than communicating wants, ideas and knowledge, it is a vehicle to express one’s beliefs, establish one’s identity and protect it. With voice comes a sense of power. Silence is the absence or denial of voice, for some it is the loss of identity and power. Silence is the opposite of voice and can have a dire consequence on a boy’s learning.

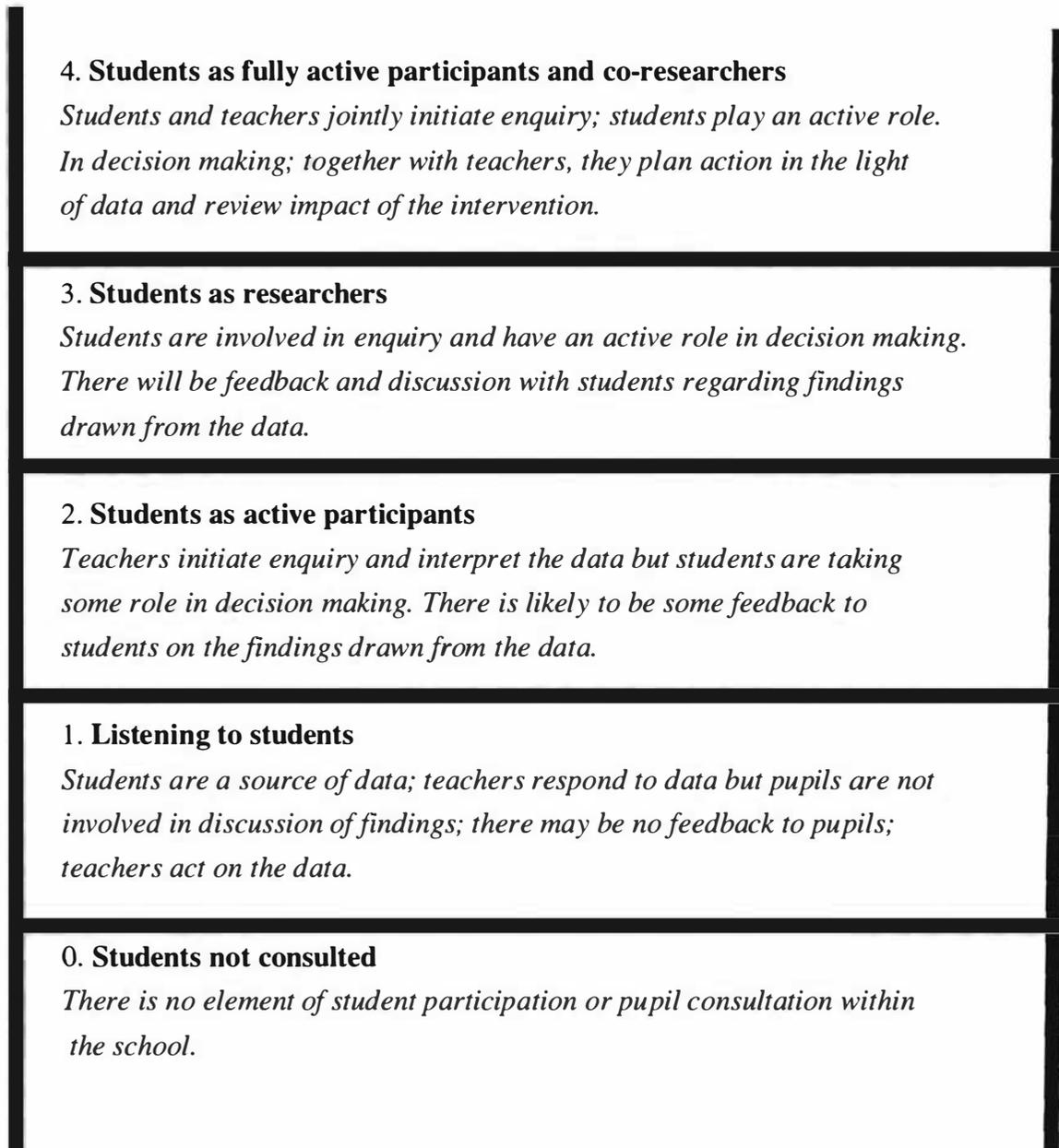
The classroom has a powerful effect on students. Children often evaluate their performances and sense of self, on the feedback they get from this environment (Bosacki, 2005; Bruner, 1996). A student’s sense of self and voice can be determined in part by teacher and peer interactions within the class and school setting. Voice or silence can be used as powerful tools to establish social power, to exclude, or to withdraw from social settings. In classrooms, the dominant voice is the teacher’s in a one-way interaction with silent students. Silberman (1970) found that two thirds to three quarters of all classroom communication is teacher talk. Teachers and students can use voice and silence in a variety of ways. In this research the notion of silence means “a position of not knowing, in which the person feels voiceless, powerless, and mindless” (Goldberger, Tarule, et al. 1996, p. 5) and to have voice means to be heard, to be able to express ones thoughts and opinions freely. In New Zealand schools, teachers have the voice and the power.

3.5 Student Consultation and Participation

Flutter and Rudduck (2004, p. 5) define consultation as “the action of taking counsel

together; deliberation or conference” and this notion of ‘taking counsel’ suggests that the parties involved in the consultation process have been invited to contribute because they have relevant and important views and information to share. Flutter and Rudduck (2004) developed ‘The Ladder of Pupil Participation’ (Figure 3.1), which outlines a school’s position and route to full pupil participation. Student consultation is Step 1 on

Figure. 3.1 Ladder of Pupil Participation



The Ladder of Pupil Participation where teachers or school principals use students as sources of information but do not in any way involve them in discussion or sharing of

findings. Lansdown (1995, p. 17) defines participation “as the process of sharing in decisions which affect one’s life and the life of the community in which one lives.” Student participation is Step 2 on The Ladder of Pupil Participation, where teachers and principals use students for information and the students have a role in the discussion of data collected in the decision making process. When participating students have an active and respected role within the school community; they are considered as valuable contributing members. A number of researchers (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004; Smyth et al., 2000; Trent & Slade, 2001) believe, as pupil participation in their school and learning becomes more widely used and embedded in the culture of the school, we will see a range of positive learning and behavioural outcomes for students, teachers and schools.

3.6 Students-as-Researchers

Students are largely ignored as contributors or collaborators in educational research or change within their school. Mac an Ghail (1996) argued that the only way to get access to the ‘real knowledge’ in schools is through the active participation of students. He believed getting access to the official knowledge of the school is relatively easy, but getting access to the private knowledge of students, which he deems is the ‘real knowledge’ is more difficult. Student perspective is missing from the large majority of educational research but the use of students-as-researchers could overcome this and see students being considered as valuable sources within the school. Oldfather (1995, p. 3) stated, “in the midst of expanding the boundaries of knowledge, authority and scholarly research, we are generally leaving out the primary stakeholders of education, the students.”

Students-as-Researchers is a collaborative methodology, which uses students as active participants in research either within their school or community. Teachers either guide and facilitate the research, or act as partners within the research. Students-as-Researchers is Step 3 on The Ladder of Pupil Participation.

Students as Researchers promote ‘partnerships’ in which students work alongside teachers to mobilize their knowledge of school and become ‘change agents’ of its culture and norms. It seeks to develop amongst students and teachers a sense of shared responsibility for the quality and conditions of teaching and learning, both within particular classrooms and more generally within the school as a learning community

(Fielding & Bragg, 2003; p. 4).

The Students-as-Researchers approach seeks to involve students rather than just use students. Students are viewed “not just as recipients or targets, but as resources and producers of knowledge” (Fielding & Bragg, 2003, p. 4).

Kirby (1999), cited in Fielding and Bragg (2003, p. 3), identified a number of ways that adult educational researchers could benefit from use of student researchers. Firstly, student researchers could use more appropriate language or questions to reach students and gather better quality and in-depth data from students. Secondly, the use of Students-as-Researchers may give improved access to the views of students who are difficult to reach. Finally, a distinctive student perspective may be obtained that may differ from the adults viewpoint. Involving students in the research process can provide students with a real opportunity to be engaged¹¹ in a purposeful, relevant educational experience that motivates them to communicate, to question and to seek answers.

Students-as-Researchers is based on a number of assumptions. Fielding and Bragg (2003, p. 5) identified three:

- Students can undertake serious and significant research.
- They have skills and knowledge about teaching and learning based on their schooling experiences.
- They can be trusted.

Flutter and Rudduck (2004), Nieto (1993), Soo Hoo (1993), and others have discovered that students who have assumed roles as student researchers have acted with maturity, awareness and integrity. As Egan-Robertson & Bloome (1998, p. xii) stated, “to invite students to be researchers is to invite them into a new relationship with the teacher and a new relationship with academic knowledge.” It takes great courage by the teacher and the student, but the result, as Nieto (1994) described it, can be a transformation to the learning environment.

¹¹ Engagement is defined “as the student’s psychological investment in and effort directed toward learning, understanding, or mastering the knowledge, skills, or crafts that academic work is intended to promote”. (Newmann, 1992, p. 12)

3.7 Improving Schools

The students' traditional school role has been one of passive compliance. In the new business model of education where schools have mission statements and strategic plans, staffs are accountable for student outputs. Pupils are considered as products that must reach certain set criteria; little has changed for the pupil. Neito (1994) gives a warning that more than school structures have to change.

Educating students today is a far different and more complex proposition than it has been in the past... Reforming school structures alone will not lead to differences in school achievement... if such changes are not accompanied by profound changes in how we as educators think about our students. One way to begin the process of changing school policies is to listen to students' views about them; however, research that focuses on student voice is relatively recent and scarce (pp. 395-396)

Simmons and Blyth (1987) claimed the key to an individual's optimum development and happiness in school is a 'good fit' between the activities within the school and the needs, values and beliefs of each student. The challenge for educators is to achieve the pupil-school 'good fit'. This is where educators need to turn to the students and together create the school environment that allows for optimum development for individual students.

The rights and responsibilities of students in school contrast greatly with student rights and responsibilities beyond the school boundary. The business model of education has seen along with accountability, a changed and ever increasing curriculum. According to Fielding and Bragg (2003), students have come under increasing pressure at school in that they are subject to increasing workloads and assessments, with their performance under scrutiny by parents, school managers, Boards of Trustees, Ministries and media. However, beyond the school boundary students have greater freedom and responsibility. In today's world students have greater economic power, social maturity, instant communications, knowledge access and freedom.

In New Zealand, as elsewhere, the greatest concern in education is standards; raising educational pupil performance. Schools are doing this without consultation or collaboration with the very people they are making change for - their student. Soo Hoo (1993, p. 392) claimed that: "traditionally, students have been overlooked as valuable

resources in the restructuring of schools.” Phelan et al. (1992), after interviewing numerous students who had completed two years of secondary school believed that students could contribute greatly to their school and learning. “Students have a great deal to say about school and classroom conditions that educators should hear; about how students feel about themselves as learners and members of the school community, and their perceptions of the school as an educational and social setting” (p. 696). However as Smyth et al. (2000, p. 5) discovered, “schools are power structures in which the clear unfettered voice of students is rarely heard.” Student voice is not in the equation of school leaders when it comes to school change and improvement. Schools lose their most valuable resource when they do not involve their students in school improvement.

Trent and Slade (2001), in their research of 1800 adolescent males’ perceptions of school achievement and retention in South Australia discovered that the boys:

Believe that adults don’t ask young people what they think and that they certainly don’t ask in a way that establishes trust and mutual respect; they don’t listen, and they don’t really want to know, particularly if it requires or necessitates substantial changes on their part (p. 2).

The same would apply to most New Zealand schools, which would place these schools on the bottom of the Ladder of Pupil Participation.

3.8 Pupil Engagement in Learning

Researchers have found that a significant number of pupils disengage or dropout of school because the conditions of learning within the school do not support the development of all its students as learners (Klein, 2003; Ruddock & Flutter, 2004; Smyth et al. 2000, Trent & Slade, 2001).

Arguably the most marginalized and voiceless of all consumers of the education service are those who are disengaged from school, having either left, been excluded or being at risk of doing one or the other. (Klein, 2003, p. 112)

Slade (2002, p. 68) argued, “there is clearly a failure on the part of schools in the United states, as there is in Australia, to accommodate difference.” The same could be said for New Zealand where educational statistics illustrate that being a male makes it more likely that you will be expelled, be truant, or leave school without qualifications. Maori

boys are over represented within these statistics. Schools struggle to understand and meet the needs of an increasing diverse student population.

Rudduck et al. (1996), Smyth et al. (2000), and others have described how students perceive teachers' expectations of them. Adolescents have a very strong sense of justice and have given numerous examples of teachers giving what they perceive as favoritism or unfair treatment within these studies. Chaplain (in Rudduck et al. 1996) found that disengaged boys were sensitive to what they saw as teachers neglecting their interests in favour of the girls. Smyth et al. (2000) discovered similar results in his research in Australia.

3.9 Teachers Expectations and Beliefs

Teachers' expectations of pupils can have considerable effect on pupils' school achievement, motivation, and their sense of self worth (Covington, 1992). Harris and Rosenthal (1986) developed a model to illustrate the potential harm of teachers' expectations on disengagement, underachievement and anti-school behaviours. The three components of the teacher expectancy process were:

1. Forming impressions
2. Communicating beliefs
3. Effects on others

Teachers form impressions about students in their class and school from a variety of experiences. As teachers, we all probably have a hypothetical model of the ideal pupil: quiet, attentive, hard working, neat, respectful, and considerate. It is against this hypothetical model that teachers measure the students of their class (Chaplain, 1996). The large majority of our teachers are women; their hypothetical model tends to be based on feminine experiences. Most of these teachers do not list such qualities as outgoing, boisterous, active, curious, messy, and loyal, in describing the ideal pupil; qualities that many boys display at school (West, 2002). The perceptions that teachers hold about students can be reflected in the way they interact with the class as a whole, or students as individuals.

A number of researchers (Beaman & Wheldall, 1997, 2004; Harris & Rosenthal, 1986) have demonstrated that teacher perception of engaged and disengaged students and the

quality and quantity of their interactions between these students varies according to student gender. Male students were more likely to be perceived negatively and receive more negative interactions. Teacher interactions can have both positive and negative effects on students' motivation, social and academic behaviours and attitude to school and self. Students can be very perceptive in regards to teacher interactions between students. Carrington (1996; p. 107) stated, "some pupils who felt that it was so difficult to change the image that the teachers had of them that there was little point in trying to reform and settle down to work ... it is the disengaged pupils who more often, according to their accounts of the situation, claim that they are being treated unfairly and who receive more negative messages from teachers." Research by Beaman and Wheldall, (1997) would support these student claims.

"Rather than continuing to fit these young people's complex lives neatly into categories or theories that don't seem to be working" (Smyth et al. 2000, p. 2); schools need to re-evaluate the issues and restructure, using students as part of the solution instead of problem. In giving students' voice and participation in decision making of their learning, educators are showing students respect and acknowledging their identity, both collectively and singularly. "Respect is a tricky concept, as subjective as they come... a universally recognized method of ensuring that children feel they are respected in schools is to listen to what they have to say and giving them responsibility that has genuine value" (Klein, 2003, p. 3). Rudduck et al. (1996) and Smyth et al. (2000) in their research found that both engaged and disengaged students wanted to be treated in a more adult fashion and with respect, and in receiving this, believed that teachers and schools would gain more respect from students. Schools using student participation have the opportunity to give voice and respect to the engaged and disengaged student in their schools; reaching the diverse population of their school instead of just the few academically engaged few at the top.

Stenhouse (1975) (cited in Rudduck and Flutter, 2004, p. 141) claimed that teachers can "change the world of the classroom" and they should do so, by first understanding it. This study would argue that for teachers to fully understand their classrooms they need to listen to the voice of their students. McIntyre, Pedder and Rudduck (2005) explored how a group of teachers responded to pupil's ideas when consulted. The large majority of the teachers were able to acknowledge that students had insightful things to say about

classroom teaching and learning. The study found that the teachers were receptive to many of the students' suggestions because the students were asking for more of what the teachers already did. The students' ideas were within the teacher's own thinking and teaching framework. The teachers did not have to make major shifts in their classroom practice. Teachers' responses to pupil participation varied considerably. On one end of the continuum were teachers who were enthusiastic, welcoming and impressed; the other end of the continuum was teachers who were defensive, suspicious and unimpressed.

Students have proven to be capable of being involved in school change and educational improvement. Soo Hoo (1993; p. 392) claimed that "traditionally, students have been overlooked as valuable resources in the restructuring of schools." In her research with students in school, she found that the students not only acted with maturity and responsibility, but also after identifying school issues wanted to take the next step and instigate change. She found that "students placed in positions of responsibility and shared authority could actively investigate what was working and not working for them as learners" and that the "student voices evolved as they found their experiences respected and reaffirmed by others" (1993, p. 386). Researchers involved with giving student voice and participation, have found that the students most often act responsibly, having a depth of awareness and the ability to focus and be analytical and constructive (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004; Neito, 1994; Rudduck, Chaplain, & Wallace, 1996; Slade, 2003; Soo Hoo, 1993).

One of the biggest issues for teachers keen to adopt and develop pupil participation is the demands and restrictions of official requirements of school, mainly curriculum and assessment. Teachers need to be able to achieve a balance between professional compliance and responding to the needs of their students. Teachers must accept that students have something significant to say about teaching and learning and be willing to make more dramatic changes rather than just accommodating ideas with existing beliefs. This is the only way that student voice and participation will succeed.

3.10 Student Participation: Some Benefits

The benefits can be summarised into three broad themes. Firstly, students gain a new

measure of empowerment and identity in their learning process. Secondly, teachers establish and gain a new relationship with and respect from students. Thirdly the school creates a new partnership, a new collaboration and a new joint ownership in the learning process. The learning process is less hierarchal; power is distributed across more of the school. However, the key to student voice are the teachers who have to embrace a new innovative teacher-student relationship model base of mutual respect and collaborative ownership of learning along with a new set of pedagogical skills. Both teachers and schools will need a 'mind shift' for the benefits of student voice to be fully embodied into a school, which as Fielding (2004) explained, involves developing teaching environments and learning enquiry methods with the students rather than for the students.

One of the largest research projects, '*Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning*' occurred in England. Phase one was conducted during 2002 -2003. The research team led by Professor Jean Rudduck of Cambridge University reached the following conclusions.

It cannot tenably be claimed that schooling is primarily intended to benefit pupils if pupils' own views about what is beneficial are not actively sought and attended to. Available evidence (e.g. Cooper and McIntyre, 1996; Rudduck et al, 1996) indicates that the kinds of changes to teaching and learning activities, which pupils suggest when they are consulted, tend to be very sensible. Not surprisingly, pupils can find it motivating to be consulted about how they can best be helped to learn and to be treated as active responsible members of the organisations in which they work (McIntyre et al. 2005, p. 150).

Pupil motivation is an important key to learning (Martin, 2003). This study would support the premise that pupil consultation and participation in their learning improves pupil motivation and therefore has a positive effect on pupil learning. The positive effect on pupil learning could be increased if pupils' suggestions to improve classroom teaching and learning are seen to be adopted by teachers. Figure 3.2 is a summary of possible benefits as to why student participation into the teaching and learning should be adopted by teachers and school leaderships. It outlines benefits for students, teachers and schools and is adapted from Flutter and Rudduck (2004, p. 21).

Figure 3.2 Reasons for incorporating student participation into schools

For Students given student voice and participation:

- raises students' self-confidence and self-worth.
- promotes thinking skills, especially meta-cognition.
- develops a greater understanding of the whole learning process.
- makes students part of a learning community.
- improves students' language skills.
- improves students' attitudes to and behaviour at school.
- creates an ownership and responsibility for own learning.
- gives opportunities to learn and participate in democratic principles.

For teachers involved in student voice and participation partnership:

- creates a new style of student-teacher relationship.
- helps teachers identify student barriers to learning.
- gives teachers new insights and understandings on how pupils learn.
- gives teachers feedback from a new aspect to improve pedagogy .
- assists in the development of collaborative learning classrooms.
- develops new teaching ideas more relevant to students.
- shares ownership of the teaching-learning process.
- establishes pedagogy that accurately meets student needs.

For schools involved in student voice and participation:

- helps establish a new, invigorating learning culture .
- contributes new data for school self-review.
- identifies new directions for strategic plans.
- creates collegial partnerships for curriculum and school development.
- establishes a new respect for learning.
- creates a new dimension of respect for both students and staff.

3.11 Student Voice and Participation: Some Cautions

Levin (1999), a Canadian researcher and policy maker, commented “that when we hear what students identify as the main elements of schooling- ‘memorisation and passing tests’ - we realize that we have failed to communicate our broader goals and aspirations for schooling in ways that enable young people to understand what learning is for and how it is for them (cited in Rudduck and Flutter, 2004). The schooling of our young people has to change; the curriculum needs refining, teachers need time and opportunity to teach successfully and assessment tasks varied so as not to disadvantage one gender or socio-economic group over another. Students need teachers who take the time to genuinely listen, respond with understanding, and treat children with respect. Giving students’ voice and the opportunities to participate more fully in school organisation and change has the possibility of creating new learning partnership within the school. Making changes within a school involving student participation needs to be approached positively but at the same time taking into account possible cautions and negative factors.

Fielding (2004) warned of the possibilities of student voice and participation being either treated as another faddism or manipulated by education management to support the status quo. It requires a transformation in schools for student voice to be incorporated into a school’s culture and not be this year’s ‘educational gimmick’.

Transformation requires a rapture of the ordinary and this demands as much of teachers as it does of students. Indeed, it requires a transformation of what it means to be a student; what it means to be a teacher. In effect, it requires the intermingling and interdependence of both. It requires an explicitly intended and joyfully felt mutuality, a ‘radical collegiality’ (Fielding, 2004, p. 296).

Fielding’s concept of student voice requires the development of a “transformative set of practices” (p. 296) and demonstrates just how radical it could be for students, teachers and schools. Fielding and Bragg (2003), Rudduck and Flutter (2004) and others in the UK working in collaboration with schools on student participation and teacher-student research collaboration, have documented case studies of school culture and pedagogy transformation.

Fielding drew on the work of Humphries (1994) and Said (1989), to explore the research and development of practices of student voice so that schools can truly transform their practices. Humphries argued that there are a number of ways in which research or innovative ideas can be accommodated, accumulated or appropriated. Accommodation refers to the undermining rather than the enhancing of empowering ideas so that they are “reconstructed in such a way that it reaffirms existing prejudices and forces of domination” (p. 296). Accumulation aspires to similar ends through using the new knowledge to control. Knowledge is accumulated about the lives of oppressed groups (students), it is communicated in specific ways that does not empower but regulate. Appropriation uses the information from accommodation and accumulation to enhance or further develop a particular view of the less dominant group (students) by the group in power such as teachers, principals or policy makers (Fielding, 2004; pp. 297-229). A New Zealand example of this is the student representative on the Board of Trustees, which demonstrates accommodation. The student representative is usually a highly motivated, successful and engaged student who speaks for all students in the school; however, this student probably only mixes with a small circle of students (appropriated). There is a huge gap in attitude, motivation, and power between an engaged student and one who is struggling or is at school, in name only. There are always dangers when speaking for or on behalf of others. All students need to have the opportunity to be heard. McIntyre et al. (2005, p. 167) stated that:

Pupils who have experienced most success in school learning tend to be the most articulate about what helps them to learn. Those from whom teachers most need to hear are those whom it will be most difficult to consult.

If those less articulate or on the school fringe are interviewed they have a common theme. Smyth et al. (2000) interviewed students at risk of dropping out of school, Faith & Trent (2002) interviewed boys at all levels of secondary school, a common theme identified from both studies was; teachers do not genuinely listen to their students.

3.12 Conclusion

Fielding and Bragg (2003, p. 3) warned schools “if they fail to engage their students, schools will miss out on valuable opportunities to develop young people’s skills, improve provision, and promote citizenship and social inclusion.” Student voice has the

possibility to change schools, pedagogy and student attitudes only if the school embraces it fully; otherwise it will be just another educational faddism as Fielding (2004) warned. Students have shown in the wider community that they are mature and responsible; they are productive contributors to the economy and community outside of school. Rudduck and Flutter (2004) believed that schools should not try to keep the “world outside school away from the world inside school.” For merging the world of school and the community outside of school requires “changing our perceptions not only of the young people we teach but also of the assumptions that keep traditional structures and relationships in place” (pp. 8-9). Students need to be given greater opportunities and responsibilities in school and to be seen as emerging adults instead of passive learning receptacles. Student voice removes traditional power structures in the classroom giving the students and teachers opportunity to form a new style of relationship; one that Fielding (2004) referred to as ‘radical collegiality’.

Flutter and Rudduck (2004, pp. 6-7) argued that the problem of underachievement is not only a male problem and that deeper understanding of the problem could be addressed by asking students a set of broad questions.

1. How can lessons be made more engaging?
2. Do pupils feel that what they are learning is relevant and important?
3. Are schools providing conditions for learning that enable all learners to succeed?

This study gave boys the opportunity to have voice, to answer questions similar to those above. They did with honesty and maturity. The boys demonstrated a deep awareness and insightfulness of what was happening within the school and with their learning. The next chapter looks at the methods used to generate data by the researcher in collaboration with the boys.

CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology in Theory

Aim of education is the knowledge not of facts, but of values.

W.R.Inge (Dean of St.Pauls)

4.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research methods and the conceptual framework on which this research is based. Researchers in the field of education are increasingly questioning the design of research and the research processes as knowledge increases and the educational background changes and develop. The research perspectives and methods developed for use in educational research are based on the philosophical assumptions and perspectives of the social sciences.

To understand the underlying theoretical perspective and philosophies of this study, this chapter will consider a number of key research paradigms. A brief outline of the main features and philosophical assumptions of each paradigm is summarised. It is argued that because of the complex nature of the boys' perspectives used in this study that one perspective is not adequate to understand and explain this research. The need for a multi-dimensional paradigm that employs both qualitative and quantitative methods is necessary to meet the complexity of this study.

4.1 The Educational Background

Pedagogy, the science of teaching, has in the last fifty years gone through a number of dramatic changes as the theoretical model of teaching has changed. For much of the last century the transmission model of teaching had the teacher as the authority and disperser of knowledge and the student as the passive receiver of the knowledge. The teacher controlled the students from the front of the classroom and the student sat and carried out mainly drill, practice and work from their seats.

Through the 1960's and 1970's learning theorists began to develop the negotiable learning curriculum (Dewey, 1938; Isaacs, 1955). Teachers facilitated and guided their students through experiential learning situations. The student was seen as an active learner involved in practical activities and experimentation to discover learning/knowledge for them self. Many teachers were influenced by the work of Piaget who devised a theory of sequential development. Piaget (1952, 1954, and 1955) alleged that a student passed through a natural order of sequential physiological, psychological and social phases of development. Teachers ensured that children were prepared and ready for each phase of their development.

In the 1980's learning theory changed with the constructivist theorists gaining prominence. It was argued that students learn best by actively making sense of new knowledge, making meaning from it and linking it into their existing knowledge or schema. The sociocultural approach (Vygotsky, 1978) emphasised the culturally situated nature of learning and on the individual acquiring knowledge in social action. Importance was placed on social interaction with more knowledgeable others; building new knowledge on the base of prior knowledge. Teachers modelled learning and students also took on roles as peer tutors and mentors.

The learners' role in the learning situation was further developed by the concept of metacognition. This is a learner's awareness of and control over his/her cognitive processes (Eggen & Kauchak, 2007). Good learners scrutinise their learning using a variety of strategies such as reflection and self-questioning. This was further enhanced by an emphasis on learners engaging in deep thinking strategies (Bloom, 1956; Gardner, 1983). The key factor in the pedagogy of this century is the student's active engagement in the learning process. Schools and classrooms are referred to as learning communities and are expected to create an environment with the emphasis on learning, sharing, caring and collaborating. The learner within a community of learners has responsibilities toward one self and the group as a whole; sharing a belief that 'We're all learning together' (Brophy, 2004; Purkey & Novak, 1996; Rogers & Frieberg, 1994). To ensure students are actively engaged in their learning the importance of motivation and self-esteem has been highlighted as important aspects within the learning process. (Brophy, 2004; Martin, 2003a)

As the student is such a key element in the learning process it is important to seek their experiences, understandings and perceptions of the teaching and learning they experience within the school. The beginning point for this research is the boys and the socio-cultural setting; the school in which these boys receive their formal schooling. This research concerns boys and their perceptions of school and academic success and must be understood within the boys' socio-cultural setting. That setting is their school. It begins with the premise that the most significant influences in shaping students' minds are the cultural settings in which learning takes place, the activities in which students engage, and the dialogue among them. A variety of methods were used in this study to listen to the boys' dialogue so to obtain their perceptions of their places of learning and the activities that they identified as enhancing and hindering that learning. These research methods were selected and developed based on the perceived methodological needs of the research and the beliefs of the researcher.

4.2 Research Objective

The main research objective is:

To investigate boys' perceptions of what enhances and hinders their academic success at secondary school.

4.3 Research Questions

To meet this objective, the study was designed to answer the following specific questions:

- i). *Can boys be contributors and participants in the development and implementation of change for better learning in their school environment?*
- ii) *What perceptions and beliefs do boys have concerning school, curriculum choice, learning and teaching styles?*
- iii) *What interests and motivates boys to learn?*
- iv) *What factors do boys believe enhance and/or hinder their academic success?*
- v) *How do friends and mates contribute to or distract from a boy's learning?*
- vi) *Is there a uniformity of boys' viewpoint between schools and Year levels?*

4.4 Research Paradigm

Social scientists and educational researchers are faced with complex and often

competing views and belief systems regarding knowledge acquisition and the understanding of reality. Different research perspectives have different philosophical assumptions underlining their belief structures. Clark (1997) believed that researchers must make a careful and considerate examination of the philosophical assumptions underlining each research perspective before making a reasoned and justified choice of preference for choosing one research perspective over another.

Kuhn (1970) developed the idea of a research paradigm as an overall embracing conceptual framework that guides the philosophy and activities of a community of scholars and researchers. A paradigm comprises the ontological, epistemological, axiology and methodological beliefs of the researcher and becomes the philosophical assumptions under which the researcher conducts his or her research. In order to establish the underlying research philosophy of the approaches used in this study key paradigms and respective worldviews will be described. These views are defined on how people respond to the following philosophical questions: What is the nature of reality? What is the place of human beings and how do they respond to their world? What is the basis of our knowledge about the things in our world? What is the purpose of research and the creating of knowledge?

The three dominant paradigms of positivism, interpretive and critical theory will be discussed using the above questions to compare each. These paradigms, like any theory, are not fixed but continue to develop and evolve and are always open to question and debate. It is highly unlikely that an individual researcher holds to one straightforward paradigm as there are many contradictions and nuances contained within one's personal worldviews; just like the paradigms, they are evolving and changing (Clark, 1997).

The positive paradigm is the oldest theory in social sciences and emanates from the natural sciences. It is based on the methodological methods of the natural sciences that believe that reality is 'out there' in the world and can be perceived through the senses of independent rational human beings. There is objectivity to this reality where strict order, laws and procedures govern the natural reality of the world. Positivism separates facts from values; the claim is that it is value-free (Sarantakos, 1998). The positivist researcher is a rational observer, someone who makes value-free, objective observations and decisions using traditional scientific inquiry.

The interpretive paradigm view on reality is in marked contrast to the positivist. The interpretivist believes reality is in the minds of people; it is socially constructed through interaction with people. Reality is subjective, internally experienced and is what people see it to be. People occupy a central position and it is they who assign meaning systems to events. Interpretivists search for systems of meaning that people use to make sense of the world. The methodology employed is inductive, proceeding from the specific to the general and from the concrete to the abstract. The interpretive researcher tries to interpret and understand people's reasons for social actions, the way they construct their lives and attach meanings, which is sometimes known as hermeneutics or phenomenography. The researcher sees things through their own 'theoretical lens' that is inherently biased, value laden and observes subjective people and their world. This paradigm is also referred to by some as constructivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Sarantakos, 1998),

The critical paradigm has developed out of the work of Karl Marx and the critical and feminist theorists. In critical theory people who have power create reality; they manipulate condition and brainwash others to interpret and perceive things their way. Reality is constructed by the powerful to serve their needs. This reality is in conflict, tension and contradiction that result in a constantly changing world. The critical perspective perceives people as being restricted and oppressed by social factors and conditions and exploited by those in more powerful positions. The critical researcher sees people as being creators of their own destiny; they have great potential for creativity and adjustment that can confront the socioeconomic conditions that shape their lives. They are also capable of assigning meanings to their world and bringing about change. The critical paradigm shares the subjectivity of interpretivist but attempts to retain the objectivity of the positivist as the critical researcher observes an unjust and inherently political world. (Sarantakos, 1998)

Table 4.1 The main research perspectives informing this study

Main Research Question: What enhances or hinders boys' academic success at secondary school?			
Philosophical Paradigm	Main Characteristics	Data Gathering Methods	Associated Research Questions
Positivism	Objective Measurable Traditional scientific methods Universal laws Perceived through senses Information out there to be found	Quantitative A standardised Motivational Scale based on 40 Likert scale items measuring motivational factors in boys	Are certain motivational factors more prevalent than others amongst boys? Do NZ boys' motivation data compare with Australian boys? Do motivational factors change between Year levels and between school cultures?
Interpretive Constructivist Socio-cultural Ethnographic Discourse Analysis Grounded Theory	Subjective Socially constructed Through interaction Created not discovered Relies on interpretation Own systems of meaning	Qualitative Semi-structured interviews Focus groups Students-as-Researchers Collaborative group	How do boys' perceive their <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning • School • Teachers What motivates boys to learn? What do boys see as assisting their learning? What do boys see as hindering their learning? How important are mates to a boy's academic success?
Critical Grounded Theory	Objective and subjective Complex, what is seen not always reality. Critical of process Deconstructs text Based on oppression and exploitation Employs and works with values	Participatory Collaborative Group Data interpretation	How do boys see their schools and teachers enhancing or hindering their learning? Is researcher interpreting boys' perceptions accurately? What are significant findings to the boys in this study?

Table 4.1 outlines the main paradigms and their relationship with the research questions and the data collection methods of this study. As can be seen this study adopted a multi-dimensional approach.

4.5 Selection of a Multi-dimensional Research Perspective

Selection of an appropriate research perspective provided a challenge to this research and other similarly conducted research (Smyth, 2000; Trent & Slade, 2001; Trent, 2002) as it encompasses more than one perspective. This researcher believes that the paradigms can be used together, that methodologies of one can be used to support methodologies of another. That one approach can enrich another. This researcher's beliefs are guided largely by two paradigms; the interpretive and critical paradigms.

Both paradigms share the same idea that reality is a social construct; it is formed by social interaction between the researcher and the participant, and that the socially created experiences needed to be understood from the participants' point of view. As a result a multi-dimensional approach that utilised both qualitative and quantitative methodology was adopted. It was considered appropriate to collect both qualitative and quantitative data so to gather and document both objective and subjective information from the participants. As can be seen from Table 4.1 each respective paradigm and its data collection methods have contributed to our understanding and explanation of what factors hinder and enhance boys learning.

4.6 Qualitative and Quantitative Methodologies

The method most used in this research to investigate the boys' perceptions and their school environments is largely that of the qualitative researcher. Qualitative researchers are seen by Hammersley (1992) to share a set of preferences.

1. A preference for qualitative data - understood simply as the analysis of words and images rather than numbers.
2. A preference for naturally occurring data – observation rather than experiment, unstructured rather than structured interviews.
3. A preference for meanings rather than behaviour – attempting to 'document the world from the point of view of the people studied'.
4. A rejection of natural science as a model.
5. A preference for inductive, hypothesis – generating research rather than hypothesis testing .

Silverman, D. (2000,p. 8) adapted from Hammersley, (1992, pp. 160 – 72)

The present research uses mostly the research preferences of the qualitative researcher and the data generation tools of focus group, interview and consultation. However, quantitative analysis was carried out using *The Student Motivation Scale* (Martin, 2003) to generate descriptive statistics and to make comparisons between schools. The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods was appropriate in order to gather multi-methods of data so that the results could be triangulated and ensure a more trustworthy design. This research attempts, through using both qualitative and quantitative methods

to satisfy the four main criteria of trustworthiness:

(1) confirmability; (2) credibility; (3) dependability; and, (4) transferability (Lincoln & Gruba, 1990).

Research is not so much a choice of qualitative or quantitative methodology but one of making careful, considered choices between methodologies according to the specific research problem. In these combined uses of qualitative and quantitative methods the goal is to use each method so that it contributes to the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon under study (Morgan, 1997). The present research used multiple methods so to be able to view the research question from a number of perspectives and to give the collected data greater validity. As Silverman (2000, p. 98) stated:

By having a cumulative view of data drawn from different contexts, we may, as in trigonometry, be able to triangulate the 'true' state of affairs by examining where the different data intersect. In this way, some qualitative researchers believe that triangulation may improve the reliability of a single method.

At the heart of this research is the desire to comprehend boys' experiences of schooling and to identify the practices that either enhance or inhibit the boys' motivation to learn. To do this, it is intended that the boys must be fully involved in this research. Mac an Ghaill (1996, p. 305) argued the necessity for getting access to the "real voices"; that is the students in the school. To use students in the research process is based on the assumption that students are stakeholders in the educational and schooling process and are experts on what happens around them. Mac an Ghaill (1996) believed getting access to the official knowledge of the school is relatively easy, but getting access to the private knowledges of the students is more difficult. In using an ethnographic perspective it is hoped this research will gain access to the students' private knowledges about their school communities by the use of students as researchers in focus groups.

4.7 Ethnography

This research is grounded in ethnography; also referred to as ethnology, social anthropology or cultural anthropology. Literally, ethnology is the science of 'ethos', that is, nations, people or culture. Ethnology was considered to be the area of interest of anthropologists who were interested in relationships between people and their physical,

personal, cultural, political and historical aspects of their life. (Sarantakos, 1998)

A recent development in the social sciences and especially with the advent of feminism and women's studies has seen ethnographic research become popular. Reinharz (1992, p.51) asserted:

In the area of feminism, ethnology becomes a powerful methodological tool, particularly because it relies on interpretation and on the researchers' immersion in social settings, and aims at:

1. documenting the lives and activities of women.
2. understanding the experience of women from their own point of view, and
3. conceptualising women's behaviour as an expression of social contexts.

This research uses the three aims as described by Reinharz (1992) and applies it to the study of boys. This includes (1) documenting the lives and activities of boys in a school setting, (2) understanding the experience of boys from their own point of view, and (3) conceptualising boys' behaviour as an expression of social contexts.

Hymes (1981, p. 57) description of ethnology is a 'good fit' with the research methodology used in this research:

Of all forms of scientific knowledge, ethnology is the most open, the most compatible with a democratic way of life, the least likely to produce a world in which experts control knowledge at the expense of those who are studied. As a discipline, ethnography adds a body of concepts and techniques that direct attention, relate observations, more systematically than community members would normally have occasion for doing...It provides for making explicit relationships and patterns that members leave implicit...Ethnography, in short, is a disciplined way of looking, asking, recording, reflecting, comparing and reporting. It mediates between what members of a given community know and do, and accumulates comparative understanding of what members of communities generally have known and done.

This researcher was interested to determine how boys construct knowledge and how they understand situations affecting their learning. This requires boys to be active participants and collaborators who are effectively being involved as co-researchers at times. This study wanted the participants to have as much control and say as possible in the collecting and interpretation of the data. Ethnology because of its open and more democratic style enabled this active participation of participants. In the present study,

the research design incorporates three schools and three different Year levels of boys within each school that allowed for the creation of explicit relationships, patterns and the accumulation of comparative understanding of what boys know and do.

4.8 Socio-cultural Perspective

The present research has a strong socio-cultural perspective relying heavily on the work of Vygotsky (1965, 1978) and later theorists of Bruner (1996), Wells and Claxton (2002) and Gee (2005). Vygotsky (1965) described learning as being embedded within a social event and occurs because of the interaction between the child and people, events and objects that surround the child. His theory views knowledge as being situated and collaborative. A child's thinking language and learning can only develop as a result of social interaction. Knowledge is therefore constructed through interaction with people and environment.

At the heart of Socio-Cultural theory is the idea that "education is a process of simultaneous enculturation and transformation and has come to be called Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). CHAT is a theory of human development that sees human societies and their individual members as mutually constitutive" (Wells & Claxton, 2002, p. 2). There are three key features of CHAT. Firstly, cultures play a large role in the development of individual minds. Secondly, artefacts are important; these are not only physical and technological tools but also meaning-making tools "that mediate communicative and reflective action, and which have as their outcome such semiotic artefacts as drawings, graphs, theories and works of literature" (Wells & Claxton, 2002, p. 4). The third key feature of CHAT is the use of discourse.

It is particularly by learning to use these semiotic tools in discourse with others that humans appropriate the cultures dominate ways of thinking, reasoning and valuing. And in making them their own and in bringing them to bear on new problems and new situations, they may transform them in ways that add to and potentially improve the culture's shared toolkit of meaning making resources (Wells & Claxton, 2002, p. 4).

Bruner (1996) argued that knowing and communication are highly interdependable on each other. Gee (2005, p. 7) claimed "language has meaning only in and through social practice." The development of our mind, our language, our thinking requires interaction

with others within a mutual socio-cultural setting. Bruner (1996) contended that:

Culture shapes minds, that it provides us with the toolkit by which we construct not only our worlds but our very conceptions of ourselves and our powers.” (p. x)

For however much the individual may seem to operate on his or her own in carrying out the quest for meanings, nobody can do it unaided without the culture’s symbolic systems. It is culture that provides the tools for organising and understanding our worlds in communicable ways. (p. 3)

Schools create their special culture and shape boys’ minds. They use a variety of signs and symbols to do so. To understand how boys perceive that culture and operate within it we must listen to them; allow them to describe their experiences, feelings and understandings of their schooling. Gee (2005) believed that institutions (schools) and groups within the institution render certain sorts of activities and identities meaningful through the language they use. With these perspectives in mind, the present research approach studies the school from the meaning and identities of boys; letting boys use their own “toolkit” to describe and inform on their school cultural experiences.

Gee (2005, p. 10) stated that:

We continually and actively build and rebuild our worlds not just through language but through language used in tandem with actions, interactions, and non-linguistic symbol systems, objects, tools, technologies, and distinctive ways of thinking, valuing, feeling and believing

This study is closely linked to the perspectives of Gee (2005), Vygotsky (1965, 1978), Wells and Claxton (2002), and others who believe knowledge is constructed through social interaction within social events. Boys are very much social beings, enjoying close relationships with their friends. ‘Hanging out with mates’ is a favourite pastime of boys, as the finding chapters of this study explain; for some boys it is the contact with mates that is the most important aspect of school to them. The socio-cultural perspective believes that culture shapes minds and the school is the most important mind shaping culture that boys experience while at secondary school. As Bruner (1996) explained it is the culture that one is in that provides the tools for communication and understanding our world. This study examines the culture of the school by recording the tools that boys use to understand and perceive the school world to which they belong. So as not to distort or misrepresent the boys view and the tools they use to understand their school environment, boys themselves were used as co-researchers and collaborators.

4.9 Discourse Analysis

To gain a greater understanding of the school world of the boy it is necessary to examine and analyse the language in terms of its full meaning. Language in this context means “language having meaning in and through social practices” (Gee, 2005, p. 7). To understand language in this social context requires the researcher to use Discourse analysis, with a capital “D”. According to Gee (2005, p. 10), Discourse analysis is “analysing language as it is fully integrated with all the other elements that go into social practices.” Communication is more than words; it is the context, the actions, the feelings, the use of various objects and tools. Discourse analysis is about looking at the whole language package for meaning and not just the words in use.

Discourse is language use as social practice. It moves back and forth between reflecting and constructing the social world of a person. Language used this way is never neutral, because it is caught up in social, racial, political, economic, religious and cultural formations. “The important thing to keep in mind about Discourse (both big and little D) is that they are social and political and have histories of participation that are saturated by power relations” (Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, & Joseph, 2005; p. 370). The power of language can be either oppressive or liberating depending on how it is used. Researchers (Smyth et al, 2000; Slade, 2002; Trent & Slade, 2001) have found that most pupils in school find that the language is oppressive, that pupils do not get the opportunity to use language in a liberating way. In an executive summary of boys’ views Trent and Slade (2001, p. 2) stated that:

Boys believe that adults don’t ask young people what they think and they certainly don’t ask in a way that establishes trust and mutual respect; they don’t listen, and they don’t really want to know, particularly if it requires or necessitates substantial changes on their part.

It would seem evident that power is kept in the hands of the teachers, as most use discourse in an oppressive way by keeping discourse away from the boys. Bruner (1996, p. 37) contended that “school judges the child’s performance, and the child responds by evaluating himself or herself in turn.” Teachers have to be aware of the power of the discourse they use and how it affects the boy.

To understand the discourses of boys the present study involved boys within the research process as student researchers and collaborators. This distributed the research power between researcher and the boys. Boys contributed to the forming of the interview questions, to leading and asking questions in focus groups and to clarifying the research findings. Who better to understand boys' Discourse than the boys themselves?

This research was conducted within a socio-cultural setting, the school where boys use their own particular signs and symbols to make sense of their school setting. This investigation gives boys the opportunity to explain the socio-cultural setting of the school from their perspective, using their own language, signs and symbols.

4.10 School Culture

The three schools in this research were chosen because they were culturally diverse, that is, each school had a different pupil base and ways of doing things (processes, signs, symbols, artefacts) that made them unique. This was important to this research as a school's culture and its environment has a major impact on forming the students within.

Social roles shift depending on who is present and what the established expectations are of those present. This socio-cultural approach to self and language suggests that the "self" is a permeable, fluid, dynamic, and developing process that is culturally created (Vygotsky, 1978). That is, individuals' self-views, emotions, and motivations take shape and form within a framework provided by cultural values, ideals, structures and practices. (Bosacki , 2005, p. 10)

In schools a form of socialisation occurs so that the pupil knows the culture and can fit in and survive. "Cultural socialisation can be defined as how people learn to live culturally" (Lee, Spencer & Harpalani, 2003, p. 5.). Boys have to be socialised to the culture of the school, too often this is not done in a supportive way by the school or there is a mismatch between school culture and a boy's belief that can result in inappropriate behaviour. For example, it has been documented that some adolescents in low socio-economic families assume adult type responsibilities at home e.g. parents, care-givers, economic providers, car owner, while at school they are expected to assume child-like, docile and compliant roles within the school organisation (Burton, Allison, &

Obeidallah, 1995; Hawk & Hill, 1996). This example is one of a number of situations that boys can find themselves in at school that do not match their needs. Schools must make an effort to rectify these types of mismatches as they can lead to inappropriate school behaviours and the risk of truancy, stand-down, expulsion and early school leaving.

Lee et al (2003, p. 8) claimed that:

How people learn to make sense of experiences in the world is an outgrowth of a process of cultural socialisation. Interpreting experiences and figuring out how to respond involves developing patterns of coping that are both immediate and long-term. Such long-term processes of coping shape an individual's sense of identity.

A school's culture develops its own uniqueness and the people within that culture develop their own way of doing things. Thus, newcomers entering for the first time need to be culturally socialised. As Gee, Allen and Clinton (2001, p. 3) stated;

People use, at a given time and place, a style of language that functions for the context they are in, both in terms of the reality of that context (i.e., institutions and material circumstances to place very real constraints on people) and in terms of the ways in which people construe the context they are in (i.e., language helps activity to construct contexts).

In listening to the boys in these three unique school cultures it was important to consult with boys; to have them interpret the style of language that they use in the context of their school. Language meaning and structure can vary between schools as well as within a school. Motivation is a key component in how boys think, act and construct language and meaning. A number of researchers (Mac an Ghail, 1994; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003; Smyth et al. 2000) have found that boys can belong to sub-groups within a school and these sub-groups have distinctive attitudes to school and motivation to learn.

4.11 Motivational Theory

“Motivation is a theoretical construct used to explain the initiation, direction, intensity, persistence, and quality of behaviour; especially goal-directed behaviour” (Brophy, 2004, p. 3). Motivation has similarly been described as a force that energises, sustains, and directs behaviour toward a goal (Eggen & Kauchak, 2007). There are strong links between motivation and achievement; a student's motivation to learn at school is at the

very heart of successful academic and school success (Brophy, 2004; Eggen & Kauchak, 2007; Weinstein, 1998). A number of researchers (Martin, 2003; Stipek, 2002) have indicated the behaviours or characteristics of motivated students. They are:

- More positive about and enjoy school more.
- More effective and persistent on difficult learning tasks.
- Cause less classroom behaviour problems.
- Learn more curriculum knowledge and gain better marks on assessment tasks.
- Demonstrate deeper thinking and processing skills.

Teachers appreciate and enjoy motivated students.

Theories of motivation have developed from a belief that a student's motivation depends on an external response or internal felt need; to motivation being an intrinsically, self-determined action. There are three main theories of motivation; they are behavioural, humanistic and cognitive. These three theories can all be found in use in the classroom but researchers would argue that cognitive theory due to the strong correlations of its principles with intrinsic motivation is the ideal. Table 4.2 outlines and gives the main focus of the three main motivation theories that are used in most classrooms in New Zealand schools.

Table 4.2 Theories of Motivation

BEHAVIOURAL	HUMANISTIC	COGNITIVE
<p>A focus on changes in behaviour that result from experiences with the environment.</p> <p>The use of reinforcement as an explanation for motivation.</p> <p>Reinforcers such as praise, rewards, grades and test scores seen as good motivators.</p>	<p>A focus on people's attempts to fulfil their potential. Emphasises the total person and drive for self-actualisation. To motivate need to address lower needs along with upper needs and acknowledge the genuine accomplishments and increased competence of students.</p>	<p>A focus on learner's beliefs, expectations and needs for order, predictability and understanding.</p> <p>Motivated by the need to understand and make sense of the world is at the heart of cognitive motivation.</p>

Adapted from Brophy (2004) and Eggen and Kauchal (2007)

Motivation can be divided into two broad categories; extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is determined by felt pressures or needs towards a predetermined end. Intrinsic motivation is self-determination of goals and self-regulation of actions; a

self-determined involvement and action for its own self (Brophy, 2004; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). The ideal is for students to be intrinsic or self motivated; doing something without external pressure being applied by a teacher or some other agent. Intrinsic motivation is also preferable because of its more direct focus on learning and understanding. Research has determined that students can be more intrinsically motivated by learning tasks or activities that involve challenges that are moderately difficult, where learners feel they have influence and control over their learning, and the learning tasks evoke interest and curiosity, as well as, involving creativity and fantasy that allow learners to use their imagination. (Brophy, 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Stipek, 2002). Brophy (2004) argued that although intrinsic motivation is the ideal it is unattainable in the every-day school classroom.

If intrinsic motivation is ideal but unattainable as an all-day, everyday motivational state for teachers to seek to develop in their students, what might be a more feasible goal? I believe that it is realistic for you to seek to develop and sustain for your students motivation to learn from academic activities: their tendencies to find academic activities meaningful and worthwhile and try to get the intended benefits from them. (Brophy, 2004, p. 15)

Motivation to learn requires students to find learning tasks to be meaningful and worthwhile and understand the learning benefits from doing so.

Table 4.3 Theories of Cognitive Motivation

Theory	Definition	Basic Premise
Expectancy x Value	Suggests that people are motivated to engage in an activity to the extent that they expect to succeed <i>times</i> the value they place on the task	People are motivated to work on a task if they expect to succeed and value success
Self-Efficacy	A belief about one's own ability to organise and complete a course of action to complete a task	People's beliefs about their capabilities influence their motivation.
Goal	An outcome an individual hopes to achieve. A <u>learning goal</u> focuses on the mastery, improvement, and increased understanding. A <u>performance goal</u> focuses on competence or ability and how it compares to others	Setting appropriate goals increases motivation
Attribution	Attempts to systematically describe learners' explanations for their successes and failures and how these influence motivation and behaviour	People are intrinsically motivated To understand their successes and failures
Self-determination	The process of deciding how to act on one's environment	People have instinctive needs for competence, Control, and related needs

Adapted from Brophy (2004); Eggen and Kauchak (2007)

As Brophy (2004) explained, it is a cognitive response involving attempts to make sense of the information and relate this to prior knowledge as well as to mastering the skills that the learning task develops. “Stimulating students’ motivation to learn includes encouraging them to use thoughtful information-processing and skill-building strategies when they are learning. This is quite different from merely offering them incentives for good performance later” (Brophy, 2004, p. 15)

This motivation to learn is closely related to the cognitive theory of motivation and involves five sub-theories of Expectancy x Value Theory, Self- Efficacy Theory, Goal Theory, Attribution Theory and Self-determination Theory. Each of these theories is explained in Table 4.3 along with the basic premise for each.

Both Brophy (2004) and Martin (2003) believed that strategies can be taught that will improve the motivation of the student and enhance their academic success. The next section discusses the *Student Motivation Scale* developed by Martin (2003) that identifies ten factors which either enhance or inhibit motivation. The factors are closely linked to the theories of cognitive motivation as explained in Table 4.2. The *Student Motivation Scale* was the quantitative data collection tool used in this study.

4.12 The Motivational Scale

The *Student Motivation Scale* (Martin, 2003) was developed and normed for Australian students but was chosen as a method of data collection in this study on the basis that it was reliable, easy to administer, modern and developed in a similar environment to which it would be used in this present research. Australia and New Zealand have similar education systems, language and culture so the *Student Motivation Scale* should meet the requirements of New Zealand students without need for adaptation. (See Chapter 9 to see results, suitability and reliability for New Zealand students)

Martin (2003, p. 2) defined motivation as “a student’s energy and drive to learn and to work hard at school”. The *Student Motivation Scale* measures secondary school student’s motivation by identifying factors that enhance or inhibit motivation. (see Appendix A for example of a Student Motivation Scale.)

There are six motivational enhancers, called boosters, which are measured.

- *Self belief.* Self Belief is a student's belief and confidence in their ability to meet challenges of and understand and perform to their best in their school work.
- *Learning Focus.* Learning focus is being focused on learning, solving problems, and developing skills to be the best student one can be.
- *Value of Schooling.* Value of Schooling is a student's belief in what they learn at school is useful, important and relevant.
- *Persistence.* Persistence is a student's effort to keep trying to solve or understand a difficult or challenging problem or task.
- *Planning.* Planning is how much a student plans schoolwork and study and monitors progress.
- *Study Management.* Study management is the way a student chooses to organise and manage study and study time.

There are four motivational inhibitors, called mufflers and guzzlers, which are measured.

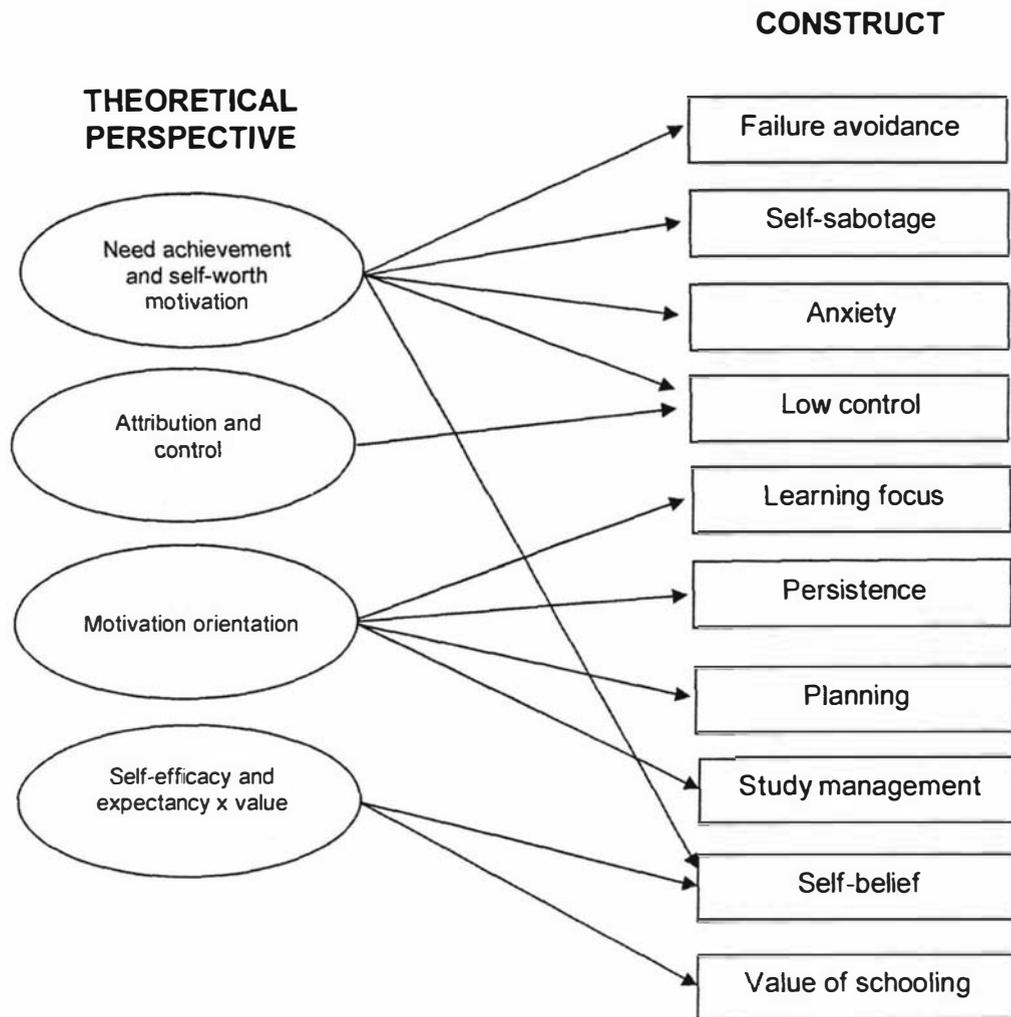
- *Anxiety.* Anxiety has two parts: (1) Feeling nervous: uneasy or sick feeling students feel when thinking about school works and exams. (2) Worrying: students fear about not doing well at schoolwork and exams.
- *Failure avoidance.* Failure avoidance is when student's main reason for doing schoolwork is to avoid doing poorly or to being seen to do poorly.
- *Low control.* Low control is when a student is unsure how to do well or how to avoid doing poorly.
- *Self-sabotage.* Self-sabotage is when a student does things that reduce their chances of school success.

The motivational factors that Martin identified as enhancing or inhibiting students motivation to succeed at school have a strong theoretical perspective in motivational theory. Figure.4.1 displays the theoretical perspective linked to each of the motivational factors described in the *Student Motivation Scale*.

The *Student Motivation Scale* has 40 items and students respond to each question on a

7-point Likert-type scale; to each item the students rate themselves on a scale of 1 ('strongly disagree') to 7 ('strongly agree'). The Scale can be administered in groups or to individuals in approximately 15 minutes.

Figure 4.1 Central theoretical perspectives and associated motivational constructs.



(Martin, 2003)

The Student Motivation Scale had been carefully constructed, thoroughly tested and found to be reliable and of good fit (Martin, 2003, pp. 47-49).

It was trialled using 3773 students from thirteen secondary schools across NSW and ACT in Australia. Students involved were in Years 7 and 8 (40%), years 9 and 10 (42%) and Years 11 and 12 (18%).

The gender of participants was 43 percent female and 57 percent male. Data were analysed using LISREL 7.2 (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1989a, 1989b), PRELIS (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1988) and SPSS for Windows (Version 11) Analyses included confirmatory factor analysis, tests of reliability and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Each of the motivational enhancers and inhibitors comprises four items within the *Student Motivation Scales* 40 items. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using LISREL 7.2 was carried out to justify forming these subscales.

The raw data were used as input to PRELIS and a covariance matrix was produced which was subsequently analysed using LISREL. In term of goodness of fit indices, the Tucker Lewis index (TLI) is emphasised as simulation studies have shown that it is relatively independent of sample size and also imposes an appropriate penalty for inclusion of additional variables in a given model. Following Marsh et al. (1996), the Relative Noncentrality Index (RNI) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) are also emphasised as measures of goodness of fit. For both boys and girls, this model yielded an acceptable fit to the data.

Martin (2003) found that the analytical results for each item and the subscales for the motivation factors are statistically reliable. Distributional data also showed that for boys and girls each motivational factor is approximately normally distributed. The reliability of this measurement for use in this New Zealand study is discussed in Chapter 9.

4.13 Data Analysis Framework

The data analysis framework used in this study follows closely that of Grounded Theory Methodology (GTM). Grounded Theory (GT) is an approach that emphasizes the importance of empirical fieldwork and the need to link any explanations very closely to what happens in practical situations in the 'real world'. Grounded Theory has been adopted by many researchers engaged in smaller-scale research projects using qualitative data for the study of human interaction. "It has come to provide a well recognised, authoritative rationale for an approach that does not necessarily involve statistical analysis, quantitative data or the quest for representative samples" (Denscombe, 2004, pp. 109-110).

Grounded Theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and is an example of a methodology that is conceptually linked to more than one philosophical paradigm discussed in Table 4.1. Strauss and Corbin (1998) cited in Babbie (2007, p. 296) suggested that Grounded Theory Methodology can allow the researcher to be both scientific and creative if certain guidelines are followed.

- **Think Comparatively:** It is essential to compare numerous incidents as a way of avoiding biases that can arise from initial observations and interpretations. This research used numerous sites and participants for comparison to obtain diverse view and broadly representative samples and avoid bias.
- **Obtain Multiple Viewpoints:** This referred to view of participants under study and observational or data generation techniques. This research used both interview and focus group with boys from three diverse school cultures and localities.
- **Periodically step back:** It is important to keep checking data against interpretations. To ensure interpretations were as accurate as possible this study also used Participatory Action Research where a consultative group of research participants was established to collaborate with the interpretation of results. This brought in a valuable new step to the interpretation process to ensure accuracy; the boys.
- **Maintain an Attitude of Scepticism:** Initially regard all interpretations as provisional, using new observations to test interpretations not just confirm them. Interpretations in this study were validated by cross checking data from over 185 boys' interviews plus focus groups.
- **Follow the Research Procedure:** GTM allows for flexibility in data collection but three techniques are essential; making comparisons, asking questions, and sampling. This study used these three techniques regularly, especially when working with the collaborative group.

These techniques are firmly built into this study's methodology; in particular the coding phases of the research.

4.14 Summary

The intention of this research was to obtain boys' perceptions of their learning experiences at school and to record these accurately. This research is best represented

by a multidimensional research perspective of Ethnography and Social Constructivist Theory and the Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) and is strongly of the interpretive philosophical paradigm. As Wells and Claxton (2002, p. 3) explained “cultures play a large role in shaping the development of individual minds; and individuals’ thoughts and deeds serve to maintain or to alter the cultural milieu.” The boys in this study were in a cultural place, the school, and within the school, boys’ work, play and deal with issues together. Through their talking and thinking, ideas are developed, ideas that accumulate in a set of cultural values and beliefs.

It was these ideas and views that the boys developed within the school cultural setting that this study obtained through the use of a variety of qualitative and quantitative research methods. This chapter discussed the perspectives of the qualitative and quantitative framework and the justification for selection of the data collection methodology used in this study. Chapter Five describes the research organisation and methods that were used to collect statistical data using the *Student Motivation Scale* and to gather the perspectives of boys on school, motivation, learning and success.

CHAPTER FIVE

Methodology in Action

I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.

Chinese Proverb

5.0 Introduction

This chapter documents the methodology by explaining firstly how the research was conducted and secondly the various methods used in this study to generate data. An account of the procedures and techniques used for gathering and analysing the data is provided along with justification for decisions made during the research process. A timeline outlines each phase of the research and details are given of the progression of each phase. Ethical considerations and perceived methodological limitations of the research are outlined and discussed.

5.1 Field Research Entry

Three secondary schools with contrasting cultures were seen as vital to the success of this research, so a diverse representative sample of boys could be obtained. This diverse representative sample was essential as the research sought to ascertain if there was a uniformity of viewpoint with boys at the three Year groups. The researcher had been conducting an evaluation of a Mentoring Programme in a single-sex boys' secondary school and the principal there was keen for further research and collaboration, this was a logical first choice. The second school approached was a large, coeducational multicultural school with pupils from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. To ensure further contrast, the third school contacted was an independent, coeducational school established on Christian principles with pupils from high socio-economic backgrounds. On each occasion an initial meeting was held with the principal of each school where the research was explained. On receiving a positive response to the research, a letter was written to each school's Board of Trustees outlining the research

and seeking permission to conduct research in the school (see Appendix B).

5.2 Research Settings and Participants

The data for this research were generated through interview, focus group and motivational scale over the course of one calendar year with boys from the three secondary schools. The boys were randomly selected by senior school staff and were in Years 9, 11 and 13 of their schooling. The Year levels were specifically chosen because of their significance to the boys' schooling. Year 9 is the start of secondary schooling in New Zealand, Year 11 is when formal examinations and qualifications for the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (N.C.E.A.) begin and Year 13 is the final year of secondary schooling before tertiary study or employment.

A diverse and broadly representative sample of boys was required to establish if there was uniformity of viewpoint between boys in the various year groups and schools. The number of boys participating in the interviews was 127. The research aimed to include a selection of 15 from each Year level within a school. However this was not always possible due to availability of boys, curriculum timetabling and time restraints. A total of 311 completed the *Student Motivational Scale*. Nine focus groups were completed during the process of the main study; this involved a total of 72 boys. The consultative group consisted of twelve boys. Table 5.1 details the number of boys from each school that took in each phase of the study.

Table 5.1 Number of Schools and Participants involved in data collection

	Motivational Scale	Focus Groups	Interviews	Consultative Group
School K	95		42	
School M	105		41	
School W	111	72	44	12
Total	311	72	127 ¹²	12

Three secondary schools from geographically different locations and socio-economic

¹² A total of 45 boys in Year 9, 42 in Year 11 and 40 in Year 13.

backgrounds were used in the research. Each school had its own unique characteristics, organisation and culture. The schools had many similarities but it was for the differences in geographic location, socio-economic diversity of its pupils and the cultural organisation and environment for which they were selected. As Smyth, Hattam, Cannon *et al* (2000, p. 81) claimed, “attention is paid to both sameness and difference” when conducting research of a socio-cultural nature. These schools were chosen because of their diversity, and thus a representative sample of boys within the secondary school system could be obtained. The data generation methods would show the sameness and differences between the boys within and across each school.

School K. This is an independent co-educational school based on strong Christian beliefs for 1600 students from Kindergarten to Year 13 situated in the greater Auckland region. The student roll ethnic composition is 86% Pakeha/European, 10% Asian and 4% others. The school is a Decile 10 school divided into Junior, Middle and Senior schools. The school has high quality premises, is well resourced and offers both international and national educational diplomas and certificates. It also has a strong emphasis on computer technologies and performing and visual arts.

School M. This is a large multicultural co-educational state school situated in Auckland catering for 2000 students from diverse cultural and/or socio-economic backgrounds. The student roll ethnic composition is Pakeha/European 55%, Maori 20%, Asian 10% Samoan 6%, other Pacific Islands 5%, Others 4%. The school is Decile 5 and offers a wide range of academic and vocational programmes with a major focus on effective student support strategies. The school has strong sports, performing and cultural arts programmes.

School W. This is a traditional state boys’ school situated in a provincial city with a roll of 1100 boys. The school is Decile 5. It has a strong tradition of leadership and competition in sports, school prefects, and a House system. The student roll ethnicity composition is Pakeha/European 69%, Maori 27%, Pacific Island 1%, Others 3%. A small boarding establishment catering for 90 boys is attached to the school. The school promotes student leadership, integrated careers education and the transition from school to work through apprenticeship work schemes. This school has been involved in a number of initiatives to develop boys’ educational success at both local and national

levels.

School W played a more significant role in the data generation process than School K or M. Firstly it was involved in the initial pilot study which developed, trialled and established the data gathering methods used in the present main study. This included the development of a training format for the student researchers who conducted the focus groups. This school was chosen to develop and trial the data generation methods as the researcher had worked previously on a Mentoring assessment project within the school and had developed an understanding of the school culture and a rapport with key leadership personnel. The school leadership offered full support and involvement of students in all phases of the research process as they considered the research as being beneficial to the school. School W was involved in every phase of the research where as Schools K and M was only involved in interview, completion of the *Student Motivation Scale* and collaboration of findings.

5.3 Research Base

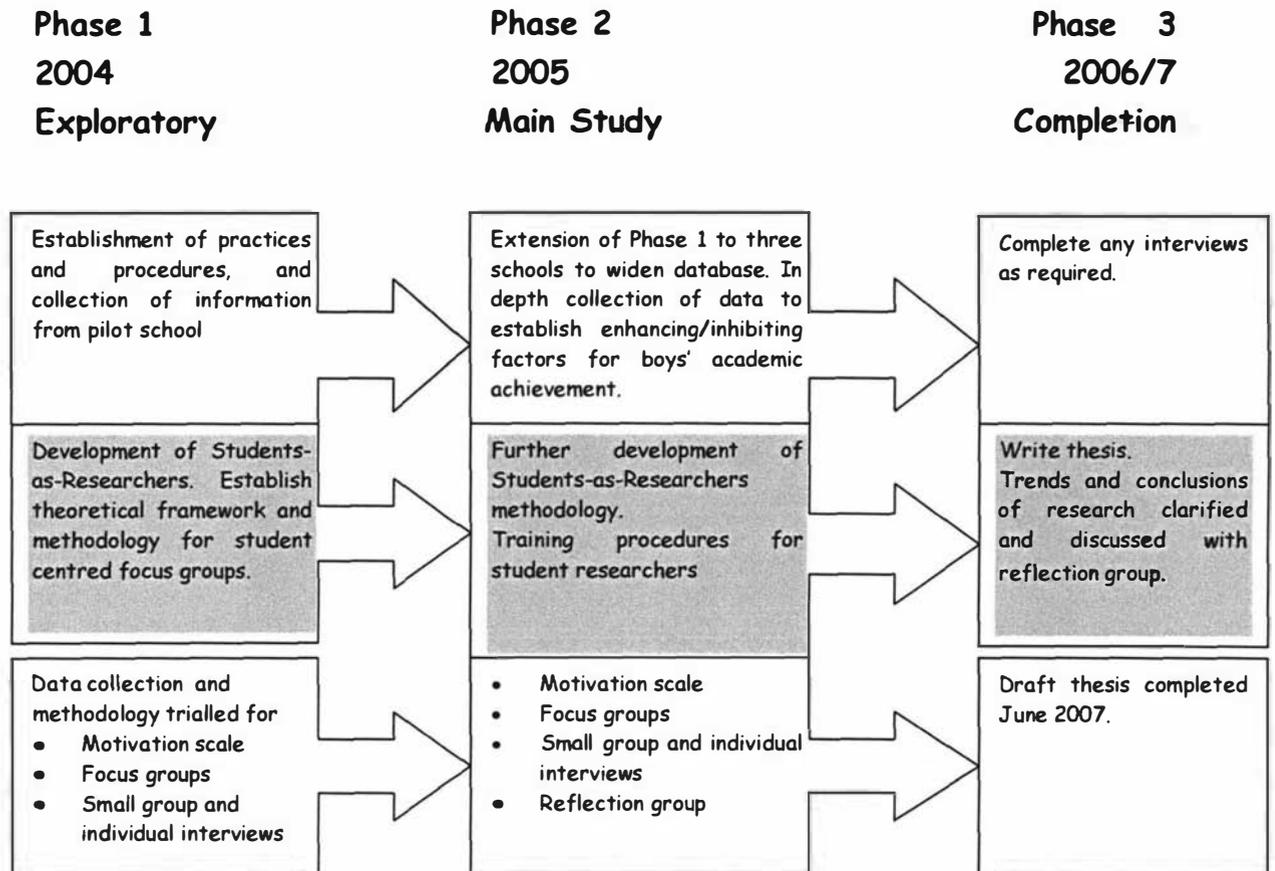
At each of the three schools an area was made available to conduct interviews and focus groups close to the administration area. In two schools it was the Board of Trustees Meeting Room, at the other a meeting room within the school's library facility. On occasion when the Boardroom was not available a small office was made available. These rooms were centrally located, easy for boys to locate and quiet to allow for audio-taping to occur.

5.4 Research Phases

There were three distinct phases to the research. Each phase was conducted over a course of a year. The exploratory phase started in November 2003 with meetings with principal and senior staff to outline the objectives and the specific structure of the pilot study. The school appointed a senior staff member to act as liaison with the researcher. In 2004 the pilot study aimed at developing and refining data methodology to be used during the main study with an increased number of students across three schools. The main change during the exploratory stage was made to interview questions and the development of training techniques for student focus group leaders. Boys within the pilot study were consulted and assisted with the refining and development of new

questions as well as the training that they required to effectively run a focus group.

Figure. 5.1 Research Phases for this study



Phase two saw the implementation of the study in three schools. The use of a liaison staff member in each school made the implementation of phase two relatively smooth. The biggest difficulty was working around the researcher's workload and the availability and release of boys to complete motivation scales, individual interviews and focus groups. An efficient method for handling the large amount of completed data was developed. Each piece of data was coded with school alphabetical code and year level then filed. When each phase of the data collection was completed across the three schools, initial analysis began.

Figure 5.2 Research Timeline for this study

1	Accepted for Doctorate Research September 2003	
2	Ethical approval: March 2004	
Phase 1 2004 Exploratory		
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review of literature "Students as researchers" ● Establish contact, gain approval to conduct pilot study in one "Boys' only Secondary School" ● Development of protocols and procedures for using boys' only focus groups. ● Develop and trial interview questions. 	March 2004 March 2004 April 2004 April 2004
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Permission sought from individual participants to participate in research.¹³ ● Conduct Motivational Scale questionnaire ● Train Lead Boys and Recorder for focus Groups ● Conduct boy led focus groups ● Conduct small group and individual interviews. 	April 2004 May 2004 May 2004 June 2004 July 2004
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mark and interpret data from Motivational Scale ● Transcribe tapes ● Initial data interpretation 	July 2004 Aug-Sept Sept-Dec
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seek funding (MURF) for transcribing, travel and accommodation 	Sept 2004
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish contact and gain approval from two other schools to conduct research 	Nov 2004
Phase 2 2005 Main study-Factor identification		
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Permission sought from individual participants to participate in research. 	Feb 2005
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As for 4 & 5 above for other two schools 	Mar-June
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Write methodology for data collection 	March
4	Attend 4 th Biennial Working with Boys Conference in Melbourne. Present pilot study findings.	3-7 April
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Transcribe all taped material from focus groups 	May- August
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seek funding from Graduate School Research Fund 	April
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conduct Individual interviews 	June-July
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Transcription of interviews and focus groups 	Aug-Nov
Phase 3 2006 -2007 Findings analysis and completion		
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Complete interviews with students and teachers as required. 	March 2006
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify trends and draw conclusions from data collected 	April
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discuss trends and conclusions reached with consultative group 	May -August
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Write, write, and write. 	May- Dec
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Awarded advanced study Award to allow time for writing 	July - Dec
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Complete draft thesis 	Aug 2007

¹³ See Appendix D, E, F for examples of Information Letters and Consent forms for boy participants, student researchers and parents.

The end of 2005 saw all data collection completed and the final phase of analysis, consultation and writing started. The *Student Motivation Scale* data was entered in to the computer using the *Statistical Package for Social Sciences* (SPSS Version 11) software. Audio-tapes of focus groups and interviews were transcribed. Then the task of analysis and interpreting data, identifying trends and reaching conclusions began. During the final process a consultative boys' group was established to assist with interpretation and findings.

Before the study began in 2004 two years had been spent on reading literature and conducting two small studies which involved interviewing boys and assessing programmes specifically designed to assisted boys in schools. Approval from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee was obtained in March, 2004 (see Appendix C) and the writing of the thesis completed in August, 2007.

Figure 5.2 is a graphic representation of the timeline for this study starting with the granting of the ethics approval from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee in March 2004. The writing of the thesis was completed in August 2007.

5.6 Data Collection Methods

A variety of research tools were used to enable the researcher to gather knowledge from a variety of viewpoints. By looking at the gathered data holistically and from different perspectives it is expected that the knowledge gained will hold validity and be seen as realistic to those in the research process.

The following research tools are used in this research:

- *Student Motivation Scale*. (Martin, 2003)
- Focus groups
- Individual interviews
- Consultative group

5.7 Motivation Scale

The *Student Motivation Scale* has 40 items and students respond to each question on a 7-point Likert-type scale; to each item the student rated themselves on a scale of 1 ('strongly disagree') to 7 ('strongly agree'). The Scale was administered in groups and took individuals approximately 15 minutes to complete. In this research their teachers, within a classroom setting, administered the *Student Motivation Scale* to randomly selected classes of boys during class. The rating scale was first explained and a sample item trialed; after the teachers checked for understanding and answered questions, the boys were then asked to complete the *Student Motivation Scale*. The teacher collected the completed instrument. Teachers handed the completed *Student Motivation Scales* to the researcher in the staffroom at the end of the teaching period. The researcher completed marking and analysis of the raw scores away from the school site.

5.8 Focus Groups

Focus groups are a key component of this research. They were designed to give the boys voice; to meaningfully engage the boys in the research process through focus groups actively led by boys trained as student researchers. The focus groups were boy controlled and aimed at gaining in-depth insights from boys with minimal adult influence. These groups were to enable boys to collaborate and construct their own meanings in regard to their schooling. The focus groups were based on Vygotsky and other's views, that knowledge is socially constructed through social interaction.

Focus groups are a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. In essence, it is the researcher's interests that provide the focus, whereas the data comes from the group interaction (Morgan, 1997, p. 6). The focus group was chosen as a method of collecting data because it was expected that the interaction between the members within each focus group in discussing an issue, would generate new perceptions and ideas; the boys could share information and construct some understanding together. The student focus groups had no adults present; this was designed to encourage more talk by the group of boys. It was hoped that by having a trained boy researcher as leader of each group, and with no adults present, that the boy participants would express themselves more openly and freely (see following

section for details on training). The intrusion of human observers or moderators can impact on the focus group participation and dynamics to an unknown extent (Gamson, 1992; Morgan, 1997). The researcher wanted to avoid this adult intrusion and give the students the opportunity to voice their ideas with complete freedom. For example, adult researchers could inadvertently narrow the discussion by implicitly assuming which issues are important. The focus group discussions were audio-taped, the tape collected by the researcher at the end of each session. The tapes were then transcribed word-by-word and analysed.

Over the years a number of guidelines, or as Morgan (1997, p. 34) described them, 'rules of thumb' have developed to assist researchers with decisions on focus group structure.

According to these "rules of thumb", focus groups where possible should:

- (a) Use homogeneous strangers as participants..
- (b) Rely on a relatively structured interview with high moderator involvement
- (c) Have six to ten participants per group.
- (d) Have a total of three to five groups per project.

The focus groups in this research follow these general 'rules of thumb'. The participants were randomly selected from each of the Year levels by the school involved, they may have known each other but it is unlikely that they were friends. There should have been homogeneity within the group. According to Morgan's 'Rule of Thumb' a more free flowing conversation would occur amongst the participants because they were of similar age and educational background. There were six participants per group with direction from a boy with mana or leadership within the school. The reasons for having only six participants per group was so that it would be easier for the boy leader to control and to obtain a clear response from each participant to the topic. Morgan (1997) has found that as group numbers increase there is greater likelihood that leader/ moderator participation increases, there is less free discussion and some participants may not become fully involved in the focus group discussion.

Three focus groups were formed at each Year level, a total of nine within the school.

It has been found through social science and marketing research that having more than the three to five groups seldom provides more meaningful new ideas or insight. Data "saturation" is reached at around three to five groups, which is the point at which

additional data collected no longer generates new understanding (Morgan, 1997, p. 43). The aim of the nine focus groups from the one school was to give an accurate “picture” of boys’ ideas and perceptions for both the school and Year level without reaching “saturation” of data.

The focus groups used in the research are formal in structure because invited participants are used and a distinctive role is given to one of the participants as a group moderator (student research leader). The title moderator, highlights the roles orientation towards encouraging and assisting someone else’s discussion. In this research the term moderator was replaced with the term student research leader. To assist the student research leader another student was selected to act as a recorder and to give support during the focus group sessions. The student research leader and recorder were selected from senior members (Year 13) of the school by the Dean of Year 13. These senior boys once selected gave their consent to participate and signed a confidentiality agreement. They had the opportunity to withdraw before this stage.

The student research leader was given suggested questions to ask during the focus group. In discussion with the student leaders further questions were developed that they thought appropriate. It was important that the student leaders felt that they could develop questions, to have freedom in the role of student researcher. The student leaders were shown how to adopt a “funnel-based” strategy to questioning. In a “funnel-based” strategy, each group begins with a less structured approach that emphasises free discussion, and then moves towards a more structured discussion of specific questions. The focus group sessions followed a similar format: (see Appendix G: Step-by-Step Instructions for Focus Groups)

1. Welcome, introduction to research, setting of discussion rules and roles.

2. Brain storming session on following two questions:

“What do you think stops you from being successful and learning at school?”

“What helps you to be motivated and learn at school?”

Responses are recorded on large sheet of paper.

3. Student Researcher leads a general discussion about school and learning experiences covering a range of set topics with opportunity to develop themes and ideas.

4. Summary of discussion. A reminder is given to participants of the ethical considerations, such as confidentiality. The students are thanked for their participation

To assist in the efficient operation of each focus group and to ensure that student research leaders could conduct a focus group session and ask appropriate questions training was given. The researcher carried out training using instruction methods of modelling and scaffolding to enhance understanding of their role of student researcher. The appointed group leaders and recorders received this training. The training encompassed two 45-minute sessions with the following agenda:

1. Roles of Group leader and Group Recorder
2. Skills of a Good researcher
 - Being an Active Listener
 - Seeking elaboration to answers
 - Ensuring flow of discussion
 - Using a variety of questions
3. Conducting a brainstorming session
4. Research ethics
5. Role Play of a Focus Group session

In conducting the pilot study it had been found that student research leaders required more training than was initially given and a more detailed structure for them to follow in guiding the focus group. In the main study an additional training session was given where the researcher modelled the conducting of a focus group session. The training sessions were held for 45 minutes on two consecutive days. A training handout for conducting the focus groups was devised (see Appendix H: Training Handout for Student Researchers) to explain roles and skills required in conducting focus groups was given to each student leader. The aim was to assist the student leaders understand their roles and to reinforce the information covered during the two training sessions.

The step-by-step focus group instruction handout was devised to guide and assist the student leader to act in a confident, purposeful manner. It also ensured some consistency between groups. It was to be used as a guide and not an edict. The additional training session and the Focus Group Guide had a positive result on focus group data generation;

approximately thirty percent more talk was generated and data collected when comparisons were made between the pilot and main study focus groups. The student research leaders were more confident, and seven out of the nine researchers asked student participants to elaborate and/or justify their answers.

In the focus groups a unique ethical issue arises due to the fact that what a participant discusses is inherently shared with all other participants of the group. This can raise serious privacy concerns. Morgan (1997, p. 32) argued that if members of a focus group belong to the same subculture then the ethical concern can be somewhat alleviated. As each focus group consisted of boys from within the same Year level in the school they could constitute as a subgroup and thus the ethical concern is minimised.

It is critical that students understand that while these personal experiences contribute valuable to the group's work, there is a need to ensure that privacy of group members and interview participants is maintained. Trust can be developed in the group when all participants feel safe and respected and act in respectful ways to others. Establishing a code of behaviour or a common understanding about the topic of confidentiality can assist in the development of a trustful, safe and respected space for students. (Edwards, 1999, p. 21)

It was emphasised to all involved that confidentiality meant no one discussed or referred to what was said in focus groups outside the group. Student Researchers and participants had separate question and answer sessions with the researcher to develop a common understanding on privacy and confidentiality before signing a privacy and confidentiality statement as part of the consent process. A number of researchers (Fielding & Bragg, 2003; Smyth et al. 2000; Trent & Slade, 2001) have conducted research with thousands of boys as active participants in focus groups and using other data generating methods; they have found boys spoke freely, articulately and with respect for each other's views and confidentiality. Ethical concerns surrounding confidentiality and anonymity were found not to be an issue.

5.9 Interviews

Interviews were held within the three schools with randomly selected boys from the three Year levels involved and followed the completion of the *Student Motivation Scale*. For this research the definition of an "interview is a purposeful conversation wherein

the interviewer has a set research agenda” (Ruane, 2005, p. 149). There were three specific purposes for using the interview in this research. The first was to gain a greater depth of understanding and clarification of initial trends and findings after the analysis of the *Student Motivation Scale*. The second was to ask specific questions on topics pertaining to the research and be able to probe for greater understanding. Thirdly, was to give the boy participant the opportunity to elaborate or express his ideas on sub topics pertaining to the main research questions.

The interviews began with relatively unstructured, open-ended type questions and became more structured towards the end of the interview. Ruane (2005, p. 149) claimed “interviewers employ either an interview guide or an interview schedule to assist in the accomplishment of research goals.” Guides are relatively unstructured and list the general topics or issues to be covered, where as schedules are more structured and list exact questions. In this research the interview technique falls between a guide and a schedule. The initial structure for the interview was developed from research conducted by Martin (2002) and trialled in the pilot study. According to Gillham (2000, p. 3) “the researcher’s sense on the structured – unstructured dimension of an interview is false.” Expert interviewers always have a structure, which they use flexibly according to what emerges during the interview. The interview structure in this research was used with flexibility; questions outside the initial interview structure were developed in response to answers and comments given by the boy (See Appendix I and J). The researcher wanted direct experiences from the boys, of their educational experiences at school and allowed the boys freedom to talk and develop ideas from their initial responses.

The main study interview structure changed due to boys’ responses made in the pilot study and suggestions made from the collaborative group at School W. During the pilot study the responses to certain interview questions led the researcher to change the wording of some questions, deleting others and adding a new set of questions. The main alteration was due to the data collected that indicated the importance of mates within the learning environment of the boy. Every boy when asked, “What are the best three things you like to do?” replied “Hanging out with mates” as one of their choices. From the data generated it was evident that mates have a crucial role not only in the boys’ social life but also in their educational life. A new subset of interview questions was developed to explore the importance of mates in the schooling process.

Interviews were conducted either in a small meeting room attached to the library or in the school administration building. Interviews were scheduled for every 30 minutes during the school day. Boys were informed the day before and a reminder slip informing of time and place given to them at the start of the school day in their home room. An average time for an interview was 24 minutes.

The data generated from the interviews was audio taped for later transcription by the researcher. The researcher also wrote key words and ideas expressed by the boy as the interview progressed to assist with later transcribing and data analysis. The aim was to decipher some of the big 'D' discourse¹⁴ that went on during the interview.

5.10 Consultative Group.

A group of up to twelve boys were involved as a consultative group. The consultative group was not used as a method of data collection but had the important role of assisting the researcher and ensuring that boys' voices were being heard and interpreted correctly. This group was selected from among the senior boys who had participated in the research as leaders of focus groups and wanted further involvement in the study. The essence of this research was gaining access to boys' understandings and interpretations of their school environment and academic learning. If we are to understand what is happening in schools we need to understand how students are making meaning of what is happening to them in this environment. The boys met on an irregular basis with the researcher in a school meeting room for up to an hour. The consultative group discussed and gave feedback on developing of questions for main study, the importance of mates, student research leaders training, and findings on school, learning and motivation.

The consultative group was given opportunity to discuss, interpret and give meaning to research findings. The researcher conducted the initial analysis and presented this to the group for them to discuss and provide their interpretation of the results. This assisted the researcher to keep boys voice and meaning to the fore and not that of the researcher.

¹⁴ For explanation of big 'D' discourse see 4.5 Discourse Analysis in Chapter 4.

The consultative group were positive, insightful, and brought knowledge and experience to the issues without reducing the discussion to a personal level.

5.11 Data Recording and Analysis

The quantitative and qualitative raw data was handled and coded differently. The quantitative data from the *Student Motivation Scale* was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS for Windows Version 11). This computer software package allowed for statistical comparisons to be made between motivational factors identified in the *Student Motivation Scale* and also between schools and Year levels. SPSS was also used to generate statistical tables (see Chapter 9).

The focus groups, interviews and consultation discussions were all audio-taped. The reasoning for this taping was to ensure that the researcher had an accurate record of conversations that could be transcribed, analysed and replayed if necessary. The replaying is essential because it can reveal previously unnoted features of discussion. This could not occur if only field notes were taken of conversations. The researcher also wanted detailed transcripts so that an inspection of sequences of utterances could be examined where necessary to clarify meaning. The research findings and conclusions that were identified from these conversations must be able to be identified through analysis of the detailed transcripts of the boys' discourses. Once transcripts were completed analysis could begin. The boys participating in this study were not given the opportunity to review their transcripts but the consultative group were asked to review and interpret parts of scripts.

This study follows a Grounded Theory Method (GTM) first developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) for data analysis. Grounded theory is an inductive approach to the study of social life that attempts to derive theories from an analysis of the patterns, themes and categories discovered in the data (Babbie, 2007).

It involved three stages:

1. An initial attempt to develop categories, which illuminate the data.
2. An attempt to "saturate" these categories with many appropriate cases in order to demonstrate their relevance.
3. Developing these categories into more general analytic frameworks with relevance

outside the setting.

The researcher in handling the transcripts of the tapes adopted these three stages. Transcripts were read and initial categories were identified by the frequent occurrence of common words or phrases in the data. Sarantakos (1998, p. 282) defined a category as “a set of criteria which are integrated around a theme or value.” The categories were established and defined by reading and comparing boys’ text. On subsequent readings relevant data from the transcripts was selected to, as Glaser and Strauss (1967) say, to “saturate” the categories. That is, finding a quantity of data that will validate the initial selected categories. At the same time data was examined for any further emerging categories. The categories tended to be key words or phrases that carried a theme or value that occurred frequently. Firstly the researcher transcribed all audiotapes. The researcher chose to complete the transcriptions so to be aware of the ‘colour’ and ‘emotion’ that was in the taped narratives. This followed Gee’s (2005) explanation of capital ‘D’ discourse analysis. (See Chapter 4 for explanation) All transcriptions were read twice, first by school site and secondly by Year level for the researcher to gain an overall awareness of the data. At this point a detailed analysis of the content, the text began. Berg (2007, pp. 303-304) defined content analysis as “a careful, detailed, systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases and meanings” and is “chiefly a coding operation and data interpreting process.” This research followed a fairly standardised set of analytical activities in line with G.M.T. Figure. 5.3 outlines the analytical activities arranged in a general order of sequence that was used to develop the patterns, themes and theories within this research.

The researcher used manual methods and did all coding and analysis in this study. The computer programme NUD*IST was considered for developing a coding system and a conceptual model but was rejected. After listening to the narratives of the boys it was decided that NUD*IST was inappropriate as the language of boys relies heavily on subtleties, double meaning and humour which the programme would not be able to interpret or code correctly. Slade (2002) came to a similar conclusion in his Australian study in which he interviewed many boys.

Figure 5.3 Operation Frameworks for Analysis of Text within this Research.

Data were collected (field notes and audiotapes) and transcribed into text by researcher



Text was read twice and criteria were inductively developed for creating categories. Categories were developed by the frequency occurrence of word or phrase.



Texts were read and sorted by these categories, identifying similar phrases, patterns, relationships and commonalities or disparities.



Category tallies were created by counting number of occurrences of category occurs in the overall texts. Example of boys' narratives highlighted to support categories.



Texts and categories were examined to identify meaningful patterns



Categories and patterns were considered in light of previous research and theories and generalisations established

5.12 Data Presentation

In reporting the findings and to illustrate a theme or point, direct quotations are taken from interviews and focus groups to give importance to the voices of the boys' within the study. Chapter Three outlined the importance of giving voice to the boys in this research. An alphabetical-numeric reference code is used to identify the quotation. The letter of the alphabet refers to the school, the first number to the Year level to which the boy is in and the second number to interview transcript. For example, K11/13 indicated the boy was from school K and was in Year 11 and was interview number 13.

5.13 Ethical Considerations

The research presented a number of possible ethical concerns. The main concern was to ensure anonymity for schools, to ensure confidentiality for the boys involved and to protect the participants from any harm. "Anonymity is concerned with the identification of individual respondents, confidentiality is concerned with ensuring that the information they provide cannot be linked to them" (Habibis, 2006, p. 67). There were also important issues relating to selection of participants, collection of data during school time and access to data. The research design was presented to Massey University's Human Ethics Committee and approved in March 2004 (see Appendix C). The three schools' Board of Trustees and principals were fully informed and consent obtained prior to the researcher beginning data collection. The principals appointed a senior staff member to act as a contact/liaison person with the researcher.

At each phase of the research, participants and names were kept private by the researcher. The researcher maintained this anonymity by using an alphabetical/numerical-coded system on all written documents and transcripts. The coded system indicated the school and the year level of the boys, which was all the information required in the data collection process. In the audio-taping, there was no reference made to the name of the school or to the participant. The specific geographic location of each school is not identified in the research. The researcher felt that public disclosure of precise location could jeopardise participant anonymity.

School staff used Year level rolls and selected every fifth boy randomly to participate in the research. The researcher checked through discussion with school liaison, that boys selected were a fair representation of ability levels and ethnicity within the school. Prior to each data collection phase the participants had the research explained and were given the opportunity to ask questions. An information letter was sent to each boy's parents or guardians and consent was obtained as a prerequisite of involvement (see Appendix E). Each boy also received an information letter explaining the research, and his consent was obtained (see Appendix F). The researcher felt that it was important that the boy gave his consent, as this was part of the process of establishing a relationship of trust. In only one case a boy decided not to consent and participate and was removed from the study

It was extremely important for the researcher to establish a relationship with the participants so that they felt willing and safe to share their schooling experiences and that their anonymity and what they said was kept confidential and protected. The researcher was aware of the potential for conflict between the views of boys and those held by their teachers and school. To protect boys from the potential of harm and to give them the confidence to speak freely data collection was conducted in a room away from main teaching and staff areas. During interviews and focus groups it was clearly explained that participants could ask questions and request the audiotape to be turned off at any time. One boy made such a request during the interview process. All data were specifically coded and material kept secure and only accessible by researcher.

Individual anonymity could be protected during interview but was not possible for the boys who participated in the focus groups. Members of the focus groups would know what each other said. The researcher took a number of steps to protect boy's anonymity as far as possible during focus group sessions. These were: no adults were in the group, no names were to used, the nature and extent of participation was up to each individual to decide, the emphasis in discussion was to be focussed on the views and not the individual who held them, and confidentiality was stressed by the researcher at the start of the focus groups by the researcher and again at the end by the student researchers. In this study, as in overseas research (McIntyre, Pedder & Rudduck, 2005; Trent & Slade, 2001), the boys spoke constructively and thoughtfully, taking seriously the importance of their role and the ethical considerations of confidentiality and anonymity.

They did not, for example, use the opportunity to make complaints about perceived injustices or about personal characteristics of teachers they did not like. They seemed to value the opportunity to reflect and to talk seriously about what helped them to learn.

McIntyre, Pedder, and Rudduck (2005, p. 152)

The collection of data was carried out during a normal school day. To keep classroom learning disruption to a minimum data collection was scheduled for study and homeroom times. Where this was not possible, boys were only out of class for one session of 30 minutes. Boys also had the right, when interviews were scheduled during an important learning time, to reschedule and a number did this

5.14 Summary

This study aimed to capture the genuine voice of the boys on their experiences of what hinders and enhances their learning within the school setting. Boys were more than subjects in this research; they were active participants having both collaborative and research roles. In using boys as researchers and boys-only focus groups the aim was to capture the genuine ideas and voice of the boy.

Voiced research starts out from the position that interesting things can be said and garnered from groups who do not necessary occupy the high moral, theoretical or epistemological ground – they actually may be quite lowly and situated at some distance from the centres of power. (Smyth et al. 2000, p. 22)

To use such data generating methods required the boys to feel protected and respected, to have anonymity and confidentiality so that they would express themselves freely. Table 5.2 is an overview of the research, which was described in-depth in this chapter. Chapter Six presents the findings and perceptions of boys regarding their main motivational interests and the importance of their mates within their lives; in particular their school lives.

Table 5.2 Overview of the study

Research topic	Boys' perceptions of what inhibits and enhances boys' academic achievement at secondary school.
Research focus	Identifying boys perceptions of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Learning distractions ● Learning enhancements ● Motivation to learn ● Best teaching practices ● Mates contributions to learning
Methodology	Ethnography
Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Semi-structured interviews with boys ● Boys only focus groups ● Motivation Scale questionnaire ● Collaborative Group
Research site	Secondary Schools N=3
Participants	Boys: Year 9. N=108, Year 11 N=112, Year 13 N=91

Format adapted from Whitehead (2001)

CHAPTER SIX

Mates and Other Interests

'I pay the schoolmaster, but 'tis the schoolboys that educates my son'

Ralph Waldo Emerson

6.0 Introduction

Mates play an important part in the overall development of a boy (Chu, 2005; Head, 1997). The influences of culture, society, community and relationships upon the individual have been widely acknowledged in developmental and psychological theory for decades by well known theorists such as Erikson (1968), Piaget (1955), Vygotsky (1978) and Wells and Clayton (2002). Socialisation occurring at school was perceived to be extremely significant to the boys in this study. It made no difference whether the boys were in early or late adolescence; they placed equal importance on daily contact with their mates and the opportunity to make new friends and acquaintances. This contact with friends and mates can have a powerful effect on their psychological development; especially in terms of their self identification and finding and establishing a place in society (Brown & Klute, 2003; Head, 1997; Kroger, 2004).

The study of friends and mates evolved from the icebreaker question used in the pilot study interviews.

What are the three best things you like doing?

The main aims of the question were to establish a rapport by displaying interest in the things boys like doing; a secondary purpose was to gain an insight into what interests or motivates boys at Years 9, Years 11 and 13. In the pilot study every single boy (n 30) indicated that hanging out with their mates or friends was one of their most preferred activities that they liked doing. A question within the interview 'What is the best thing about school?' also saw 70% of boys indicating that being with friends or mates and socializing was the best thing about school. Responses from a significant number of the boys in the pilot study indicated that mates played an important role in their education

through assisting and motivating them with learning. This prompted the researcher to include four questions relating to mates in the main study, with a desire to gain a greater understanding of mates and the role they play in a boy's adolescent life.

Why are mates so important?

What makes a good mate?

What do you do with your mates?

Are there differences between friends and mates?

These questions were included to generate data that would allow for comparisons between schools and Year levels to be made. Do boys' perceptions of mates differ between schools? As boys grow older do the roles of mates change? This chapter presents the findings along with a discussion, in order to identify the major implications and conclusions regarding the boys' interests and the importance of 'hanging out with mates' and the perceived effect this can have on their schooling.

6.1 Boys: What they like doing best.

Boys' interests become more varied as they grow older. However, for an overwhelming majority of boys in this study, their nominated best activities included: team sports, hanging out with mates, outdoor pursuits and computers. Table 6.1 show the top interests of boys at each Year level. The tally was achieved by counting the number of times an activity was mentioned by a boy, with the top three gaining 50% or more of the boys' choices. All boys, except one had as one of their top three choices hanging out with my mates.

Table 6.1 Boys' Preferred Interests

Year 9 (Age 13)	N	Year 11(Age 15)	N	Year 13 (Age 17)	N
Organised Team sports	41	Hanging out with mates	29	Hangingout with mates	24
Hanging out with mates	30	Organised Team Sports	24	Outdoor Pursuits	22
Computer Games	16	Outdoor pursuits	13	Organised Team Sports	13
Indoor activities	11	Computer Games/net	12	Computers/Internet	11
Outdoor Pursuits	6	Watching TV/Videos	9	Music	11
Reading	4	Working on Car	7	Chill out/Time Alone	8
Watching TV/Videos	4	Music	2	Partying	3
Activities with Dad	2	Eating/Sleeping	2	Girls	2

The large majority of Year 9 boys enjoy organised sports with rugby, cricket, soccer and basketball being the preferred sports by many. Most of the sports that they are involved in also include their mates. As boys get older, team sports are rated as less important by many of the Year 13 boys. This could be due to the development of individuality, interests and particular strengths that characterise getting older. In this study outdoor adventure pursuits seem to become more important than team sports. By Year 13 boys reported more diverse interests and many move away from team sports and into adventure pursuits such as: surfing, mountain biking, skiing, rock climbing, snowboarding, diving, and boating.

The importance of mates was given further emphasis by the participants in this study when asked the question "What do you like best about school?" Boys were more than four times as likely to say, seeing friends, being with my mates and socializing, than any learning aspect within a school.

"Catch up with your mates; it's a giant meeting place." W13/8

"If you don't have mates you don't want to come to school at all. Mates, like, one of the most important parts of school." W9/12

These responses illustrate the importance that many boys place on school as a setting for meeting and spending time with friends; a place where they perceive learning is a distant second in importance to that of a social gathering place. A number of boys (N=10), perceived that it was their mates and friends that kept them in school and the classroom through their support and encouragement.

Table 6.1 illustrates just how important having 'good mates' and physical activity is in a boy's or young man's life.

6.2 Mates or Friends

What is the difference between hanging out with your mates versus going out with your friends? Do boys make a distinction between friends and mates or are they interchangeable terms? Boys' interview responses in the pilot study indicated that approximately 50% of boys made a distinction between who were their friends and who were their mates. In this present study boys were asked to explain if they made a distinction between their friends and mates.

62% said there were no differences

38% made a distinction between friends and mates, indicating one had a closer bond with one group than another.

24% indicated that with mates you had a closer relationship.

A Year 13 boy explained the differences between friends and mates the following way.

“Mates are particularly close people. Friends are someone you can talk to, have fun, but not close.” K13/7

It is interesting to note that 16 percent of boys, who commented that friends were closer, did so with similar reasons as for mates; they were a closer group of friends who could be trusted. The distinction became clearer by Year 13, more boys in the 17 to 18 year age bracket had a small group of close mates that they spent as much time as possible ‘hanging out’ with. A number of boys (N=12) made the distinction between friendships and mateship with girls. These boys stated that girls could not be mates.

“Friends are different. You can be friends with a girl you can’t be mates with a girl.” K11/9

The majority of boys use the terms friends and mates interchangeably; indicating that there is no real distinction between the terms. What is important, however, is the importance that boys place on a small, close circle of friends/mates; and hanging out with your mates/friends¹⁵ is something every boy wants to do on a daily basis at school and in the community. This study uses the term ‘mates’ rather than friends; as hanging out with your mates was the significant phrase that the large majority of the boys used when describing being with a group of friends.

6.3 Benefit of Mates

The boys in the study were asked the question “Why are mates so important?” and to encourage further response “What are other benefits of having mates?” There responses were categorised, tabulated and ranked according to the tally of responses. Table 6.2 lists the main benefits boys perceive from having mates. It is ranked from 1 to 5 with

¹⁵ In this research the term mates will be used to describe that close, intimate circle of male friends. Friends will refer to that group of acquaintances that boys know and feel comfortable around.

number one being the most important.

Table 6.2 Benefits of Mates.

Ranking ¹⁶	Benefit	N ¹⁷
1	Give you help, support, stick up for you	96
2	Understand you, relate to you.	49
3	To talk to, stop you feeling lonely.	36
4	To have fun, tell jokes, enjoy self	29
5	Can relax, be yourself, non-judgemental	27

The benefits that boys recognise from having mates seem to have an enormous effect on them. The results from Figure 6.2 indicate that mates have a major impact on a boy's behaviour and social development during adolescence. This study would define mates as an intimate support network that understands and offers a close relationship, where a boy can share, talk, grow, relax and have fun. This definition was developed from the responses as listed in Table 6.2.

Mates are supporting:

“Someone you can rely on, you don't have to do it alone.” M11/9

“When you're sad, they cheer you up.” K11/11

“If you're feeling down they pick you up and make you feel good again.” M9/13

Mates are accepting:

“You can tell them everything and they won't judge you on that. There is protection and you feel secure with mates.” M13/8

“Someone who accepts you for who you are and doesn't judge you.” M13/11

Mates give advice:

“Mates take the stress out; you sit down and talk to them getting different views.”

M13/9

¹⁶ The ranking format from 1 to 5 or more, with one being the highest ranking is used throughout the Tables.

¹⁷ N in each Table refers to the number boys who mentioned the main concept, factor or characteristic during the interview phase.

Mates offer understanding:

“They understand me better than my parents do.” K9/12

“Person you go to with issues. They go through stuff like that as well. You feel closer with mates.” M13/3

Mates help:

“Always there if you feel down, they help anyway they can.” M13/4

“Mates, they help me through life as well, easy to talk to.” M11/14

Mates offer a place to belong:

“Belonging to a group, can be yourself and a place where you belong.” K13/3

Mates improve self image:

“If you have mates you feel stronger.” K9/15

Mates are fun:

“Have a social life, its fun to be around friends you get along with, you can just talk about anything to them.” W11/2

“Knows how to make you laugh and feel good about yourself.” M9/13

“They are there for you and they’re fun to be around.” K13/5

Mates challenge:

“I have four good mates, they’ve become like brothers. They challenge me, I challenge them and we help each other grow. They help to anchor you.” K13/10

Mates offer security:

“There is protection and you feel secure with mates.” M13/8

“My friends keep me grounded. Awesome, support and care.” M13/2

This study would suggest that a boy with a group of mates has a very strong, supportive network that assists him through a difficult developmental phase; that of adolescence. If a boy’s mates offer the behavioural features as described above it could be argued that his development through the turbulent times of adolescences would be less stressful and easier to navigate.

6.4 The Characteristics of Good Mates.

A Year 11 boy (K11/15) described his relationship with his mates as “unconditional friendship, if you screw up they’re still there.” This research has found that mates are someone extremely special to a boy, and prompted the question to be asked; what makes a good mate? The characteristics that a boy wants in a mate are similar to the virtues that King Arthur would require of his knights, or Baden-Powell of his scouts. The list of characteristics is similar to the laws a scout promises to obey. These include such virtues as being honest, trustworthy, reliable, friendly and respectful, to name a few of the virtues a boy wanted in a mate, as did Baden-Powell in a scout.

Table 6.3 ranks the characteristics the boys recognised as being important for a mate to possess and displays the tally of responses for each characteristic. The most important quality to have in a mate is loyalty; someone you can trust and who will “watch your back.”

“He’s reliable, doesn’t cut out on you; not a back stabber.” M9/5

Table 6.3 Characteristics of a good mate.

Ranking	Characteristic	N
1	Trusting and loyal	76
2	Sense of humour and fun	48
3	Similar interests or qualities	46
4	Reliable	40
5	Caring, kind and considerate	36
6	Honest	34
7	Respect for each other	22

The above responses indicate that a mate is usually someone who is dependable but also fun and enjoyable to be around. It is someone you can ‘muck around with’ and feel at ease and safe within their company. The boys in this study defined ‘safe’ as meaning emotionally safe rather than physically safe. In other words, you are able to express your emotions and thoughts and be confident that your mate will not divulge them to others. That was why a good mate is not “a back stabber”, he does not divulge confidences.

6.5 Hanging out with Mates: What is involved?

A Year 9 boy (K9/10) from one of the co-educational schools referred to the “fellowship of hanging out.” The study asked the question, “What do you do with your mates?” and depending on the responses a clarifying question was often asked, “What do you do when hanging out with your mates?”

Judging from the similarity of responses from the boys in the study; ‘Hanging out with your mates’ is largely a harmless social activity which involves a large amount of sitting around, with small bursts of activity mixed with joking and fooling about. The major activity of mates is sitting or lying around talking. An Iceberg Model of Adolescent Boy Activity (see Figure.6.1 in this chapter) has been created to illustrate the behaviours of boys when they are hanging out with their mates.

“Hanging out, means mucking around, telling jokes, talking; talk about anything we want to.” M9 /8

According to the boys in this study when they are with their mates the activities they participate in most are:

- Hang out together.
- Talk about stuff.
- Do sports, play games.
- Go to the movies.
- Go to the mall.
- Go to each others’ homes.
- Go to the beach.
- Listen to music.
- Watch TV and rent DVDs.
- Muck around, do stuff and make own fun.
- Party.

As evident from the above list of activities, being with mates involves for a large majority of the time being sloth like; lying around in each others company, enjoying being together, sharing ideas, discussing stuff, watching or listening to electronic media and eating. Eating is involved in most of the activities that boys partake in. The word

'stuff' is a dominant word in boys' vocabulary and was used right throughout the schools. Its meaning can vary, depending on the activities of the group of mates that you belong to. For example "doing stuff" might mean sitting on the beach talking between surfing or it could mean watching DVDs, telling jokes and eating.

6.6 Mates and School

This research proposes that mates can have a significant influence on schooling and that influence is usually more positive than negative. There was no particular question asked on the influence of mates in a boy's schooling. However, during individual interview conversation and focus groups a significant number of boys throughout the Year levels indicated that mates played a number of very significant roles within the life of a boy's schooling and learning. The boys indicated how some mates offered support, academic instruction, motivation to learn, challenge and competition to improve standards.

The boys also recognised a negative aspect of mates within school. This concerned the ability of mates and others to be a distraction from learning tasks. It was indicated that this tended to occur on a more frequent basis in the early years of secondary schooling and occurred with lesser frequency until it practically disappears in some Year 13 classes. It is notable that 36% of boys admitted their friends could be a distraction in class through talking and 'mucking around.'

"Talking in class, talking about the weekend, you get right into that and next thing you know the period's over". W11/1

The majority of concerns raised by boys regarding classroom distractions were activities such as talking, 'joking around' and disturbing off-task behaviour which occurred more often in Years 9 and 10; the first two Years of secondary schooling. At Years 11 and 13 the boys perceive there were fewer disruptions as the concentration was on qualifications and employment. It was believed that there were more positives of having mates in your class, than negatives.

This study would argue that the positive aspects of mates would far outweigh the negative aspects. A Year 13 boy (W13/12) illustrates the feelings of many boys in the

study towards their mates and school.

“If you don’t have mates, you don’t want to come to school at all. Mates, like, one of the most important parts of school. Mates will sometimes motivate you. Like in class, if you’ve missed a day, the teacher won’t give you the notes, but your mate will be there for you, if you need help he is always there.” W13/12

A number of themes were identified from the perceptions that boys held on how mates assist them at school and with their learning.

Mates are good at explaining things.

“Learning same things at the same time, mates can tell you how to learn it.” K11/15

“Some of my friends are pretty good at explaining. We help each other in different subjects.” M9/6

“My friends help, because they’re one of us and be able to tell me in his own words.” M9/4

Mates work together:

“With my mates, well, if we find it difficult, we work together, we try and figure it out ourselves by helping each other and if my mate gets something and I don’t know what the hell to do, well, they’ll going to help me get it right, even if they’ll probably laugh at me, but that’s just mates, but they do care and they’ll going to help you.” W13/5

Mates learn the same way:

“I usually go to a friend. I’ve got a few smart friends; they usually have the answers to everything. May be it’s because they learn the same way you learn. They can explain it better because they know what you are like.” W13/3

Mates motivate:

“My friends motivate me. Telling me how to do stuff, if not sure how to do stuff they’ll help me out.” W13/1

Mates are competitive and inspire:

“Mates, we sort of have competitions to see who gets a better mark. Not really a set competition, just trying to get better than them and stuff like that. Keeps you going, something to strive for.” W13/11

As can be seen in the above comments mates are able to offer a close, supportive relationship where a boy can feel comfortable enough with his mates to seek assistance with his learning. The key is the closeness of the relationship. It would appear from the boys' comments that turning to mates for help with school work become more common as boys reach Year levels 11, 12 and 13. This study would suggest that this is due to the fact that boys have developed a strong, trusting bond with their mates by the upper years of schooling. In the earlier Years boys are in a new school environment, they are feeling their way and are establishing bonds of friendship. For the early adolescent boy these new mates are most likely to be found within team sports or some other similar interest group. The virtues and the closeness of mates experienced at upper Year levels are not as fully established in Year 9.

6.7 Mates and Peer Pressure

The boys in this study did not admit that peer pressure was a problem with close mates; the general consensus was that good mates do not pressure you into being what you are not, or to act in ways you do not want to. One of the characteristic of a good mate was that you are respected and accepted as you are.

“Comfortable to be around, no pressure to try to be cool.” K11/14

“They are always going to be there for you. Good mates wouldn't pressure you to do what you don't want to.” K13/2

This study would suggest that peer pressure does not come very often from your mates, that intimate circle of friends, but from the wider group of associates and friends that boys belong to, whether it be a school Year level, a sports team or other societal group that the boy or young man associates with¹⁸.

6.8 Mates and Partying

The present study found a small number of boys (N=7) who revealed that partying was a regular Friday and Saturday night occurrence. There were also a small number (N=12) who admitted that they went to parties once a week. These parties were either on a Friday or Saturday night, with no boys indicating that they went partying during

¹⁸ See Discussion and Level of Friendship Model for further explanation

the week. At Year 11 and 13 a significant percentage (60%) of boys are working up to three nights a week and often part of the weekend. Parental expectations, work, plus homework and study, leaves only the weekend for a bit of a party.

“Go partying once a week, most of it’s for a good time, girls, catching up, meeting new people, relax end of week.” M13/3

It was admitted by a small number of boys (N=4) that partying on Saturday night made it difficult for them to do study or complete assignments on Sunday. However, these boys claimed that partying brought more positive than negative results. According to those boys who regularly attended weekend parties; the parties allowed you to feel relaxed, to ‘chill out’ and to forget all your stresses and commitments for a short while.

A significant number of Year 11 and 13 boys admitted feeling stressed or worried about exams or gaining qualifications.. Many of these boys recognised that mates played an important role in releasing the pressures that boys’ felt they were under from school, home and society. It was indicated that by the time a boy is in Year 12 or 13 he was under a great deal of responsibilities and expectations; such as achieving success in examinations, owning and operating a car, after school employment, family responsibilities and leadership roles at school A lot of stress was released through after-school talk, ‘fooling around’ and companionship. However, a few admitted using drink and parties to relieve the stress.

The attitudes expressed in the Vignette 6.1 were typical of a good many boys interviewed at Year 12 and 13 towards alcohol and parties. This Year 13 boy was the only one who openly expressed the added attraction of girls and sex. Alcohol was used by this boy at weekends to relax and forget about the stresses and expectations of the week.

Vignette 6.1 Views on partying, drink and girls

The Year 13 boy was asked “what stops you from learning?”

“The major one for me is that by Monday afternoon I am already planning the next weekend.”

Like? (Interviewer)

“Girls...um...alcohol.”

When do you drink? (Interviewer)

“Just the weekends mainly. I have one or two beers with my dad during the week.”

Is alcohol important during the weekend? (Interviewer)

“It is not important...I don’t know...it loosens you up a bit I guess...helps you forget about all the stresses of the week, you forget about all the work that is waiting.”

Does alcohol affect your learning? (Interviewer)

“I don’t really think so...I guess it does indirectly cause I’m tired afterwards...maybe due to the alcohol or...I’m going to be out to five in the morning.”

This boy, on occasions after partying, went to the beach to watch the sunrise and surf. Partying, girls and drink were an important part of his weekend. When asked “What are the three best things you like doing”? he replied,

“Socialising with girls, hanging out with my mates”. The third choice was difficult for him. “I don’t know. Having sex with girls or surfing. Don’t know which. They are both pretty awesome.”

K13/7

6.9 Comparisons between Schools and Year Levels

The boys in the three diverse schools in this research all perceived mates in the same way. There was a difference in some of the outdoor activities and sports the boys played and did with their mates but not in the benefits, characteristics or activities that constituted ‘hanging out with mates.’

In School K, a coeducational, independent school, the boys were involved in team sports, and they favoured outdoor activities such as snowboarding, skiing, rock climbing, and surfing. Partying also featured more as an activity within this school.

In School M, a multicultural coeducation state school, the boys participated and enjoyed rugby, basketball and other team sports. There was a small group into skateboarding and an even smaller group into surfing. In School W, a single sex boys’ state school, the boys enjoyed the traditional team sports of rugby and cricket, as well as outdoor pursuits such as surfing, diving, boating, motorbikes and mountain bikes.

The differences in interest could be explained by the geographic location of the schools and the socioeconomic surroundings of the boys’ backgrounds. School W is in a smaller provincial city where approximately forty percent of the boys live in a rural location.

The provincial city is also close to the sea and very good surf beaches. However, all boys from each school still enjoyed spending a great deal of their time just hanging around with their mates, talking, and listening to music, watching television and videos; a time of just being together and doing 'stuff.'

In making comparisons between the three Year levels there can be found more significant differences, especially between Year 9 and 13 where there is at least a four year age gap resulting in a different level of maturity and experience. In reviewing responses of the participants in this study the following tentative conclusions can be reached. Year 9 boys are more active with their mates, enjoying sport and playing games. At this level, they are still establishing relationships and developing close friendships, this would seem to most often happen through sport or common interests. The majority of Year 9 boys do not actively seek support and assistance with their school work; they turn more to teachers and parents when needing help. Mates also have a greater negative effect on learning, causing more distraction through talking and 'fooling about' than further up the school.

For the majority of boys at Year 13 they enjoy spending a great deal more time with their mates talking and being less physically active; socializing, connecting and relaxing are more important than active team sports with mates. A strong bond of trust, loyalty and respect has been established with each other; so that mates are more likely to turn to each other for assistance with school work or any other problems or issues they may encounter. It would seem that at this level mates have a stronger positive effect on each others learning through support, encouragement, motivation and instruction.

6.10 Analysis and Discussion

The findings from this study would suggest that mates have a substantial effect on a boy's attitude towards school and even his academic success. Mates can have positive or negative effect on results of exams and assignments, as well as the will to stay at school. Mates can be considered one of the cornerstones in the adolescence boy's journey to adulthood. A number of researchers have found that same sex friends can be both a strong pressure and a major support structure for both girls and boys (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Chu, 2005; Jackson, 2006; Way, 1998). In this present study the boys

perceived a close friendship to be one of greater positive support rather than pressure. The majority of boys held the view that close friends do not pressure you into situations or try to change you. Like Chu (2005), this study found that there were no concerns expressed by the boys in having a close group of male friends or mates might lead to homophobic slurs or for others to think they were gay. In fact, not one boy in the study expressed any concerns or worries regarding gay or homophobic behaviour or bullying.

The findings in the present research indicated that boys perceive mates as a close, intimate circle of male friends which is in contrast to other research indicating that mateship can have a strong anti-social and anti-authoritarian theme. This contrast is evident in research by Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) that interviewed and researched boys within Australia on issues of masculinity and schooling. According to these researchers:

Mateship involves loyalty, sharing interests and activities that are dictated by what may be termed a heterosexually masculine camaraderie including drinking, smoking, taking drugs and a certain kind of 'yobbo' or 'laddish' behaviour.

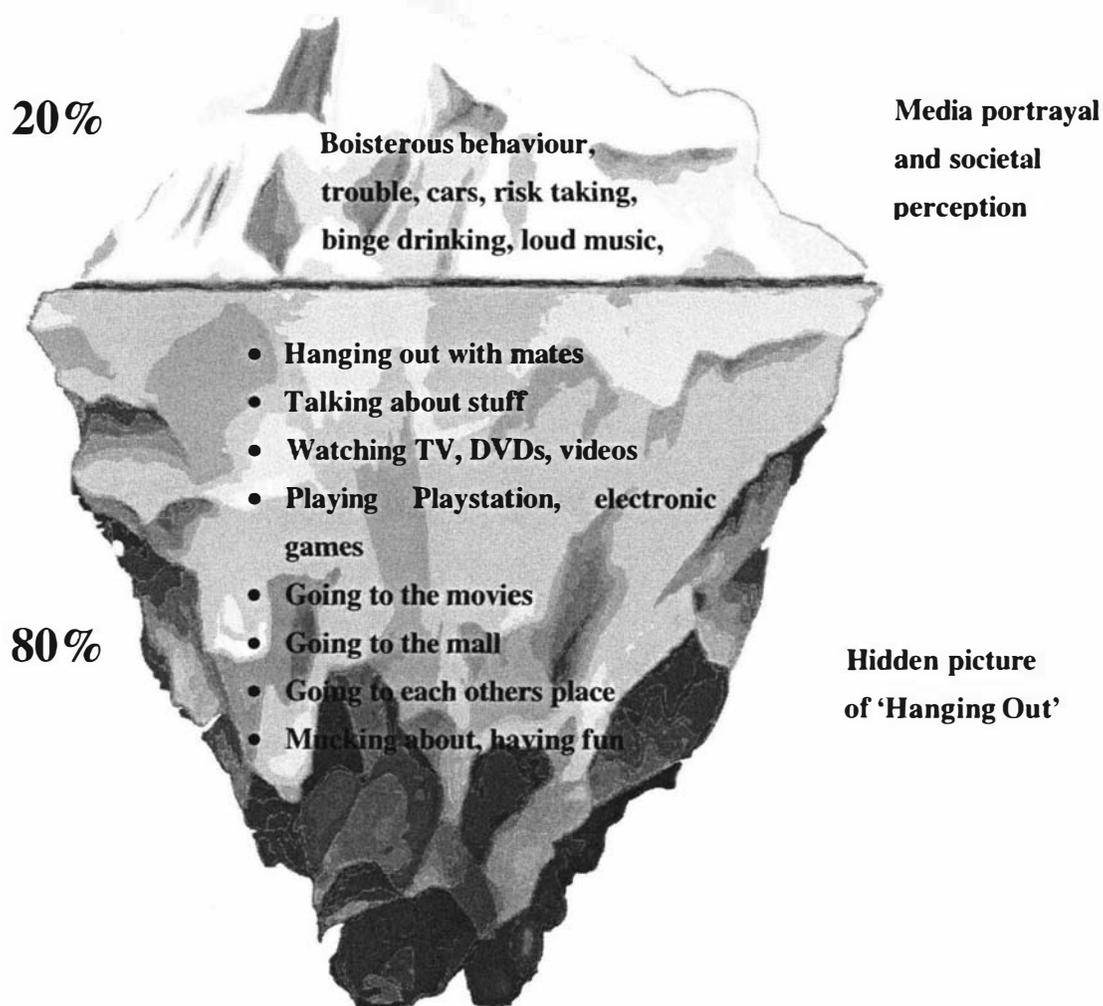
... a mate which has come to connote the 'normal' relationship of conformity and uniformity between boys with its focus on shared activities, nonchalance, rebelliousness, and having fun. 'Friend' is constructed as Other because it involves a deeper sharing of emotions, support and a level of intimacy. (2000, p. 62)

The present study found that mates have a strong sense of loyalty and of trust to each other and that often mates share similar interests and activities. However, unlike the Australian study, the boys in the present study did not place drinking, smoking, taking drugs or rebellious, nonchalance behaviour as activities that they admitted to participating in on a regular basis. 'Laddish' and 'yobbo' behaviour is often associated with boys. However, this research would argue it is only a small percentage of the total behaviour of boys. The Iceberg Model of Boy Activity was developed as part of this present research to illustrate how boys and adults perceive boy activity. (See Figure 6.1)

The model was constructed based on the results of interviews with boys and their descriptions of the activities and time spent with mates during the present study. To date much of the media hype and public myth highlights the adverse behaviours of the adolescent boy; such as fast cars, binge drinking, parties, boisterous, rowdy and often

risk taking behaviour. *The Iceberg Model of Adolescent Boy Activity* was created to depict descriptively that the often media portrayed behaviours of boys are only the ‘tip of the iceberg’. This behaviour which is perceived by many in the media and public to reflect adolescent boy group behaviour is only small percentage of adverse and risk taking behaviour committed by a few of the boys for a small percentage of their actual time. The large percentage of a boys and his mates’ behaviour is not seen, like the iceberg it is below the surface. Most of this behaviour is harmless and involves camaraderie, inactivity, and talk.

Figure 6.1 Iceberg Model of Adolescence Boy Activity



The anti-social and anti-authoritarian behaviour of boys have been commented on for centuries. The findings from this study would suggest that this type of anti-social and anti-authoritarian behaviour is an extremely small percentage of the total behaviour of the majority of boys. But it is behaviour that attracts all the attention, comment and at

times moral panic. The research of others have identified within schools distinctive subgroups of boys and would suggest that this behaviour is quite often linked more to one particular group of boys than another (Mac an Ghail, 1994; Rickard, 1998; Youniss, McClellan & Strouse, 1994).

Male peer-group networks constituted the institutional infrastructure, within which a range of social and sexual identities were negotiated and ritualistically projected. They were a key feature of the student microculture, providing a material and symbolic safe space within which to develop social and discursive practices that served to validate and amplify their masculine reputations. Here, young male students learnt the heterosexual codes that marked their rites of passage into manhood. (Mac an Ghail, 1994, p. 53)

Mac an Ghail identified such groups by their attitudes, behaviour, dress and gave these groups such labels as 'The Macho Lads', 'The Academic Achievers', 'The New Enterprisers' and 'The Real Englishmen.' The present study would suggest that boys might belong to one of these groups within a school. However, that such a group does not constitute the strong emotional connection and virtues that exist within a group of mates. It is argued in this research that it is within these larger groups of friends and acquaintances that the boy experiences the peer pressure to conform, to display risk taking behaviours that are often rites of passage of manhood or challenges that prove masculinity (see Figure 6.1 Friendship Model). The large majority of boys in this study did not acknowledge or mention receiving peer pressure from mates. A small number (N=5) claimed that mates do not exert peer pressure because mates accept you as you are and do not pressure you into doing or being what you are not. Peer pressure can be a difficult problem for boys to resist. The findings from this study would suggest that having a close circle of mates may act as a buffer from peer pressure from the larger circle of friends and peers that a boy comes in contact with.

Trust and loyalty are the most important qualities that boys in this study identified as requirements in developing a relationship with a close, inner circle of mates (see Table 6.3). Chu (2005) interviewed and observed 65 adolescent boys over two academic years. In her study found similar results to the present study and "emphasised that being able to trust their friends and also feeling trusted by their friends enabled them to confide in, be vulnerable with, and really take care of each other" (p. 18). Azmita, Ittel

and Radmacher (2005, p. 30) in their friendship research concluded that “adolescents viewed trust and loyalty as important ideals of friendship.” These two studies support the results of the present research that found loyalty and trust as the two most important virtues to have in a mate. It was with your mates that you were most open and at your most vulnerable. In this group you shared your ideas and feelings; the sentiment of many boys in this study was that ‘your mates watch your back’ and ‘do not stab you in the back.’

It is extremely important for boys to have a close circle of mates that are loyal to each other and can be trusted. The findings indicate that a close circle of mates usually numbered between two and five. The present study indicated that it is within this small intimate group when they are ‘hanging out’ that many boys are developing their identity, testing their ideas and widening their views of their community and world. A huge amount of a boy’s time, when hanging out with his mates, is taken up with laying about talking, watch TV, listening to music and making occasional comment. It is within this comfortable, emotionally secure surrounding that boys talk and share. As Bosacki (2005, p. 26) stated:

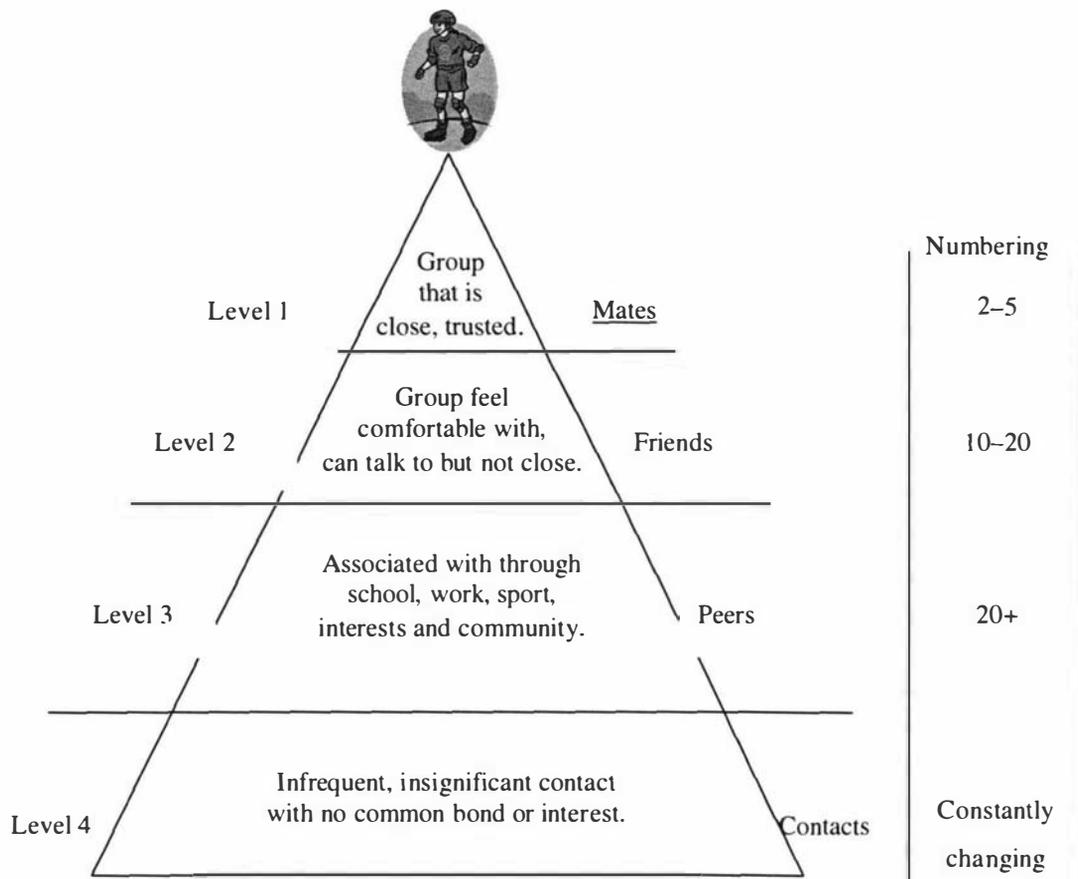
As children grow and become adolescents, they co-construct their meaning of the world through language. That is, through conversations with their peers, teachers and family members, adolescents begin to integrate the shared centres of values and power into their developing identity.

The majority of time that boys are hanging out is of a passive nature; but it is still crucial communicative behaviour. It is behaviour that allows boys to develop in a loyal, trusting environment their ideas of self, their world and their future. Head (1997, p. 23) argued “adults cannot force identity achievement on others. It is, after all, an activity process undertaken within the mind of the adolescent.” Research by Call and Mortimer (2001) and Giordano (2003) have placed great significance on friendship contexts for self exploration and development. Their research has shown that friendships can provide a supportive environment for self-exploration and the development of future goals. Findings from the present study would suggest that for a significant number of boys the identity process occurs while the boy is hanging out with his mates. His mates’ influence is a critical factor in the development of self and future. Mates have a major influence on the development of most adolescent boys due to the closeness of the

relationship and the amount of time spent in each others company. Bradley (2002, p. 41) reported that teenagers spend an average of 21 hours a week in the company of their peers. That is with their close circle of friends, their mates, whom they go to school every day to see and spend as much ‘free time’ as possible ‘hanging out’ with. This is not counting text, on line or phone time.

In order to provide an explanatory framework to show the various relationships a boy has between mates, friends, peers, acquaintances and significant others; results from the present study were used to construct the *Apex Model of Friendship* (Figure 6.2). The relationship is closest at the apex; this intimacy changes and there is less trust, loyalty and sharing of emotions, ideas and opinions further away from the apex

Figure 6.2 Apex Model of Friendship



At the apex is the boy with 3 to 5 close mates at Level 1. Level 2 are friends in whose company the boy feels comfortable and can talk and joke, and have fun with. Friends can number between 10 and 20. The biggest difference between friends and mates is the emotional closeness of the relationship, mates are emotionally closer. Level 3 are peers

of a similar age in which the boy associates with through school, sports, work or other interests and activities within the community. Level 4 are contacts or acquaintances that the boy knows and has infrequent contact with; there is an awareness of each other but no common bond, activity or interest between the boy and this group.

This study would argue that peer pressure; especially that which is seen as negative is more likely to come from boys within Level 2, 3 and 4 of this friendship model. A boy's mates at Level 1 are a positive support; a 'buffer' against stressful effects of peers, school and family. The view of mates acting as a 'buffer' between the stresses and pressures of others is supported by the research of Hamm and Faircloth (2005) who found similar results in their study. Bradley (2002, p. 41) argued that peer pressure has become "a convenient mythological scapegoat for our fears" where peer pressure will have an adolescent trying drugs, alcohol, having sex, skipping school and engaging in boisterous, vandalistic behaviour.

The boys in this study did not identify peer pressure as being a problem with their mates. The influences that mates have on a boy were perceived by them to be positive influences. The apparent benefits of mates (indicated in Figure 6.2) that were expressed by a significant number of boys could have considerable effect on their emotional and psychological wellbeing. The boys expressed how mates assisted them in terms like 'you feel strong', 'grounded', 'and secure', and you 'don't have to be alone', 'you get picked up when feeling down'. These examples would indicate that the influence of mates is one of psychological development and well being and not of physical protection and power. When the majority of the boys spoke of strength, it was inner strength not physical strength; when they spoke of help, it was emotional help not physical help. Chu (2005, p. 16) claimed a similar benefit of friendships, that of fostering "resilience as they come up against and tried to navigate around pressure that they encountered within peer group culture".

The majority of behaviour that occurs when hanging out with mates, as indicated by boys in this study, is largely passive, unacknowledged, and harmless but extremely beneficial behaviour for the group of boys who are mates. This is the behaviour that mates participate in for the vast majority of the time they are together. The Iceberg model predicts for 80% or more of the time that boys are together they are basically just

'hanging out' and enjoying being together in a safe, trusting relationship. For 20% or less of the time they partake in boisterous, risk taking, challenging and often extremely noisy activities. It is very difficult predicting accurately the exact percentage boys participate in both types of behaviour, as there are numerous variables within particular groups of mates that could alter the percentages.

The evidence from this study would suggest that mates can have a significant role in a boy's education. Peer acceptance and friendship have been identified as key experiences that support a students' sense of belonging at school (Hamm & Faircloth, 2005; Osterman, 2000). Bradley (2002, p. 42) claimed that "researchers find that the most prevalent form of peer pressure teenagers 'suffer' is a demand from friends that they finish school." A small number of boys in this study indicated how support and influence of their mates kept them at school to finish their education. The research of Flutter and Rudduck (2004) and others within the ESRC Project, *Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning* gathered extensive data that showed:

The positive dimension of friendships suggests that they are an important means of support, particularly for pupils who are experiencing difficulties with their learning. The influence of friendships seems to vary, however, from direct support with work to a more pastoral one. Direct learning support from friends was referred to by pupils across the school age range. (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004, p. 103)

The findings from this present study would suggest that mates have an even stronger influence on boys at school than Flutter and Rudduck suggested. The majority of Year 13 boys used their mates to assist in a variety of ways at school; most of these boys were not experiencing difficulty at school; they had successfully completed NCEA levels one and two in Years 11 and 12 and many were leaders, mentors and prefects within their school. A lesser number of boys at Year 9 and 11 also used mates as advisers, instructors, supporters and motivators. One of the reasons for consulting their mates was because mates can explain in ways that make it easier to understand and learn the concept than most teachers can. Hamm and Faircloth (2005) claimed that close friendship is a critical cornerstone to a student being able to function successfully at school. They stated that their research "results clearly speak to the protective, adaptive, and resiliency-enhancing nature of having close friends at school to buffer the common and alienating effects of cliques and academic stress and ennui" (p. 76). The same could

be said for a boy's mates in this study.

The boys in this study were quite aware of both the positive and negative effects of mates and other class acquaintances on their learning. In the early and mid years of their secondary schooling the boys would openly admit that their friends had a disruptive or distracting effect on their learning. Most common distractions admitted by the boys were talking and fooling around; having a bit of a laugh. Several variables could be proposed for the time or the intensity of the disruption to learning. The most important variables acknowledged by the boys being the style of teaching, pupil/teacher relationship and relevance of topic under study. In the final years of secondary schooling the boys did not admit that mates were a big distraction to learning; they knew if they wasted a lesson period talking they had to make it up in their own time. The majority of these older boys admitted they were more learning focussed than ever before in their schooling because they had goals and a sense of direction for the future. None of the boys talked about the disruption to learning that can occur when a friendship breaks up. However, other researchers (Borland, Laybourn, Hill & Brown, 1998; Flutter & Rudduck, 2004) in their research have identified that a loss of a friendship as having an impact on pupils academic success and confidence. A friendship split can leave a student feeling anxious, emotionally upset and without that practical help, guidance and reassurance given by a friend. This research would propose that schools need to be aware of the strong bonds of mates and use this relationship to improve boys' attitude to school and academic success. Mates working together can be used as peer support and tutors, to work cooperatively and collaboratively on learning tasks and to create exciting learning challenges (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004; Neall, 2002; Noble & Bradford, 2000; Borland et al. 1998). This study would argue that the findings suggest that mates enhance rather than hinder a boys learning and that mates could be used to support the pedagogy of the classroom.

6.11 Summary

The results of the present study indicate that the strongest preferred activity for adolescent boys, no matter the age, is to hang out with his mates. Mates are the ultimate support network that understands the boy and offers a close relationship, where a boy can share, talk, explore and create self, while growing and having fun. A mate must be dependable and trustworthy but also fun and enjoyable to be around, someone you can

'muck around with' and feel at ease and safe with in their company. These mates not only have an important role in the psychological development of a boy; but an equally important role in the boys' ability to function and achieve academic success at school. In the early years of secondary schools there is a strong correlation between mates and team sports, such as rugby, soccer, basketball and cricket. This research would suggest that boys often establish strong relationships within sports team that leads to the creation of that close bond of 'matemanship'. In this smaller group of mates, friendship can last many years and offers support and security in both schooling and the development of individual self.

In this study it was found that mates have both positive and negative effects on a boy's education. The research would suggest that the positive effects far outweigh the negative effects according to the boys in this study. Mates in a learning context have been identified to be supportive, fun to work with, explain learning in a 'boy friendly' manner, motivate through competition and challenge, and influence the boy to stay at school. Negatively they can be a distraction to learning; presenting disturbing and antiauthoritarian behaviours in class. This study would suggest that mates have a far greater positive than negative effect on boys and that when they are 'hanging out together' a lot of academic and social learning is taking place. Schools need to use the positive benefits of mates by allowing boys to work in collaborative and supportive ways. The findings would imply that this cooperative and collaborative style of working together could enhance boys learning. The early work and evidence from the Te Kotahitanga Project (2003) would suggest that boys working in this way of learning could successfully raise their academic achievements.

Using information gathered in the present research, two models were created to explain levels of friendship and activities of mates. The *Iceberg Model of Boys Behaviour* demonstrates that the great majority of a boy's time hanging out with his mates is quiet, inactive behaviour where they 'do stuff.' The *Apex Model of Friendship* offers four levels of acquaintance. Level 1 is closest to the boy and consists of three to five good mates, Level 2 are friends in which a boy feels comfortable with and able to talk to but does not have a close emotional bond. Level 3 are peers; boys of the same age the boy knows and associates with in school, in sports teams, at work, or through other community interest or activity. Level 4 are people that the boy infrequently in contact

with but shares no bond or interest. In this study it was argued that it is boys at level 2 and level 3 that are most likely to cause peer pressure. Mates at level 1 are more likely to protect, support and act as a buffer from pressures and stress the boy experiences.

This research proposes that schools use the positive factors of mates and a boy's enjoyment of physical activity as part of a school's strategy to retain boys within the education system and to improve their academic success. The findings indicate that the huge majority of boys love physical activity. Schools need to use this love and enjoyment that boys have for physical activity and movement. At the beginning of a year schools could induct boys into the school culture and develop a connectedness by using the outdoors, challenge, competition, mates and physical activity. Offering boys the opportunity for even more physical activity when they are on task and achieving could be a powerful teaching strategy used to motivate and enhance learning;

The findings of this present research would suggest that mates could be used by schools as a strong positive influence on a boys learning. Friendships need to be seen and used as an asset to learning and not a distraction. As boys grow and develop, mates have a greater positive influence on learning. A possible teaching strategy would be the use of this positive influence and allow mates to work together and collaborate on learning tasks. This research would argue that teachers and schools should use these two powerful forces in boys' lives as teaching assets to enhance their learning and school success.

Chapter Seven 'Teachers and Learning' will explore these concept further along with boys' perceptions of the qualities of good teachers and what assists or hinders their learning within the classroom setting.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Teachers and Learning

If the student fails to learn the teacher fails to teach.

Anon

7.0 Introduction

This chapter examines boys' experiences and perceptions of their teachers and classrooms and how this affects their learning. School academic success largely depends on how boys feel about school, their learning and their teachers. Whether they feel distracted, bored or engaged, largely depends on how boys feel about the relationship they have with their teachers (Slade, 2001; Wilson and Corbett, 2001). Teachers have been shown to have a very important influence on boys and are often the key to success in the school situation (Hattie, 2003; Rowe, 2003).

In the present study, boys often referred to their relationship with teachers, as a key factor in their attitude to learning. In interviews, boys were asked questions pertaining to their learning and one in relationship to girls' learning. *How do you learn best?* or if clarification was required and/or to elicit more information a follow up question *What helps you learn?* was asked. The next question investigated boys' perceptions on negative factors that hinder or stop their learning. *What distracts, or stops you from your learning?* The boys were then asked to think of a good teacher and explain *What they thought made a good teacher?* The aim of this question was to identify the boys' perceived factors and qualities of good teachers. Finally, the researcher explained that statistics identified areas where girls were achieving better than boys. For example, girls obtain 250,000 more credits in NCEA in 2005. More girls are enrolling at university than boys. The boys were asked to give their opinion to the question, *Why do you think girls are generally achieving better than boys at school?*

This chapter will present the findings on how boys perceive they learn best, what are

their main distractions to learning and the qualities that they consider a good teacher should possess.

7.1 Boys and Learning Strategies

There are a variety of approaches to learning, but boys in this study perceived the most effective method of learning involved practical, hands-on activities that were made relevant to their lives. Through the Year 9, 11 and 13 levels, an overwhelming majority of boys prefer learning situations where they are actively involved. Table 7.1 displays the preferred methods for academic learning as perceived by boys at Year 9, 11, and 13.

Table 7.1 Boys' perceived best approaches to achieve learning

Ranking	Description of learning approaches	N
1	Practical, hands on, interactive approaches	64
2	Relevant learning tasks, examples and practice	19
3	Visual e.g. Diagrams, models, templates	12
4	Co-operative learning groups and discussion	11
5	Reading and writing activities	11
6	Clear easy to follow explanations	8
7	Organised, quiet, friendly, learning environment	6

It is evident from the responses recorded in Table 7.1 that boys prefer practical, hands-on activities where they feel involved in the learning. The response was the same across all schools and all Year levels; boys report a preference for an active role in their learning that includes some hands-on components during the lesson.

“Doing examples, practical things and basically being involved.”M9/12

“I like to do things; I actually need to do it to understand what it’s all about.” K11/10

“Interactive, hands on work, instead of being told, being able to prove it yourself.”

K13/7

Another factor that boys saw as important was the need to see the relevance in what they are learning. The majority of boys are willing to practice and complete examples to develop understanding and knowledge, if the practice is relevant to them and not just mindless copying and rote practice. Boys want to be able to apply what they are learning to the experiences of real life.

“When everything is nice and clear and easy to understand. Also examples of stuff, and its built on real life where we can use it.” W9/13

“When I see things work, I find it much easier to understand.” W13/7

There is one important ingredient that over 80% of boys in this study indicated that they would like to add to their practical, relevant learning and that is fun. Boys want to enjoy their learning, to be fully engaged and happy, being taught with humour and laughter.

“A quiet classroom, doing things, using my hands, having fun.” W9/5

Boys indicate that they enjoy being taught with fun and laughter and one of the characteristics of a good teacher as perceived by the boys is humour (See Table 7.3.).

The large majority of boys do not like spending long periods of time having to sit still and listen or copy notes. Several boys (N=12) made the point that teachers need to plan their lessons to involve boys actively within the learning and break up long periods of listening or writing with activity.

“Interactive things where the teacher gets you involved.” M9/11

“I like practicals, don’t like listening all the time.” K11/13

“I don’t learn well by notes on board and taking them down.” K13/3

This study has found that boys like physical activity; boys spend a great deal of their time in their favourite sports and outdoor pursuits (see Table 6.1.). A number of boys (N=5) linked the specific benefits of sport and physical activity to their learning.

“Physical activity gets the blood flowing. I feel quite fresh and can focus afterwards.”

M11/13

A large number of the boys during interviews and focus groups recognised that teachers have the dominant role in the classroom and the management of the learning. A number of the boys (N=13) indicated that they wanted to be involved in the learning and not just be passive observers as the teacher demonstrates.

“Doing the activities rather than the teacher.” W9/1

In studying all the research the single most identified factor that boys’ perceive that assisted their learning were teachers who took the time to explain carefully step-by-step the knowledge under study, the learning required and the required expectations. Just as important was ensuring everyone in the class understood the work. Boys experiencing difficulty indicated that they found work difficult or boring because they did not understand the content knowledge or what was being explained or expected of them.

“Going through it and explaining things little bit by little bit; breaking it down and don’t

rush.” W13/7

“Teachers who explain it, help you out until you get it.” M9/2

“Explaining, seeing how it’s done and doing it.” M11/2

This is discussed further later in this chapter and in Chapter 8.

7.2 Distraction to Boys’ Learning

Over 55% of the boys blame themselves, as much as outside influences or poor quality teaching, for hindering their learning. Laziness, poor time management, watching television, texting or chatting to mates or girl friends and listening to music are some of the reasons that boys contribute to themselves for not concentrating on completing learning tasks, homework and assignments. The major hindrance to boys’ learning is talking and fooling around in class by peers, mates or themselves; especially when they find the teaching or subject content boring. This is a greater problem in Year 9; by Year 11 and 13 a number of boys have left school and the large majority of those that remain are motivated to get qualifications that will set them up for the future (see Chapter 9). Teaching that is perceived as (a) boring, (b) where boys do not see the relevance of the learning, or (c) teaching that is conducted in an unimaginative manner are also major distractions. Table 7.2 displays the perceived main distractions to boys learning.

Table 7.2 Boys’ perceived distractions to their learning.

Ranking	Learning Inhibitors	N
1	Talking and in-class misbehaviour	79
2	Methods of Teaching	20
3	Outside interests or influences	16
4	Lack of concentration or attention	12
5	Boring, uninteresting subject matter	12
6	Negative teacher relationship	8
7	Girls	7

Talking and in-class misbehaviour is by far the largest inhibitor of learning as perceived by the boys. In an atmosphere of noise and fooling around, boys do not concentrate or stay focussed. By Year 13 it was indicated to be a minor problem, but in Year 9 and 11

this is a major problem; it also varies from teacher to teacher. The data would suggest that talking and classroom behaviour fluctuates between teachers depending on two major factors: (1) the relationship the teacher has with the boy: and, (2) the teaching style adopted.

“Peers who joke around and act like idiots.” W9/2

“Friends just getting into conversation.” K11/14

“Maybe friends, I try to keep to myself unless teacher is going on and on talking at students.” K13/2

A significant number of the boys (N=30) identified some aspect of teaching pedagogy as an important factor that contributed to boys’ lack of attention, interest in curriculum topic and a hindrance to their learning process.

“When you don’t really enjoy something its hard to do it and understand it.” K11/4

“If I’m not doing well or not interested I get distracted easier.” K11/10

“It can be the teachers, the way they teach may not be the way it gets into you the best.” W11/2

Teacher – pupil relationship is the other factor that a number of boys (N=8) identified as hindering their learning. This factor was also discussed widely during focus groups and in identifying characteristics of good teachers. In studying all the findings, a significant number of boys (N=60) place the relationship they have with their teacher as extremely important. Such factors as friendliness of teacher, does teacher help all in the class, does teacher listen to the pupils, can the teacher enjoy humour with the class; all contribute towards how a boy feels about a teacher (See Factors of good Teachers 7.4). The boys who perceive boredom (N=8) as a learning hindrance contributing factor, identify three causes of this boredom. This included: (1) a result of the style of teaching used within the class: (2) the relationship between the teacher and pupil: and, (3) a particular dislike for the curriculum subject.

“Sometimes its boredom. It’s normally a topic that doesn’t agree with me.” M11/6

“If it gets boring, teacher goes on too long on the same thing.” M13/6

“If I get bored; 30 minutes of looking at books, taking notes and stuff like.” K13/2

Teachers are also perceived by boys as a major threat to their learning in terms of the ways in which they interact with boys. The perceived factors are: (1) a teacher’s style of delivery: (2) manner of dealing with classroom discipline; (3) and/or, a lack of relationship and respect between teacher and boy. These may contribute to a situation

where 'a boy switches right off' co-operating and completing a learning task. The Vignette 7.1, from a Year 11 boy at a single-sex boys' school describes how a teacher's response can close a boy to learning.

Vignette 7.1 A boy's response to teaching style.

What hinders your learning? (Interviewer)

"I find I work better with teachers who are more fun and talk to you. I get on and do heaps of work in those types of classes."

Why does a stricter teacher stop you working? (Interviewer)

"You just get real angry and frustrated. Say 'Na'. You just go moody, say not doing the work and just sit there".

W11/8

Several of the boys (N=20) identified a number of out of school influences such as sport, work, TV/electronic games, family issues and girls that also tend to distract boys from the task of learning. The boys who referred to out of school distractions acknowledged it was largely of their own doing and that good time management by them could alleviate much of the distraction..

"Probably my laziness, I'm too fooled by TV, my music and stuff." M13/5

"Something more exciting happenings in another part of my life I'd rather think about." M13/12

Every second night I do homework because I work." W11/10

The boys who have after school or weekend jobs are mainly in Year 11 and Year 13, the majority being in Year 13. On average the boys work three times after school or in an evening plus part of the weekend. They work at a variety of jobs such as in cafes, pizza parlours, supermarkets, garages and dive shops. They acknowledged that working had a detrimental affect on their school work but admitted they are reluctant to give up after school work.

"What you do out of school affects the time you've got to do homework and sleep."

W13/8

Girls are perceived as becoming a distraction for a minority of boys (N=7) who are largely in Year 13. It would appear the amount of time involved with girl friends depends largely on the relationship.

"Girl friends. It depends on how bossy they are. Some of them can be really laid back and you can see them when you want; others you have to see everyday." W13/1

Five of the reported seven inhibitors to learning as illustrated in Table 7.2 could largely be negated by modified teaching practice and classroom management. The perceived factors: (1) talking and in-class misbehaviour: (2) teaching methods: (3) lack of concentration: (4) uninteresting subject matter: and (5) teacher/pupil relationship. The detrimental effects of these factors may be greatly reduced by a change in school culture and teaching strategies.

The Vignette 7.2 illustrates the way many of the boys within the present study thought about aspects of their learning. It illustrates a boy who feels frustrated because he perceives he has no control over his learning and little input into the activities within his classroom.

Vignette 7.2 A Year 13 boy's perspective on learning.

This is a Year 9 boy, 13 years old, who attends an all boys' school. He finds school a little overwhelming as it is so much bigger than his primary school.

What motivates you to learn? (Interviewer)

"I do want to learn but I want to learn at my own pace. We never stick to one thing and just continue it and get to know it. I'm not learning much in maths because we all start on one thing and ... the teacher would expect us to learn everything in one day, and then after that we would have to start on a new subject...and it would be just really hard."

Tell me why you want to learn? (Interviewer)

"I don't want to be a bum when I grow up. I want to have a job."

Do you know what you want to be? (Interviewer)

"No, not really."

What stops you from learning? (Interviewer)

"Classmates. Our class is a bit chatty, so am I. I might learn a bit more if I didn't talk so much."

So classmates are your biggest distraction? (Interviewer)

"Teachers maybe."

Why? (Interviewer)

"Some of them just annoy me".

How? (Interviewer)

"I ask a question and they won't answer it."

Why do they do that? (Interviewer)

"Maybe because they want to get on with a lesson or something. That's why I do not learn anything."

Is it the way you ask the question? (Interviewer)

"It might be...not sure...I just put up my hand...I never get answers in some classes."

How do you learn best? (Interviewer)

"I just keep at it. I study by myself. I don't find writing helps me. I find it easier by discussing stuff and actually doing stuff. I'd actually never go back to my notes."

What makes a good teacher? (Interviewer)

"They understand me and listen to me. They don't yell at me as much." W9/10

7.3 Boys' Perceptions of Good Teachers

Teachers can have a profound affect on boys' learning. Boys are able to describe very succinctly the qualities they would like in a teacher and the preferred style of teaching and interactions within the classroom (Martin, 2002; Trent and Slade, 2001; Younger and Warrington, 2005). In asking the question; 'What do you think makes a good teacher?' not a single boy referred to the gender of the teacher or spoke in a derogatory manner about teachers. This study would emphasise the point that boys admire good teachers who can relate to them in a way that makes them feel listened to and respected. The data from this study would suggest that good teaching has nothing to do with the teachers' gender and all to do with the teachers' manner and pedagogy¹⁹.

Table 7.3 identifies the factors that boys perceive as important for a good teacher to possess. There was a significant difference identified in this study between boys in Year 9 and Year 13 in their perceptions of a good teacher. Year 13 focussed more on relationship, respect, approachability, and one-on-one assistance. The younger Year group, in their first year of school, focussed more on interest of curriculum topic, and whether a teacher was perceived to yell as a management strategy. A significant number of boys from across the Year levels perceived that a teacher must possess clear communication skills. This ability to explain slowly and clearly so that the boy can understand what is being taught and expected of them was perceived as a critical factor in a good teacher. This same factor was also identified by a significant number of the participants of this study when answering the question, what hinders or enhances your learning?

All of the boys in the study could readily explain what they considered were qualities of a good teacher. The boys spoke like experts on the topic of teachers good and bad, which is not surprising as they have been at school from between 8 and 13 years and have experienced a significant number of teachers in that time. When explaining the characteristics of a good teacher, some of them made a list of attributes while others referred to a particular teacher and described in detail why they were considered good.

¹⁹ Pedagogy refers to the science or art of teaching.

“A good teacher is caring, nice, enjoys your company. You do fun things; practical things. They make it easy to learn, they explain things.” W9/3

Table 7.3 Boys’ perceived factors of a good teacher

Ranking	Factors of good teachers	N
1	Relates to you, knows and cares about you	55
2	Explains clearly in a relevant, interesting way.	53
3	Helps the individual, gives 1-on-1 attention	33
4	Uses humour, enjoys a laugh	31
5	Listens, answers questions, allows pupil contributions	30
6	Enthusiastic, energetic, motivates	25
7	Knowledgeable on subject, knows what they are doing	22
8	Demonstrates firm control	7

Some boys mixed positive and negative teaching behaviours into their statements on good teachers.

“I like teachers who set us our work and then walk around the room helping people; not teachers who just go ‘keep on working out of the book’ and sit on their desks, you rarely learn anything from them.” M9/14

There were a number of boys (N=9) who referred to the practice of a teacher setting work for the class and remaining at their desk or working on their laptop computer.

A significant number of the boys, when communicating their ideas on good teachers, would also make comment about what they considered were the behaviours or strategies of a bad teacher. The boys’ perceptions of behaviours that make a bad teacher could be summarised as; bad teachers often yell, use ‘copy and write’ teaching techniques, do not vary their teaching style, have limited classroom control and show little respect to or understanding of boys. The number of boys (N=25) who equated yelling by teachers as a sign of a bad teacher was significant. The majority of these boys perceived yelling as a teacher problem caused by poor classroom organisation and a teacher’s attitude towards the class. One Year 13 boy spoke of being “treated like you were the enemy” by some teachers, a “them and us mentality” (K13/3). Some of the boys (N=8) perceived that bad

teachers' behaviours were due to stress, angry or 'a grumpy feeling' before they even started teaching the class. The following vignette gives an example of a Year 13 boy who has done a lot of thinking about good and bad teachers. It is a clear example of the importance that a boy places on the establishment of a good teacher/pupil relationship and the positive or negative attitudes that a teacher is perceived of portraying to students.

Vignette 7.3 Good teachers. Bad teachers.

What do you think makes a good teacher? (Interviewer)

"Good teachers, they have to know exactly what they're on about and also I think they must have a sense of humour. They'll get a bit more respect from the guys if the teacher can give as good as they get, guys enjoy that. Also prepared to explain really well and give you all the help you need and be dedicated to the students sort of thing."

Is a bad teacher the opposite? (Interviewer)

"Bad Teachers are not prepared to explain it to you, to explain what they're talking about. Often bad teachers they're not enjoying what they're doing and not putting as much effort into it and not happy to be there so they get angry." W13/8

Some boys perceived that the attitude and behaviours of the teacher had an effect on how they responded to their learning.

"A teacher who is not angry, but happy and enjoys teaching; it rubs off on you, helps you learn better". K11/10

The perceptions and comments by the research participants highlight the issue that teachers, through their actions and attitudes, can receive either positive or negative responses from boys which in turn, helps or hinders the boy's learning. The boys in this research knew exactly the characteristics they required a teacher to possess.

Boys require teachers who have a balance in classroom management.

"Easy going, not stressed but strict enough so we don't get out of hand." M9/6

"Can be strict when needed but has a friendly disposition so you feel like you can ask questions." M13/11

Boys require teachers who want them to succeed.

"They listen to what you have to say, teachers who wants you to learn." W9/1

“They want you to succeed and not there just to do it.” M11/13

Boys require teachers who listen, understand and help.

“They understand when you can’t do something, they help you. They don’t mind if you’ve done something wrong, just show you how to fix it.” M11/5

“They are there to help, they’re cool and you understand their work.” W11/12

Boys require teachers who use humour and shared discourse.

“A teacher who brings humour to things, that talk to you and not at you, who is active moves around to help you. Has a state of mind like us, talks to us on a similar level.”

M11/9

Boys require a relationship with the teacher.

“Being friendly, developing a relationship so know each other.” K13/1

“Have more in common with you, relates to you rather than treating you like an enemy.” K13/3

From the comments of the majority of the boys three requisites of a good teacher can be identified. These requisites are: (1) to spend time to develop a relationship so a boy knows the teacher and teacher knows the boy; from this may develop a mutual respect and understanding: (2) to be able to use a variety of teaching methods during a lesson; that will include the use of humour and practical relevant learning experience: (3) to be able to explain curriculum and teach using language which boys understand. In summary, a boy perceives he is more likely to have learning success if he has a teacher who knows him, explains things carefully and uses a variety of teaching methods in which the knowledge content is made relevant to his life.

7.4 Boys Seeking Help with Learning

Who does a boy turn to when he needs assistance to understand some aspect of his learning? At school, one would assume the teacher but this is not always the case. A good number (N=25) of the boys expressed the need to feel secure with their teacher before any approach was made; a lot depended on the relationship between the boy and his teacher before help was requested.

“Usually a teacher, depending on the relationship.” M13/11

“I couldn’t ask the teachers because I don’t know them well enough.” W9/2

The boys in this study have three main sources they turn to for learning assistance; parents, teachers and mates. There is a shift as to whom the boys turn to for assistance as they progress through school. In Year 9 it is predominantly parents and teachers. In Year 13 it is teachers and mates; the parents taking a lesser role as a source of knowledge and help. Boys generally turned to a Dean or Counsellor for difficulties they were experiencing at school not related to curriculum.

Table 7.4 Boys’ sources for learning assistance.

Rank	Source of learning help	N
1	Teachers (50) Dean (4) Counsellor (6)	60
2	Parents (39) Mum (10) Dad (10) ²⁰	59
3	Mates	37
4	Self with use of internet and notes or books	8

Mates proved to be a source that a surprising number of boys turn to for learning assistance. There were three main reasons given for this by the boys: (1) a close relationship has been established with your mate; and there is a strong bond of trust: (2) mates are at the same level or better so have similar knowledge and skill set: and (3) because mates are perceived to be easier to understand when explanations are required because they use similar language.

“Sometimes mates, they are easy to relate to. They’re around same level, easy to talk to.” M13/5

“My friends because they are one of us... and be able to tell me in his own words.” M9/4

“Some of my friends are pretty good at explaining. We help each other in different subjects.” M9/6

Mates are a significant resource for a significant number of boys to consult when wanting to understand or clarify some learning.

²⁰ Boys made a distinction at times on whether they turned to mum or dad or both. This is reflected in the source of learning help.

7.5 Boys Learning, Girls Learning.

This study was inspired by media statements and research that claimed that there was a growing gender gap and significant academic difference in some curriculum areas between boys and girls (Bidduph, 1997; Noble et al, 2001; West, 2002). Claims have been made that boys were underachieving, especially in reading and writing; as well as causing major difficulties and disruptions in classrooms and schools with their rowdy and unacceptable behaviour. To gather boys' perceptions on the educational debate concerning this issue boys were asked why they thought girls statistically were achieving better than boys.

The majority of the boys identified work ethic as the greatest single factor between the two genders. A surprising number (N=31) admitted that they didn't study or work as hard as girls, and were more easily distracted from their school work. The boys also reported that school did not cater adequately for many boys, mainly due to teaching style and management of the classroom and school environment. Educators can learn from the perceptions of boys concerning boys and girls learning. Boys hold strong views on the differences between the learning of both genders; these views were similar across the three schools. The boys in the study identified a number of factors that they saw as contributing to the alleged academic gender gap. These perceptions were categorised into a number of themes.

Girls take school more seriously than boys.

“Girls they take their stuff pretty seriously, they do take school more seriously. It's their nature.” W13/12

Girls are more focussed than boys.

“Girls are more focussed, more mature about things. They don't take things so lightly.” M13/2

“Girls focus a lot harder; nearly always enjoy reading and study. I don't.” M11/12

Girls know what they want to do.

“Most girls have plans, goals; know what they want to do.” K13/1

Girls have longer attention spans.

“Girls are usually more focussed. We are usually a bit lost...We don’t have very long attention spans, one little thing will get you off topic for the rest of the period.” W13/10

Boys are more relaxed, girls are more stressed.

“Boys are more laid back than girls. If girls do not get the marks they stress out about it.” K13/7

“Guys more laid back. We are a bit more emotionally stable and cope with mixing social life with school. Girls get a little crazy and need to try real hard.” K13/3

Boys misbehave more than girls.

“I think boys have a tendency to play up, they act around and when they are doing that they’re not actually learning. Girls just get on with it.” W9/2

Boys need to see the relevance to learn.

Girls put in more effort. Boys if it’s not relevant, not important, don’t enjoy it.”W9/2

Boys are more active and physical than girls.

“Girls spend more time on learning boys spend more time on sports.” M11/7

“Girls can sit there and read, boys can’t it gets boring.” W11/14

Boys feel the education system is more suited to girls.

“Girls work in the system far better than boys.” K13/10

“The teaching pattern now is more suitable to girls.” K11/13

“Boys think more spatially, boys would have more chance showing; but not with papers and writing.” K11/12

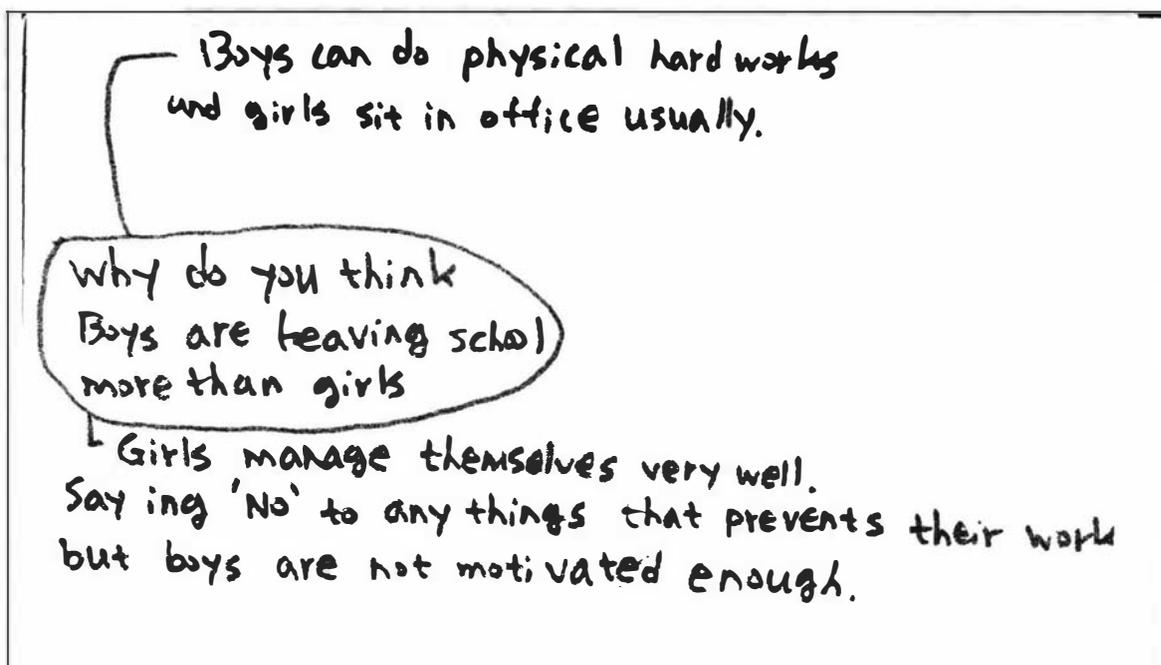
Boys have quite definite views on boys’ and girls’ attitudes to learning and some also portray quite definite gender stereotypes. Figure 7.1 from a Year 9 Focus Group Brain Storm session illustrates further some of the opinions held by boys that can affect the way they approach learning.

The challenge for educators, parents and community leaders is to change and develop attitudes that some boys have towards gender stereotypes, achievement and success in learning. Firstly attitudes towards success and achievement have to change so that boys believe they can be as successful as girls. Some of the boys do not perceive that there is

a 'level playing field' for boys and girls within the school; they feel they are treated differently.

"Girls are more organised; in class they are allowed to express themselves more. They are bought up to succeed where we boys are less encouraged. No special programmes or help for us, just left to ourselves." M13/1

Figure 7.1 Focus Group Brainstorm Gender Learning Differences



Gender stereotypes need to change; boys need to have the opportunity to study how stereotypes are formed and especially how ideas of masculinity are created.

The boys in this study were very articulate concerning their learning and in identifying factors that enhanced or hindered their success. They have shown in this study a depth of awareness, insight and understanding of what happens within the classroom; and can describe succinctly the teaching style and learning environment that best suits, motivates and enhances their learning.

7.6 Analysis and Discussion

The opinions expressed by the boys on learning and teaching were uniform across the three schools and Year levels. Despite the diversity of the schools in the study and the

five year difference in age between the Year levels; there remained a uniformity of understanding about learning and teaching. Trent and Slade (2001) in their research with 1800 secondary school boys from 60 schools in South Australia, and Rudduck and Flutter (2004) in the *Consulting Pupils about Teaching and Learning Project* in the UK found a similar lack of diversity between boys in different schools and Year levels.

The boys in focus groups and individual interviews spent the majority of their time discussing the impact of teachers on their learning; for boys, teachers are the key to their success or lack of it in a school. Other researchers (Trent & Slade 2001; Slade 2001; Wilson & Corbett, 2001; Flutter & Rudduck, 2004; Martino & Palotta-Chiarolli, 2003) have found similar results when interviewing boys in Australia, United Kingdom and the United States of America. In these studies the teacher was identified as a critical factor in a boy's attitude towards school and academic achievement and success.

The boys in this study, without exception wanted to achieve. They wanted to learn and all but three boys saw the value at being at school. The choices they made whether to engage or disengage in a particular learning task or curriculum depended on three major criteria. The first was whether the boy could see relevance or link between knowledge content being taught and real life situations. The second was whether content knowledge and skills were taught involving pupil participation in activity based learning with a mixture of challenge and fun. The third was the boy's perceived relationship with their teacher. Studies by Martin (2002, 2003b), Trent and Slade (2001), Rudduck and Flutter (2004) and others have identified similar factors. Researchers have found that most students in secondary school link learning and curriculum choices with their relevance to future life and employment (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004; Jackson, 2002; Martin, 2002; National Research Council, 2003). Students often select the subjects they are willing to work hard in or disengage from or 'find pointless' on the criteria of perceived relevance to 'real life' outside of school.

Dewey (1916, p. 309) argued early last century, that 'education through occupations consequently combines within itself more of the factors conducive to learning than any other method.' There is a trend for schools particular in the United States to explore new learning approaches combining work or life relevance; this is known as education through occupations. One intention of such an approach is to "replace current high

school curriculum – made up of independent, disconnected courses- with a more coherent programme that allows students to see how subjects are related’ (NRC, 2003, p. 169). Another intention is to make the curriculum more relevant and students more engaged and motivated. Most New Zealand schools present curriculum as separate components and need to consider an integrated approach tied to relevant life experience to increase the learning success of many boys.

The learning process is premised on the idea that students learn best when they are motivated and engaged with both the purpose and process of learning. The boys in this study identified a number of factors they believed either enhanced or engaged them in the learning process. The top three factors from Table 6.1 were:

- Practical, physical, hands-on activity.
- Relevant learning tasks.
- Visual learning models such as diagrams, models and templates.

The biggest disengager that boys’ perceived to their learning was writing; having to sit for long periods and either copy or write. Flutter and Rudduck (2004, p. 114) in their research found similar results; “that classrooms that did not involve writing were more likely to engage pupils interest, and pupils said they liked tasks that were different or involved some degree of physical activity.” Boys from all age levels wanted hands on activities that, where possible, are linked to relevance and engagement. A number of researchers (Baron-Cohen, 2003; Hines, 2004; Gurian, 2005) have linked physical activity with stimulating or engaging the brain, and some of the boys claimed that they needed ‘to do’ to gain understanding. Several boys indicated that they preferred visual models of knowledge and learning as it gave structure to the learning and a method for understanding or organising knowledge. The visual models were described by a number of the boys to be like a map or plan that organised the information and made the learning of the knowledge easier. West (2002), Noble et al. (2001), and Hawkes (2001) in their books on boys learning describe numerous case studies using these strategies to assist boys learning.

It is a teacher’s greatest challenge to engage every student in quality learning; it is made more difficult because students learn in different ways and to different degrees. There are numerous definitions of learning. Cambourne (1988) described learning as “a process that involves making connections, identifying patterns and organising

previously unrelated bits of knowledge, behaviour and action into new patterned wholes". Spady (2001, p. 18) defined learning as "a change in understanding and behaviour that results from encountering new experience." A number of points can be taken from these definitions of learning; firstly, learning results in changes in understanding and these changes in understanding enable the learner to change behaviour. Secondly these changes in understanding and behaviour are the result of learners' experiences and their thinking about these experiences. The degree to which a student learns can be contributed to their level of engagement and motivation. Biggs (1987) used the terms deep learning and surface learning to describe the differences in how students think and learn. He believed those who take a deep approach to learning are aiming to achieve personal understanding and growth while those undertaking surface learning are concerned primarily with avoiding failure. The boys in this study were engaged in both surface and deep learning; the level of learning depending on a number of factors.

The National Research Council (NRC) of the US stated that "engagement in schoolwork involves both behaviours (e.g. persistence, effort, attention) and emotions (e.g. enthusiasm, interest, pride in success) and that today the term motivation and engagement are often used interchangeably, presumably because motivation is inferred from observed emotions and behaviours" (2003, p. 31). The boys in this study were very perceptive in discussing factors that made a difference to their engagement in learning. In analysing the data from interviews and focus groups, a number of trends could be identified that boys perceived assisted their engagement in the learning process.

- Learning tasks that actively involve the student and are hands-on and relevant.
- Learning activities that offer variety and something new or different.
- Learning that is a personal challenge; but a challenge that is attainable.
- Learning that offers choice, the opportunity to establish and claim personal ownership of the learning.
- Learning where there is opportunity and time to develop depth of learning and seek explanation and greater depth of understanding from teacher and others.
- Learning where you have the choice to work cooperatively, share ideas and develop your thinking and understanding
-

Research by Slade and Trent (2002); Lingard, Martino, Mills, and Bahr (2002) in Australia and Flutter and Rudduck (2004) in the UK, have identified similar themes to those described in this study. Lingard et al. (2002) in their research, summarised what they termed 'productive pedagogies' as "pedagogies that are intellectually demanding, connected to students' lives and worlds with purchase beyond the classroom, socially supportive and encouraging of risk-taking (in the positive sense) and which recognise and engage with difference between students"(2002, p. 5). In this research many of the boys were describing in their own terminology 'productive pedagogy' as the desired learning approach. In comparing similar research in Australia and the UK with this study it was found that boys held very similar views on ways that their learning could be enhanced.

In consulting the boys in this study it was found that they could describe what they believed enhanced their learning; and were just as astute about what hindered or caused disengagement from learning. There are three main areas of concern boys identify as causing disengagement from learning; (1) In class talking and 'fooling around' type behaviours, (2) teaching methods, teacher attitudes and teacher/pupil relationships and (3) out of school influences (see Table 7.2). In class student behaviours and teacher attitudes and teaching styles can be changed and improved through developing whole school standards and adopting appropriate strategies for learning and pupil interactions. This may also require a change of attitude by schools, teachers and pupils.

Duffield, Allen, Turner, and Morris (2000) conducted a study of pupils' perceptions on achievement in Scotland, and in their conclusion stated that pupil relationships with teachers were characterised by the absence of discourse about learning. They were disturbed that some teachers were more concerned with pupils' behaviour rather than appropriate learning. Lindgard (2002), also identified in his research that some teachers were more concerned with controlling rather than teaching. Duffield et al. (2000, p. 6) found that "the pupils appeared to operate on an understanding that school work consisted of a fixed content of information or techniques for which they had to learn right answers and correct performance." The boys in the present study also identified a perceived lack of pupil-teacher discourse in regards to learning and the passive role of the learner in the construction of knowledge. Some teachers' pedagogical styles, as described by the boys in this study, indicated that teaching was concerned with

presenting fixed blocks of information which had to be learned (memorized) so to achieve credits towards passing external or internal parts of examinations. Boys, in describing behaviours of bad teachers often referred to copy/write techniques that are adopted to pass on knowledge content that needed to be 'learned' for exams.

Student behaviour in the classroom cannot be separated from the actions and attitude of the teacher. Boys often describe their classroom environments as boring. Flutter and Rudduck (2004, p. 117) claimed that "one reason why pupils turn to disruptive behaviour is that they are bored, their attention is not focussed on their learning." Educational researchers have identified a number of causes for boys to be in this 'bored state'; a lack of discourse in their learning (Duffield et al. 2002), lack of voice, the teacher not listening to the students needs or questions (Smyth et al. 2000), lack of help when student requires it (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004), lack of topic appeal for students (West, 2002), emotional distance between teacher and pupil (Hargreaves, 2000), uninteresting instructional strategies used to motivate student interest (Warsley, Hampel & Clark, 1997), lack of interaction and participation within the classroom (Myhill, 2002) to name a few of the contributing causes.

Bad teaching, boredom, and disruptive behaviours are very much an 'egg and chicken' scenario. It is difficult to decide whether disruptive behaviour leads to a teacher focusing all their energy into control, and thus teaching style becomes limited and uninteresting and results in most pupils being bored; or does poor teaching techniques lead to boredom and disruptive behaviours with the result of very limited learning occurring? This is a rather circular problem which can spiral out of control. The breaking of the spiral of disengaging and disruptive behaviours is the responsibility of school and teachers in establishing standards of behaviour, raising learning expectations and improving teaching strategies.

Lingard et al. (2002) indicated that boys' were more difficult to control, that is, boys played up more in class than girls. The most significant factors identified for boys in their behaviour and engagement at school was "the nature of the relationship established between the teacher and students and the quality of the pedagogies" (2002, p. 4). A number of researchers have identified pupil-teacher relationship as the critical factor in student engagement and interest in school (Lingard et al. 2002; Martin, 2002; National

Council of Research, 2003; Rudduck & Flutter, 2004). Teachers are the key, and with boys “the qualities that matter tend to be as much about how they are treated as how they are taught” (Rudduck & Flutter, 2004, p. 77). The large majority of boys in this study spoke as much about the attitude and behaviour of the teacher towards them or others in the class as to the methods of pedagogy adopted by the teacher. The most common identified themes concerning teacher qualities were fairness, respect, consideration and a genuine like for teaching.

Every boy in this study could list a number of characteristics that they wanted in a good teacher and in listing the qualities of a good teacher they were as likely to refer to relationship qualities as necessary teaching qualities. In examining the boys perceived top three factors of a good teacher (see Table 7.3); two are concerned with a close relation with the teacher. The boys wanted a teacher who knows and relates to them and is able to give individual attention and help. Hargreaves (2000) argued that emotional connections between teacher and student contribute to student achievement by closing the ‘distance’ between student and teacher. A number of boys (N=14) indicated that they would not seek help from a teacher because they did not know the teacher and the teacher did not know them. This study would argue that a critical factor to boys succeeding at school is the relationship that is established between boy and teacher. Farrell (1990) reached similar conclusions in his study of at-risk New York high school students. Boys indicated that they want a teacher who knows who they are, shows they care and understand, and have a willingness to listen to what they have to say. Care, to the boys in the study, actually means willingness to help, being fair and consistent in treatment of classroom behaviours, and willing to listen to what they have to say. Other researchers have also identified as a major issue the lack of attention by teachers to students’ voice that generates negative feeling and frustration by students as they are not listened (Smyth et al. 2000; Trent, 2001).

Boys’ perceptions of a good teacher would indicate that an effective teacher is able to strike a balance between relationship qualities and classroom practices (See Table 7.5). There requires a balance between fun and learning focus, friendship and professional relationship, discipline and tolerance. An effective teacher is able to balance teaching methods, learning styles and behaviour management to meet the diverse needs of individuals as they arise (Martin, 2002). Linked to creating a positive relationship

between pupil and teacher, is the ability of the teacher to explain in such a manner that the boy knows what is expected of him to achieve appropriate knowledge and skill acquisition and desired standards. According to the overwhelming majority of the boys in this study the greatest pedagogical asset a teacher could possess is the ability to give clear explanation; the ability to make one self clearly understood.

Table 7.5 Boys' Perceived Relationship and Pedagogy Qualities of Teachers

Relationship Qualities of Teachers	Pedagogy Qualities of Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knows, cares and relates to students • Enjoys humour and a laugh • Energetic and enthusiastic • Willing to assist individuals • Approachable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explains learning tasks clearly • Listens, allows students to contribute • Knowledgeable on curriculum • Firm, fair control • Makes learning relevant and interesting

The boys' biggest complaint was that the teacher did not take the time to explain clearly; that the boys did not understand the curriculum knowledge being taught or what expected standards were required to complete the learning. Wentzel (2002) found that student's perceptions of their teacher's expectations for their learning was a strong predictor of how they engaged in their learning tasks, how helpful they were to class peers and how interested they were in the class activities. Teachers' expectations of student performance and achievement have a marked effect on boys' learning success.

This study would argue that boys need to have curriculum content knowledge, presented in a structured manner and standards of achievement and expectations clearly outlined. A number of the boys (N=16) made reference to having tasks being appropriate to their level and to be challenging but interesting. Tasks that are challenging but achievable are essential (NRC, 2003). These learning tasks must be clearly understood and as important, the boy must feel that the task is achievable. One of the factors of learning success is personal belief that one is capable of accomplish a particular task and also believing that your teacher believes you are able to achieve it as well (Martin, 2002; Schultz, 2000). This study would suggest that a critical factor to attaining academic success is a clear understanding of what expectations and standards are required to accomplish a learning challenge. From the perceptions of the boys in this study it could be argued that this factor is often missing in the discourse between

teacher and boy in New Zealand schools and results in optimal learning not being achieved. There are numerous studies that link students' achieving high academic standards to schools and teachers that set and expect high levels of performance (Evans, 1997; Phillips, 1997, Lambert & McCombs, 1998).

“Boy- friendly” pedagogy has been argued by some educationalist and researchers to be needed to raise the standards of boys achievement and close the gender gap in education (West, 2002; Gurian, 2001; Hawke, 2001). The boys in this study did not perceive the need for teaching strategies that favoured them. In studying the data boys generated on what enhances boys' education and constitutes a good teacher; there was no gender bias. No boys in the study even mentioned that staffing their school with more male teachers would assist their learning. Younger and Warrington (2005, p. 91) are “firmly against a specifically ‘boy-friendly’ pedagogy, convinced that such an approach has been sustained neither by research nor by classroom experience.” In the OFSTED²¹ Report *Boys' Achievement in Secondary Schools* (2003) “inspection evidence and research both suggest a number of promising strategies for tackling the [boy] issue ... in many respects the strategies are not gender-specific, and differ little from implementing what is commonly agreed to be best practice.” This study would agree that it is not ‘boy-friendly’ pedagogy that is required but good teaching by knowledgeable, caring teachers. However, from boys' comments in this study two key teaching strategies can be identified that may have an effect on raising boys' engagement to learning. They are; (1) physical activity, the use of games, sport, and physical education and (2) hands-on, activity based learning within the classroom. Ninety percent of the boys in this study during interview or focus group mentioned the need for regular physical exercise and hands-on, activity based learning. A number of educational researchers also promote these strategies to enhance boys learning or interest and retention in school (West, 2002; Hawke, 2001; Pollack, 1998; Neall, 2002) “More active children are more alert. After exercise the metabolism is raised for four or five hours – medical evidence supports this. We can't say physical activity will improve IQ, but it does help maximise learning potential” (Kibble, 2001). In the report *Raise Boys' achievement* (2003) it is recommended that a range of teaching styles be incorporated into lessons which are broken down into a number of activities, including more activity in learning

²¹ OFSTED is abbreviation for Office for Standards in Education in the United Kingdom.

opportunities which have relevance and a real purpose.

The views of boys as to why girls were statistically obtaining better results than boys, showed an honest and an astute awareness by many boys, of the perceived learning behaviour of each gender. It is important to look at their perceptions on girls learning successes as it reflects on the learning and teaching within schools and the attitude towards boys. Boys at Year 9 did not have the same awareness or firm opinions as the older boys. The majority of the boys at Year 11 and Year 13 could give a variety of reasons why they perceived girls generally did better work at schools than boys:

- Girls are more serious about school.
- Girls study more.
- Girls are more focussed.
- Girls have longer attention spans.
- Girls know what they want to do.
- Girls are not as physically active as boys.
- Girls are brought up to succeed; boys are less encouraged.
- School and education system is more suited to girls.

The attitude of boys towards aspects of their learning needs to change; as well as the societal and school attitude towards boys. Boys have for the last few generations been subject to a media and societal image of girl power, girls can do anything; and at the same time there has been a great deal of negative media towards boys (Myhill, 1999, 2002). A supportive school culture is needed to complement quality classroom practices, an emphasis placed on high expectations and quality learning within a supportive environment. It was reported in OFSTED's annual report for 2000/01 that "in schools where boys' performance has improved more sharply than the national rate, high expectations, good teaching and close support are the most powerful explanations for this achievement" (p. 37). Some boys' who are failing or have disengaged from the learning process especially need individual support and success to change attitudes.

7.7 Summary

Three important findings emerge from the data on what boys perceive as enhancing and

hindering their learning. The first is that the boy's relationship to the teacher is a key factor on whether a boy will engage in learning for the teacher; the relationship is more important than whether the boy likes or dislikes the curriculum subject under study. This research identified some key characteristics that boys desired in a teacher to establish a positive relationship. They were a teacher who listens to the boy, is approachable, shows a caring attitude, willing to offer individual support, is enthusiastic and incorporates humour in to the learning exchange, is able to teach and involve the boy in the learning discourse. The second important finding is boys want to benefit from strong pedagogy. Data would suggest that the quality of teaching is an even stronger factor for boys than girls (OFSTED, 2004). Boys are more likely to disengage from learning than girls if the pedagogy is not of high standard. The boys in this study had strong feelings on what is good pedagogy. Boys want to be actively involved in their learning. The learning tasks must offer variety and practical, hands-on and relevant experiences to maximize learning. Many of the boys expressed the need to be able to see and do so they can understand their learning. A big turn-off to learning for boys is a passive learning environment which involves a lot of sitting and writing or copying.

The data from this study indicated that boys feel that the attitude towards them and their learning is not positive or conducive to engage many of the boys in an effort to strive for high achievement and success. Some teachers are more concerned with control of behaviour than teaching. It could be concluded from such a situation that boys are receiving more negative attentions than positive (Beaman and Wheldall, 1997). The message from some schools and much of the popular media needs to change. Boys need to believe that they can achieve to a high standard; that they have the same ability, power and choices as girls when it comes to school success.

The next chapter will examine schools and curriculum and how the school culture can have a marked effect on boys' success.

CHAPTER EIGHT

School and Curriculum

*Better build school rooms for the boy
Than cells and gibbets for the man.*

Eliza Cook (1853) 'A song for ragged schools'.

8.0 Introduction

The school's physical environment, the school's culture, the available curriculum choices, the extra-curricula options and methods of curriculum delivery all have an impact on a boy's attitude to school (Smyth et al. 2000). This chapter explores boys' perceptions of their school and their curriculum choices; what curriculum they like and dislike and what they would change about school. In this study boys had very strong views about their school and the curriculum subjects they are studying. The large majority of boys (99%) in this study liked school and wanted to learn. The specific questions asked on school and curriculums were:

What is the best thing about school for you? Why?

What is the hardest thing about school for you? Why?

If you had the opportunity, what would you change about school to make it a better place? Why?

What are your best subjects? Why?

What are your most difficult subjects? Why?

The data generated from these questions allowed for comparisons to be made across Year levels and schools to form a greater understanding of boys' perceptions and attitudes to schooling and curriculum. Within each topic it was of interest to examine such questions as: Is school perceived differently at the three Year levels? Does curriculum choice and attitude change as boys' progress through their schooling? Are concerns boys express specific to their school or particular Year level? The impact of school and curriculum is the focus of this chapter and the boys shared their views like they were experts on the subject; which they are from one viewpoint.

8.1 The Best Thing about School

The main purpose of school is to educate the child for the society in which they belong (Wells & Claxton, 2002). The overwhelming majority of boys in this study enjoy school. However, a boy's main reason for enjoying school was firstly social; boys tend to emphasis school as a social rather than as a learning institution. Boys stated often that they came to school because they could meet up with their mates and friends. Secondly for the opportunities to play sport; be physically active in a team environment which in its self, can be a social event. Table 8.1 indicates the main reasons boys revealed for liking school.

Table 8.1 The best thing about school for boys.

Rank	Descriptor of what boys like best about school	N
1	Seeing my mates, socialising	58
2	The opportunity to play sport	26
3	Learning new things, able to use your mind to study	24
4	The opportunities to do a range of 'stuff'/things	12
5	Opportunity to make new friends	10

For the majority of boys the opportunity to socialise is a far more important facet of school than learning. Boys come to school to be with their mates and to socialise in the hope of making new friends; these two aspects of schooling are twice as appealing as any other aspect of school.

“Coming to school to see your friends is probably the best part.” W13/3

“Being here with my mates, seeing them everyday, that sort of thing.” W13/8

Quite often boys compared the importance of socialising and learning as having equal importance.

“Mingling with other people and being able to use your mind a bit more.” K13/3

“Learning stuff I don't know about and getting to know more people.” M11/3

Many of the boys in the study also made reference to school being about learning; especially the opportunity to experience and learn new knowledge and develop thinking skills. The boys were quite specific in how they saw learning; it had to be the learning of new things, to be challenging, and to be presented in an active fun way.

“Learning new things you've never done before.” M9/12

“I'm actually learning something; it expands a lot of things, its experiences too.” M11/6

“Be able to learn and have fun.” M9/4

The data suggests that sport is a powerful attraction for boys at school. The opportunity to play a range of sports competitively and/or with friends is a strong factor for coming to and enjoying school. It involves mates, competition, physical activity and enjoyment; a powerful combination of factors for boys according to prior research (Hawkes, 2001; Noble et al. 2000, West, 2002).

“My sport, but I do come here to study so I can do what I want to after, but sport would be the main thing in my life.” W13/5

For many of the boys at Year 13 sport does not hold the same dominance in their life’s as it did at the beginning of secondary schooling. These older boys are still strongly competitive and enjoy physical activity and challenge but they have diversified into a range of sporting and outdoor pursuit activities.

Of interest is that school resources and environment are not perceived as high indicators for boys enjoying school. The boys were generally appreciative of their environment and resources but other aspects of schooling were of greater importance. Boys do not rank school environment before the social, sporting and learning aspects of school. Boys, if given the opportunity would make changes to their school environment and the main environmental factor would be additional or improved sports fields and equipment (see 8.4 Changes to school). Only one boy in the study mentioned the teachers as the best feature of the school and this was because he perceived he had good teachers that year.

“The teachers, I’ve got good teachers; they know what they are doing. Lot depends on what the teachers do, some of the teachers walk around and others just sit at their desk with their laptops.” W13/10

Based on the tallies and rankings from Table 8.1 and the numerous comments from boys during interview and focus groups there are three key themes that can be identified as potent factors for boys at schools. This study would suggest that a school with: (1) a strong emphasis on physical activity and challenge: (2) learning that is presented as new and exciting, with elements of challenge and fun: (3) and the opportunity to both work and socialise with your mates would be a powerful combination to meet the needs of boys.

8.2 The Most Difficult Thing about School

Boys tend to switch off, act out or even leave school if they perceive the actions of their teachers or school boring, unjust, or of little relevance to their life out of school (Farrell, 1990; Smyth et al. 2000;). The most important school retention factor perceived by the boys in this study is the relationship that is established between teachers and themselves; as well as a strong identity or sense of belonging to the school (see chapter 7). However there are a number of other factors that boys have perceived as making their life at school more difficult. The boys in this study identified issues that they saw as the hardest or most difficult thing about school. The numerous factors that can be categorised under four themes: (1) teaching style: (2) school organisation (3) pupil pastoral care and organisation: and (4) attitudes.

Teachers were identified by over ninety percent of the boys as being the single most important factor that can improve boys' academic success and attitude to school. A significant number of boys identified two key components of teaching that effect their school success; the first, not gaining a clear understanding of subject content knowledge and the second is lack of comprehension of learning expectations and standards required for assignments and school work. The findings would suggest that boys require: (1) teachers to create the time to establish positive relationships within a class and (2) teach the curriculum in a style which facilitates clear understanding of expectations and content knowledge.

“Some teachers; trying to get to grips with some teachers.” M11/6

“When you don't understand something it is frustrating.” M9/4

“Learning theory, if they put it to practical it would be a lot easier.” M13/10

The comments of these three boys' are typical of the expressions of many of the boys in this study who struggle to understand and relate to teachers as well as striving for understanding of content knowledge. Both issues could largely be eliminated by teachers if they used more effective teaching practices and took time to establish pupil/teacher relationships.

Table 8.2 Boys' perceptions of factors that make school more difficult

Ranking	Difficult factors at school	N
1	Not understanding curriculum knowledge, hard learning	24
2	Workloads, meeting deadlines	21
3	Early start of school	19
4	Exams and assessments	17
4	Quantity and understanding of homework	17
5	Expectations placed on students	6

There are distinct differences in concerns between Year 9 and Year 13 as well as between schools. The boys of School K expressed greater difficulty with workloads and homework than the other two schools. However the amount of homework, assignments clustered closely together, a lack of understanding of requirements and lack of understanding of content knowledge are concerns expressed by boys across the three schools. Workloads are of a significantly greater concern at Year 13 than at Year 9. The curriculum subject areas of English and Mathematics cause the greatest concern across all year levels. Year 9 boys also have a wider spectrum of issues than Year 11 or 13. Boys at this level worry about fitting in, making new friends, transitions, location of classrooms and buildings, the sheer size of school, the number of people involved and lack of lunchtime sport opportunities. By Year 13 the identified difficulties are more learning specific and concerned with understanding new learning, workloads and the added responsibilities and expectations placed on boys in their final year at school. The major worry Year 13 boys acknowledged was failing their final examinations or not getting the required credits to achieve entrance to university or for gaining employment.

The boys who made reference to exams and assessment (N = 17) were throughout the school; even Year 9 boys have a worry about examinations. At Year 9 the worry is concerned with how to cope with tests and exams but at Year 11 and 13 it is the worry of gaining the required credits in internal exams so to set themselves up for future employment or further education. An interesting school difficulty factor identified by a small group of boys is the starting time of school. The boys who made comment on this factor (N = 19) found getting out of bed and being alert and awake for school at 9am difficult.

Many of the difficulties reported by boys are concerned with school organisation and

management. The transition from a small primary or intermediate school to a large secondary school was acknowledged as a daunting prospect for many in Year 9. Suitable pastoral care, mentoring and an induction programme could improve the transition, especially if it involved sport and physical outdoor experiences. Year 9 boys enjoy team sport and activities; they especially want more organised sport at lunchtime. A significant number of Year 9 boys described school as 'boring', when this statement was investigated further; the boys revealed that "boring" related to there being nothing to do during school breaks.

"Something to do at lunchtimes, at lunchtime just walk around same as everyone else."

W9/1

This might also lessen some boys concerns over bullying. There were a small minority of boys (N=8) who raised bullying as a difficulty at school; the bullying was generally perceived to be amongst the Year 9 and 10 boys. This was not an apparent issue in the upper Year levels. Bullying was raised as issue by Year 11 and 13 boys who saw it as a problem in the lower Year levels. Year 9 boys did not raise it as an issue.

"Try to make it a safer environment. Year 9s feel unsafe until they get to Year 10 or 11." M11/6

"Lots of the younger students are pretty scrappy, that's only a small percentage, but that's what you see."W13/8

Other issues that boys identified as concerns were their inability to concentrate for long periods, classroom misbehaviour that distracted them, understanding clearly how to present their learning and coping with the amount homework. Martin (2003) suggests these difficulties could largely be eliminated through schools teaching study skills, goal setting, and time management; and parents creating a study environment within the home. The perceived factors that make school more difficult for boys could largely be eliminated by changes to school organisation and pedagogy. Along with carefully structure induction programme and supportive pastoral care programmes would aid connectedness to the school.

8.3 Changes Boys Would Make to School

The large majority of boys know exactly what they would change about school to make it a more enjoyable and academically successful environment .Most of the changes boys

suggested are linked closely to the difficulties boys identified in their schooling (Table 8.2). There is also a significant number (N = 35) who would change nothing about their school; they are perfectly happy with the way it is. The changes that Year 9 and Year 13 would make are distinctly different. This is probably due to their differences in experience and maturity. At Year 9 boys are more concerned about the physical environment such as tuck shop, sports fields, sporting equipment and shelters for wet and windy weather. Year 11 the major concerns are the quality of teaching and teachers; and the issue of the starting time of school. The Year 13 boy is more concerned with their learning work load, the expectations placed upon them by teachers and parents and seeking greater freedoms and less restrictive rules at schools.

Typical comments of Year 9 boys.

“Another PE shed closer to the field and have PE all year round.” M9/5

“There is not much covered places, sometimes you get wet.” W9/8

Typical concerns of Year 11 boys.

“Make work more fun, like fun instead of hard work all the time; like still do the same hard work but make it funnier.” W11/10

“Get some ‘down to earth’ teachers. *What do you mean?* There are a few good teachers who are understanding and know where you’re coming from. They know what we’re talking about.” W11/8

Year 13 boys believe that they have lots of responsibilities placed upon them and few rights or privileges; in the final year of school they are wanting more freedom and less restrictions. They see themselves as young men and want that recognition.

“Give us more freedoms; it will prepare us for university.” M13/7

“Give Year 13 no uniforms and privileges and a common room.” M13/4

The three main areas of change that boys would make to their schools are concerned with sports activity (N=46), teachers and learning (N=33) and starting time of school (N=19). A large number of boys want additional sport, a greater variety of sporting opportunity, and more organised sport at lunchtime, such as more sporting equipment being made available and more sports fields to play on. Starting school later was raised by boys at each Year level but was more prevalent in Years 11. The boys who raised these as a concern wanted school to start later when they were ‘more awake’.

“Start later, first period hard to learn, bit sleepy.” M11/

“Start time, give us more time to wake up, its not easy getting up that early.” M11/9

The concern with teachers and learning was based around three issues; noisy distractions in the classroom, teacher-pupil relationships and “too much writing and not enough doing”.

“I’m sick of teachers, they’re grumpy. I want to get out.”W9/5

“Getting the work done in a noisy classroom; when the noise is going on its hard to concentrate.” M9/13

The majority of boys want teachers who do fun, practical hands on ‘stuff’. That is the biggest change they would make to the teaching they receive. Boys’ comments revealed that a like or dislike for a curriculum largely depended on the teacher’s pedagogy and the type of relationship established with a classroom of boys. The boys in this study indicated that if they liked the teacher and the teacher’s pedagogy they would show a greater interest and liking for the curriculum subject.

8.4 Boys’ Best Curriculum Subjects

At each Year level the question was asked; what were a boy’s best curriculum subjects and why; determining why a boy liked a curriculum subject was as important as what they enjoyed. The data would suggest boys a subject mainly due to the enjoyment and success they experience; and this was largely due to the boy liking the teacher and the methods of teaching employed to teach the subject. Mathematics, English and science have a nearly equal number of boys who both like and dislike the subject for a variety of reasons.

There were a number of occasions where the curriculum was liked and disliked for exactly the same reason

“English is difficult. I’ve trouble with spelling and punctuation. There’s no real definite answer to anything.” M13/1

“Classics and English, I do better in them. You can make something up; it’s not so clear cut.” K13/3

Two Year 13 boys, one likes English because there is no definite answer and the other dislikes it for the same reason.

Drama, a relatively new curriculum, was for a number of boys (N=13) a favourite

subject. This was usually because the boys perceived drama as being active, expressive and creative. Boys across the three schools expressed an enjoyment for drama. History, a traditional school curriculum, was mentioned by two boys, and this was because they disliked all the writing that was required of them. The writing and copying of notes was a factor as to why a boy would often dislike a curriculum subject.

Tables 8.3 records the subjects that boys indicated they liked best and Table 8.4 identifies the main reasons for those curriculum choices. It is interesting to note that four of the seven best subject choices are perceived as the more hands-on, participant active subjects; physical education, art and graphics, drama and computers. In the lower Year levels boys also enjoyed woodwork and metal work for the same reason; it was practical.

“Woodwork, part of the day you don’t do writing.” M11/14

Table 8.3 Curriculum subjects boys like best

Ranking	Curriculum subject	N
1	Physical Education and Sports Studies	40
2	Mathematics	32
3	Science (both general and specific)	27
4	English	21
5	Art and Graphics	18
6 =	Drama	13
6 =	Computers	13

The boys’ enjoyment of sport/PE was not because of the curriculum knowledge content but because of the activity content. Boys at every Year level acknowledge the need for physical activity and the fun associated with it.

“P.E²²., getting out and having fun, physical activity and stuff like that.” M9/12

“I like playing sport, it’s a stress release.” M13/5

Mathematics was an interesting contradiction; boys either find it easy or difficult. Boys who perceive mathematics as their best subject (N = 32) do so because they find it fun and it comes easily to them. However, nearly as many boys (N = 31) find mathematics their most difficult subject because it is difficult to understand and they do not enjoy it.

²² P. E. is what many boys call Physical Education.

“Mathematics, I like doing it. I find it hard but its fun. I like numbers.” M9/9

“Mathematics; numbers and equations are not really a lot of fun.” K13/5

The art curriculum has a variety of aspects where boys can develop their own special skills. It is also a curriculum subject where boys’ perceive teachers are more relaxed and spend more time talking and working one-on-one with students. These boys expressed a closer relationship with their art teacher than with other teachers.

“Photography, it’s a hands on thing to do with creativity. The printing process is a lot of fun.” K13/8

Drama has a similar appeal to art; with the additional aspect of performance appealing to many boys.

“Drama, its fun, you get to relax and it’s easy to express yourself.” K11/15

The boys indicated that an enjoyment of a curriculum was due largely to it being interesting, fun and enjoyable. There are two aspects that contribute to the interesting/fun factor. Firstly, it is taught in a fun and enjoyable way by the teacher; and secondly the content is interesting. For content to be interesting the boys in this study perceived it needed to be new knowledge which held a challenge and appealed to a boys’ curiosity. Both aspects; the teaching and the content have to be interesting and enjoyable according to many of the boys. Table 8.4 displays the three most common factors that boys identify as why they like a particular curriculum subject. The three factors identified by boys to liking a curriculum subject can be addressed by good teaching management and pedagogy. This study would suggest that whether a boy enjoys a subject or not depends largely on good pedagogy within the classroom, and as discussed earlier, the relationship between boy and teacher.

Table 8.4 Identified factors contributing to best subject choice

Ranking	Contributing factor to subject choice	N
1	Interesting and enjoyable	70
2	Easy and familiar	64
3	Practical, hands on, active learning	42

Other factors such as: liking the teacher, it is creative, it is relevant and useful had insignificant numbers to be statistical significant to use as a factor and for comparison.

The Vignette 8.1 is an example of a Year 11 boy who makes clear distinctions between curriculum he enjoys and favours and those he finds difficult and boring. It is also a clear illustration of the effect of the teaching style adopted by the teacher and the affect it can have on a boy's attitude to the subject.

Vignette 8.1 Illustration of effect of teaching style

What are your favourite subjects? (Interviewer)
 "My favourite is PE, for the physical...it's good to just get out to exercise...and it's fun to play."
 "Academically, economics is my best. I enjoy it more, so I work harder."
 What is your most difficult subject? (Interviewer)
 "Accounting, I have got to take it."
 What's the difference between accounting and economics? (Interviewer)
 The teaching style is quite different between accounting and economics. I have to take a lot of notes in accounting and it gets boring." W11/11

8.5 Boys' Most Difficult Curriculum Subjects

The same subjects that some boys like the most are also the subjects that other boys find the most difficult. The reasons perceived by boys for their difficulty with the curriculum subject are due to it being either too difficult to understand, it's boring or there is too much copying and writing required during a teaching period. It would seem that teachers' actions have a direct link to a boy's like or dislike for a curriculum subject. Table 8.5 lists the curriculum areas that boys indicated are most difficult to understand and learn. English is the subject that boys dislike the most. Boys are more than twice as likely to dislike English as to like it.

Table 8.5 Curriculum boys find difficult

Ranking	Subjects boys find most difficult	N
1	English	50
2	Mathematics	31
3	Science (general and specific)	30
4	Languages (French, German, Spanish, Japanese)	11

Other curriculum subjects had a statistical insignificant number of responses that tallies were not

recorded.

There are three main factors identified by boys in this study as to reasons why they do not enjoy or have limited academic success with a particular curriculum area. The first is the amount of copying and writing involved within a curriculum subject. The data collected in this study would suggest boys consider there is an excess of writing across most of the curriculum areas.

“I’m not very good at writing creatively; I don’t have an open mind for it.” M8/7

“English, my difficulty is the writing. I’m a good speaker not a writer.” M11/6

“I don’t like physics because of the writing. I can figure out the equations but not the explanations.” M11/6

“A lot of chemistry is theory, I like doing stuff.” K13/1

“Don’t like maths, come to high school and its pretty much all theory.” M13/10

Secondly, boys tend to disengage if a curriculum subject is too difficult²³ (N = 49) and they do not understand the content being taught. A number of boys (N = 16) described such a subject as boring and a third group of boys (N = 14) indicated that they disengaged from the learning and classroom instruction if the teaching was too boring.

Table 8.6 Why boys find some curriculum difficult.

Ranking	Factors contributing to curriculum difficulty	N
1	Work too difficult or too hard	49
2	Boring	30
3	Too much writing and/or copying	19
4	Hard to concentrate	12
5	Lots of rules or theories to learn	11

Thirdly, boys perceive the way they are taught or the relationship they have with the teacher as critical to them enjoying and succeeding in a subject. The boys identified a number of teacher actions that they perceived contributed to them disliking a curriculum subject. The teaching actions were: (1) poor or little explanation given, (2) a lack of individual help given by teacher, (3) inconsistent management, (4) poorly explained

²³ Difficult refers to not be able to understand the content knowledge within a particular topic or curriculum.

assessment tasks and expectations and (5) perceived inconsistent, unfair or unjust behaviour management strategies employed towards one or more of the class.

“I don’t like mathematics. The teacher, he’s made some rude comments to me and other people too.” W9/10

“Social Studies is difficult, I don’t click with the teacher.” W9/2

The Vignette 8.1 of Michael²⁴ is an example of a boy who struggles at school because he perceives a lot of the work as boring and/or too difficult. Michael knows the value of education but finds that many of the school and classroom activities are not relevant or interesting, thus boring. Many of the boys interviewed expressed similar views to Michael concerning their learning and feelings about school.

Vignette 8.1 Michael: A Year 11’s Motivation to Learn.

Michael is a Year 11, sixteen year old Maori boy who goes to a large multicultural, coeducational state school. He enjoys sport especially rugby and basketball, hanging out with his friends and video games. At school the best thing is mates and getting an education; which is also the hardest thing at school for him. As he says “I want an education but I don’t want to work for it.” His biggest worry is getting in trouble because he gets bored and doesn’t do the work but plays around. Michael is staying at school because he thinks about the future and believes you need “education to get anywhere in the future” but he claims school does not motivate him.

His favourite subject is physical education because he “likes running around outside playing games.” Michael also enjoys Social Studies because of the interesting topics but dislikes economics because of the terminology, and English because it is a complicated language and he is “not too good at writing down answers.” He will sometimes ask teachers for help and “sometimes leaves it and gives up; can’t be bothered because I’m not interested and it’s too hard.”

Michael learns best in groups and on practical activities. He claims “I’m more the practical person than the theory person, learning best in groups.” He sees a good teacher as one who “makes the learning more fun by doing more practical stuff.” Michael also wants “a happy person” as his teacher that “makes you feel important and not just another student.” To assist Maori boys at school he sees two things as being important. First “to make it more interesting, practical; and getting them together to make things.” Secondly “making them feel important” so they will stay.

His mates are an important part of his life. A good mate is “honest, someone who respects you and your values, and learn things from each other. Someone who’s on your side and tells you and guides you.” Michael likes hanging out with his mates; to him this means, talking, eating, and going to each others house, playing sport, going to the mall and church together. M 11/5

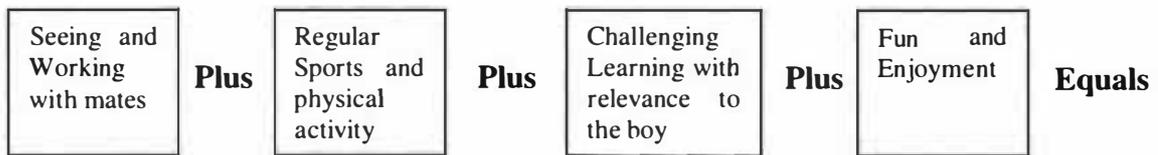
³ Michael is a pseudonym

8.6 Discussion and Analysis

This chapter emphasised the whole school environment and records boys' perceptions of school and curriculum. However, many of the topics the boys spoke about involved the classroom; it was not always possible to segregate classroom actions from school actions because of their closely intertwined characters. The school can make a significant difference to students, and a school's culture impacts on a student's engagement, learning, and future opportunities. Whether the impact is largely positive or negative depends substantially on how the school and teachers organise and structure the learning environment, and on the values, expectations and standards they communicate to students and their families (Martin, 2002; NRC, 2004; Younger & Warrington, 2005). The school environment has been referred to by researchers as – culture, climate, ethos, atmosphere and community; in this study it will be referred to as school culture. School culture refers “to the values, norms, beliefs and sentiments associated with routine practices and social interaction in schools” (NRC, 2004, p. 97). It is the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of the way schools both actively and subconsciously go about constructing the learning environment to meet the needs of their students.

The two factors that boys in this study identified as being the best thing about school were: (1) friendships and mates and (2) the opportunity to play sport. This research has already discussed the significance of mates, friends and the meeting and making of new friendships, as well as physical activity as prime motivators for boys (see Chapters 6 and 7). A third of the boys discussed the importance of learning; this learning had to have a number of elements that made it appealing and of significance to these boys. The learning factors were: (1) it was new or interesting learning: (2) it had an aspect of challenge: (3) an opportunity for boys to feel like they were ‘using their mind’ and (4) there was an element of fun and enjoyment. These identified factors from the findings would suggest that a school that optimises these four factors could create an environment in which boys were more likely to enjoy school and succeed. Figure 8.1 is a conceptual equation that incorporates the factors identified in this study for boys' liking school. This model comprises the four factors boys which have identified many times during interviews and discussions that contribute to their enjoyment and ultimate success at school.

Figure 8.1 Conceptual equation for boys liking school.



Boys liking and succeeding at school

Teachers have tended to separate students from their friends and mates believing that they are a distraction when it comes to learning. However, individual interviews and focus group data from this study has revealed that mates have more of a beneficial effect on learning, especially in the upper Year levels. The Te Kotahitanga Project (Bishop et al. 2003) has found that many of the Maori boys placed in a variety of cooperative learning experiences made marked academic improvement. Working together in groups has proven to be academically successful by a number of researchers (Bishop et al. 2003; Johnson & Johnson, 2006; Slavin, 1995). Many of the boys, especially in the upper Year levels expressed the desire to work in cooperative ways with their mates. They claimed mates not only supported and assisted with their learning, but also introduced a beneficial competitive nature to their learning and kept them focussed on the task at hand or the goal they wished to achieve.

The majority of boys when discussing learning do not want it to be too easy, but at the same time they do not want learning to be too difficult. In this study the boys rated learning that is too hard or difficult as one of the worst things about school (Table 8.2). In teaching, the principle of 'optimal challenge' requires a skilled teacher to achieve a balance between learning tasks that are 'too easy' and 'too hard' (Brophy, 2002; NRC, 2004). The resulting behaviour of some boys to work that is too easy or too hard can be very similar; boys can become bored with the classroom activity, disengaging from the learning and possibly engage in noisy and disruptive actions that disturb others. The principle of optimal challenge is similar to Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development referred to in Chapter Four. When students can benefit from the experience of interacting with a more knowledgeable individual, they are working in their zone of proximal development, a range of tasks that a student cannot yet do alone but can accomplish when assisted by a more skilled partner (Eggen & Kauchak, 2007;

Glassman & Wang, 2004). Boys in this study, who referred specifically to learning at school, indicated that learning need to be challenging, and give the boy the opportunity to develop new learning and to expand their mind. The boys indicated strongly that they wanted to do this in an active, challenging and enjoyable way. A constructivist approach to learning would best meet the learning needs as described by the boys in this study. This view of learning accepts that learners need to actively construct knowledge for themselves, and in Vygotsky's view this must first be socially constructed before it can be internalised by individuals. This view of knowledge construction has been widely adopted by the Ministry of Education and most educational providers and teachers in New Zealand.

Schools have to create an environment where the emphasis is on learning. Noble and Bradford (2000, p. 14) argued that:

Schools have to convince pupils of the importance of learning; they have to be learning organisations, and this culture or ethos is impossible if a large minority manifestly does not care about learning.

Research has identified a range of possible behaviours of boys who are underachieving; such behaviours as classroom disruption, discourtesy and lack of respect for teaching staff, and poor learning and study organisation (Martin, 2002; Noble & Bradford, 2000). Boys in this study (N=38) identified talking and 'mucking around' in class as a major inhibitor to learning, especially in the lower Year levels. Schools have to make it evident that the main reason for boys being at school is to learn. It has to be made clear to boys that sport is a benefit of being at school and not the main motivator or purpose for their attendance. This study would argue it is the responsibility of all involved in a school to make their school a learning organisation; a place that champions learning above all else. Flutter and Rudduck (2004), Martin (2002), Younger and Warrington (2005) and others have argued that a whole school approach is needed to meet the requirements and issues surrounding boys' academic success and to achieve an ethos which accepts and celebrates achievement in all areas of a boy's school life.

The data from this study would imply that boys do not perceive bullying as a major hindrance to their learning. Only nine of the 120 boys interviewed across the diversely different schools made mention of bullying and this was observed bullying on others and not bullying of self. From the comments made by these boys the bullying concerns

raised were about Year 9 and 10 boys fighting and scrapping amongst themselves and not older boys bullying younger boys. In research on bullying in schools there have been reported higher incidences of bullying than indicated by the boys in this study (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla et al. 2001; TIMSS, 1996; Whitney & Smith, 1993). This study was more concerned with listening to the voices of boys on learning and not asking questions regarding bullying, this may explain that lack of reference to bullying. A similar study by Trent and Slade (2001) found similar results in regard to boys and bullying. Some boys in both studies indicated that they 'give stick' or 'pay back' at times to others but these others are usually friends. Many boys see this as a bit of 'fooling' or 'mucking' around. This type of behaviour " is not considered to be a significant negative influence on either their attitude to achieving or their performance at school" (Trent & Slade, 2001, p. 18). Disruptive behaviour has been largely contributed to boredom by Rudduck and Flutter (2004). Jackson (2002) argued that 'laddish behaviour' experienced in some classrooms and schools may be contributed to boys trying to protect their self worth and/or social worth.

School for a very small minority (N=3) was a place which they could not wait to 'escape' from. This small minority found excessive school rules, inconsistent management and teachers expectations of and negative relationship with as factors for their 'school is a prison and escape' attitude. In Smyth's et al. (2000) research with at risk students contemplating leaving school there were students who also felt this way about school.

"Don't like it, want to get out of the place. Sometimes it is like a prison." W9/3

Noble and Bradford (2000, p. 14) warn that "boys who fail at school can all too often become alienated, under-employed, unskilled and antisocial." The findings from boys in this study would suggest that if school and staff are supportive, show that they care, are prepared to listen and work with the individual, and give pupils choices this would overcome much of the disruptive behaviour experienced in a school. A boy's 'quirky' sense of humour and a desire for fun will always mean that there will be boisterous behaviour around boys, and teachers need to recognise the difference between bullying and deliberate disruptive actions and boisterous behaviour.

Boys in the study revealed that they would not make dramatic changes to their school environment. The large majority of boys across the three schools are happy with their

school environment and proudly mentioned new buildings or school alterations that had occurred; approximately a quarter of the boys would make no changes at all. The changes that boys would make do not change dramatically between schools but do so between Year levels (see 8.3). Improving or adding to existing sports fields and equipment and the opportunity for more sport would be the most often request change by boys in this study. This is not surprising due to the prominence and importance that boys place on sport and physical activity.

There is a big difference physically, socially, emotionally and academically between a Year 9 and Year 13 boy and this brings about a major contention between Year 13 boys and their school. The data from this study would suggest that schools do not make sufficient changes and allowances between the young adolescent at Year 9 and the developing young man of Year 13. The research literature (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004; Slade, 2002; Smyth et al. 2000) indicated that a similar trend has been identified in overseas studies. Smyth et al. (2000) referred to this as a mismatch between the highly complex lives and relationships of young people and a school regime that “so often ignores this experience and maturity, demanding compliance, punishing deviance, and generally treating students like young children, rather than emerging adults” (p. 293). This study would argue that as a boy progresses through school he needs to be treated more and more like a young man. Starting secondary school the boy is still a teenager but by Year 13 he should be considered a young man. To achieve this a school needs to consider how to provide opportunities for boys to:

- increase and develop responsibility.
- exercise choices.
- involved in team and individual competition and challenge.
- have opportunities to be in the company of older males.
- listen to successful males.
- develop a social conscience through community activity.
- develop independence and respect.

Schools need to consider how they treat boys as developing adults and build this into the ethos of the school. Something the many boys in this study would argue is not happening to them at present in their schools.

In this study, as well as many others the teacher has been identified as the crucial factor in boys (and girls) achieving success at school. This has been discussed in the previous chapter. A boy's success in a particular curriculum area depends on the teacher; not just the pupil/teacher relationship but on how the teacher presents the curriculum. The data would suggest that a boy will tend to like and be more successful in a curriculum area where there is a variety of teaching activity during the course of a lesson; the emphasis being on activity. Four of the seven curriculum subjects boys liked best (Table 8.3) had large components of hands-on or other activity based tasks. Another contributing factor that boys perceived as leading to curriculum engagement was learning that involved a challenge and was presented in a manner that was easily understood with clear purpose and expectations. Many boys revealed that they did not mind writing, but not for long periods of time. The teaching technique of copy and write for long periods of time was a factor identified as a big turn off to boys' learning and also contributed to the feeling of learning and school being boring (Table 8.6).

The boys were very specific and clear in identifying within a teacher's pedagogy what they perceived inhibited their learning. Four factors emerged from the data: (1) Poor or little explanation of new knowledge or learning by teacher: (2) A lack of individual help or support by the teacher: (3) poor explanation of requirements of the assessment task and required standards and (4) inconsistent application of classroom management practices. Hawkes (2001), Rudduck and Flutter (2004), Slade (2002) and others have identified similar factors in their research through listening to and teaching boys in Australia and the United Kingdom.

The secondary school curriculum has changed and broadened as is evident by the number of boys who stated they enjoyed the new subjects of drama, photography and graphic arts. The schools that can offer a broader curriculum are more likely to be able to meet the needs of the diverse population of boys that attend their schools. Noble and Bradford (2000) have argued that schools that promote a broad curriculum help more pupils experience success, raise self esteem and indirectly improve performances. Along with the broadening of the curriculum should be the development of extracurricular activities and support which give boys wider choice as well as opportunities to develop leadership, collaboration, teamwork skills and the ability to meet new challenges. As boys are developing into young men they experience a variety of choices,

responsibilities, new experiences and health issues; a school needs to have a supportive student welfare system and pastoral care programme to meet these needs.

The difficulty for schools and staff in expanding curriculum is the ever increasing requirements of knowledges, targets and credits that have to be met within particular curriculum. Many researchers and commentators have issued warnings against an overcrowded curriculum which places ever increasing burdens on teachers and education systems and its impacts on pupil learning (Crooks, 2002; Lashlie, 2005; Noble & Bradford, 2000). Overcrowded curriculum can threaten deeper thinking and learning caused by time restraints as boys are rushed from topic to topic. The large majority of boys across the three schools in this study indicated they required more teacher time; they required teachers who would listen to them and give individual help and support. The study would argue that an overcrowded curriculum burdens many teachers to the extent that they cannot be the good teacher that they want to be or the boys want them to be.

The boys revealed that they liked a curriculum where they achieved success and enjoyment (Table 8.4). Success and enjoyment do not mean easy; according to the findings in this study a curriculum is enjoyable if it is interesting to the boy, a challenge to their thinking and is taught in an active, fun way. When boys in this study referred to fun it had two aspects, the first humour, having a joke and or a laugh with teacher and mates. The second aspect is the joy of actively doing, the delight of doing and completing a task that took mental challenge. These identified ingredients of success and enjoyment can find parallels in the principles and strategies that Brophy (2004) outlined for motivating students to learn.

Boys are experts on their school and the curriculum subjects they are learning. This study has found that the boys' ideas and perceptions on their school and learning are not over-the-top, ridiculous suggestions but are closely linked to what educationalists and researchers describe as good pedagogy and environments for learning. The challenge for school leaders is to recognise that change is required; then to work with boys to initiate and adopt new ideas and practices into the life and ethos of the school.

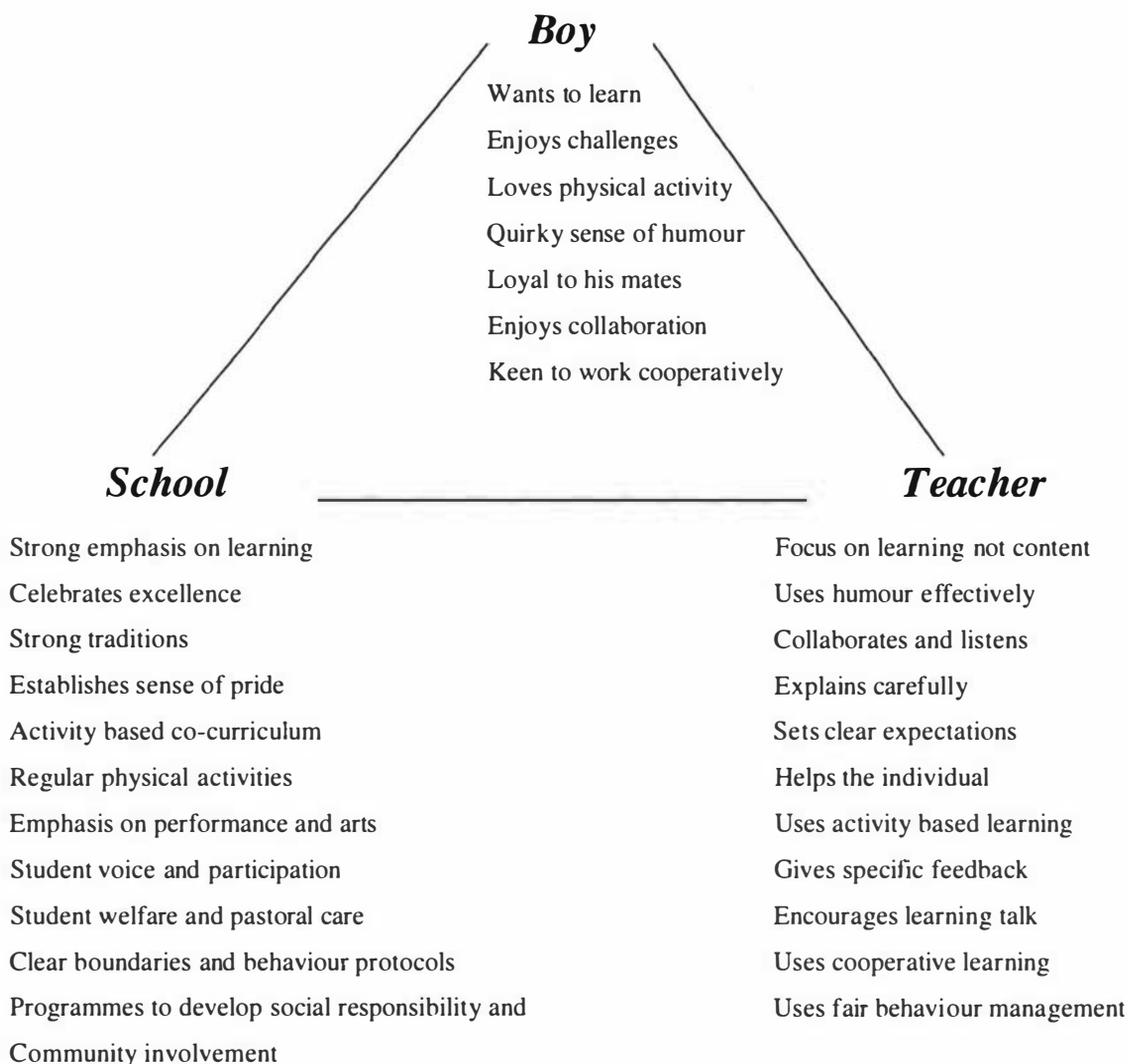
8.7 Summary

The boys in this study often put socialising and sports as their first priority for coming to school. No matter why boys come to school, once they have arrived, the school must ensure that the message is clear that a school is a learning community first and foremost. A school wide approach is necessary to ensure all the staff and the broader school community support the processes, expectations and standards that are necessary to create a school culture that celebrates achievement. The huge majority of boys are happy with the environment of their school; younger boys would make physical changes generally around sports and tuck shops while older boys' changes would concentrate on teacher/pupil relationship and pedagogy. The great majority of boys would like a relationship with their school and teachers that was more collaborative and less hierarchical. The boys in the older Year levels also want to be treated as young men and given more choices and freedoms to go with the increasing responsibilities and expectations they face as they develop maturity.

Figure 8.2 was created from the perceptions of boys relating to qualities of good teachers, school structure and support and the virtues that boys bring to learning. The Learning Triangle was developed to explain the important connectedness between school, teacher and boy. The characteristics under each apex are created from identified themes formed from the multiple perceptions of boys collected during interviews and focus groups. Each apex of the triangle is of vital necessity for successfully learning to occur within the school.

A triangle is a strong design and is often used to give strength and support to structures. This study would argue that all schools need to be designed on a strongly connected learning triangle; each apex is required for the achievement of academic success and boy well-being. This learning triangle can be a very strong structure to meet the learning needs of boys. However, if one apex is missing or is weakened through possessing an insufficient number of characteristics then the school would be weakened as a learning institution and the result could be boys struggling to make successful academic progress. The Learning Triangle is a synopsis of the findings from Chapters 6, 7, and 8 and summarises all that boys perceive important in learning, teaching and school.

Figure 8.2 Learning Triangle based on Boys' perceptions for learning



The next chapter presents both quantitative and qualitative findings on boys and what they perceive motivates them to learn and succeed. Statistical findings from the *Student Motivation Scale* will be presented along with the boys' perceptions on what they believe motivates them to stay at school and strive for academic success.

CHAPTER NINE

Boys' Motivation to Learn

Whether you think you can or whether you think you can't, you are probably right.

Henry Ford

9.0 Introduction

Boys' motivation is one of the most essential factors influencing the quality of their learning. Weinstein (1998, p. 81) argued that "motivation to learn lies at the core of achieving success at school." Motivation to learn does not just happen; certain preconditions must be in place before motivational strategies can be effective (Brophy, 2004). To understand boys perceptions of the strategies that motivate them in the school setting, two methods of data collection were used in this research; *The Student Motivation Scale* (Martin, 2003) and the semi-structured interview. The findings from this data are examined and discussed in this chapter.

The boys in this study talked enthusiastically about the things they liked best, their reasons for being at school and what motivated them to learn. They did not use the word motivation as part of their vocabulary, but tended to use words such as like, best, choice and wicked; such vocabulary describes what they were enjoying or intending to do in the future. The key question asked in the study was:

What motivates you to learn? (followed with the question)

What motivates you to come to school? (for clarification, further understanding)

The *Student Motivation Scale* was selected as it provides a reliable measure on ten factors that are considered to either enhance or hinder motivation, as defined by Martin, (2003) and discussed in Chapter 4. The *Student Motivation Scale* factor scores were compared with the themes identified from the collective responses of the semi-structured interviews. The aim was to establish correlation or conflict existed between

what the boys said at interview and the factors established from *Student Motivation Scale* data. For example, the question was asked of the data; *Did the Motivation scale factor 'Values School' compare with the boys say about school?* Was there a favourable correlation or a direct contrast?

The findings from both data collection methods were expected to give answers to the following questions:

1. *Does what motivates boys vary between Year levels or between schools?*
2. *What factors distract boys from academic learning?*
3. *How do the Motivation Scale findings of this study compare with a similar study conducted in Australia?*
4. *Can strategies be identified for increasing motivation to learn by studying the findings of the Student Motivation Scale and the semi-structured interview?*

This chapter provides an analysis of the findings of the semi-structured interviews and themes identified from examples of student voice. Secondly, examines the component factor analysis and other statistical factors of the *Student Motivation Scale*, analysed by using SPSS (Version 13) and discusses the questions raised in this chapter.

9.1 Qualitative Data: What Motivates Boys?

The boys' perceptions of what motivates them to learn are dominated largely by the future prospects of job, money and success on school completion. Success was largely measured by the majority of boys in this study as the amount of money you can earn and the purchasing of such material things as cars, houses and boats. There was a fear of failing expressed by a number of the boys (N=8); that is failing to get a good job or career and ending up having a 'dumb' or 'crappy' job.

"I want to have knowledge. I don't want to end up with a crappy job. I want to be smart and have a good job." M9/4

"Getting a good job, I want a lot in life, it all costs money." K13/7

"Have a good future, a good career instead of a dumb job." W9/8

"It's what you've got to do, motivated by fear of failure and Dad giving me a hard time." M13/1

Parents were also a strong motivating factor, the boys in this study tended to either want to please their parents or were under pressure from their parents, to achieve and do well. School was the place where you gained knowledge that in turn gave you options that would lead to financial success and through financial success your parents would be happy and proud.

“My Mum and Dad, they say if I want a better job I need a good education.” M9/2

“I think about my parents, they send me to school to do good, for a future, a good job.”

M11/12

Table 9.1 ranks the influences that boys’ perceive motivates them to do well at school and succeed. Most of the ranked influences are related to economically driven motivation factors such as job, success, university, future goals and parental career expectations.

Table 9.1 Factors that motivate boys to learn

Ranking	Motivational Influences	N
1	Job and Money	43
2 =	Future and Success ²⁵	26
2 =	Parents	26
3	Knowing and achieving your goals	21
4	Learning being fun, like doing, curious	16
5 =	Experiencing success	13
5 =	Wanting to go to University	13
6	Mates	7

The large majority of the boys saw education as a way to a better job or to giving them a range of choices for their future.

“So I know more things in the future to get a better job.” M11/3

“My future lies in education. I don’t want to be like a bum on the benefit and not doing anything.” M11/10

“I don’t know what I want to do after school, so schools going to give me lots of options.” K11/5

²⁵ Future and success largely referred to getting a good job where you were the boss and also acquired assets such as house, car, boat etc. Going to university was so you could gain qualifications to be an engineer, lawyer, accountant etc and then achieve success and money.

For two boys in the study, nothing motivated them to learn, they were at school because they had to be there. These boys would seem to be 'hanging in' at school but not really engaged in the learning or options that the school offered; waiting 'in limbo' until they could leave.

"Nothing really, I just come to school." M11/2

"Know end of year I can leave school and do what I want to do. My motivation is to get a job." W11/1

A sizeable group of the boys in the study (N=29) indicated that they were also motivated by either the process of learning or from the success of learning. In enjoying the process of learning they found the content knowledge interesting and it raised their curiosity and thus the desire to learn more. There was also comment on the way the teachers taught the knowledge and the boys' participation and collaboration in the learning process. Experiencing success in learning was due to either marks in assignments and examinations; or knowing you are gaining knowledge by responding to in-class questions or application of that knowledge in a relevant, practical way.

"Doing things that are fun makes you want to do it because it's cool." M9/8

"Schoolwork you do makes you want to learn more, especially in a subject you like."
M9/10

"When I'm doing well at something I try hard. Going to university and having the goal makes me work towards that." M13/11

A similar number of boys (N=21) are motivated to learn because they are competitively driven or challenged to do well, to try to be the best or they have goals that motivate them to succeed.

"I've always wanted to do really well. I'm competitive. Always strive for the top of the class." K13/2

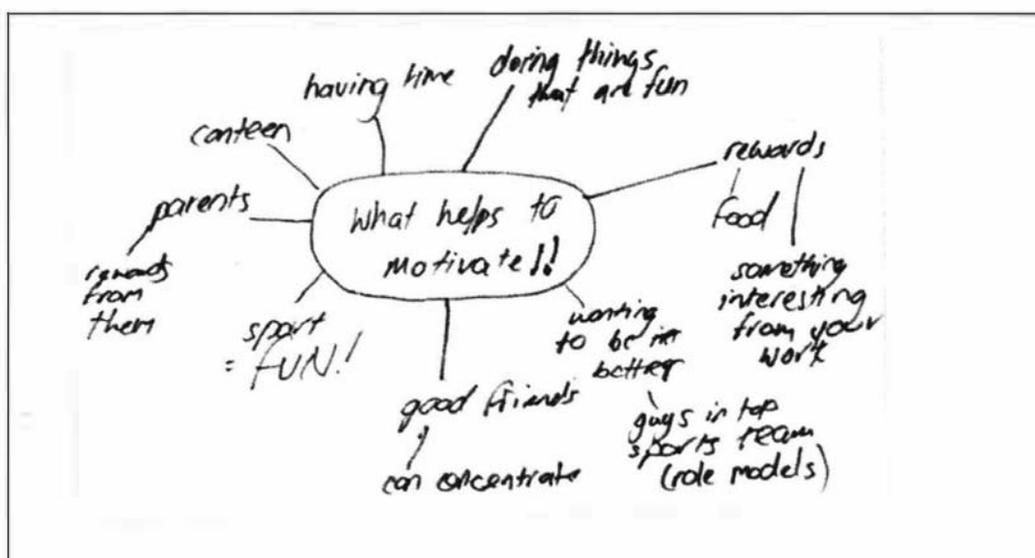
"I always set high standards for myself, it's a challenge." K13/7

Boys motivation to learn can be broadly divided into two classifications, those who are motivated due to economic reasons (job + money = success) and those who are motivated through the joy of learning; setting goals in their learning journeys and experiencing success in achieving those goals. The motivation for these boys was in the challenge of learning. Motivation for the boys in this study usually involved both motivating factors. They were more inclined to be motivated to learn when the teaching

strategies made learning fun, challenging and relevant, but this was linked to the main motivational force which was an economic reason of a good qualification and money earned. A small group of boys from across the three schools were motivated by their mates. The influence of mates tended to motivate the boys to stay at school and complete qualifications.

Figure 9.1 is the result of a brainstorm session with a group of Year 9 boys led by a student researcher. This figure illustrates some immediate motivational factors that boys have identified that encourage them, such as food and parental rewards. However, also identified are mates, the use of fun and sport as an incentive, interesting work with the time to complete it and a desire to improve or achieve greater results.

Figure 9.1 Focus Group Brainstorm: What motivates?



9.2 Quantitative Data: The Student Motivation Scale

The quantitative methodology used to collect data was the *Student Motivation Scale* (Martin, 2003) that was developed in Australia. This section of the chapter examines the *Student Motivation Scales* suitability for New Zealand pupils and examines the data from 311 boys who completed the scale as part of this study.

9.3 Quantitative Analysis

A principle components analysis was carried out on the New Zealand High School boys' data using *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* Version 13.0 for Windows. The decision to carry out an exploratory factor analysis on the 40 items was made on the basis that this would provide a relatively robust and straightforward method for verifying the factor structure of the *Student Motivation Scale*. The structure was tested using a varimax orthogonal factor solution. The varimax solution was selected with recognition that this would maximize the distance between factors thus minimizing the number of variables that have high loadings on each factor. The use of the orthogonal solution thus simplifies the interpretation of the factor analysis by pointing to the "marker" items that significantly load on each factor. The orthogonal solution, shown in Table 9.2 resulted in the emergence of ten factors with eigenvalues greater than unity (1). These 10 factors together accounted for more than 63 percent of the cumulative variance.

For the purpose of this analysis, factor loadings equal to or greater than .30 were deemed significant and are highlighted in Table 9.4. The factor structure of the *Student Motivation Scale* in the New Zealand sample was virtually identical to that found in Martin's original sample. Of the 40 items, 38 had their highest factor loading on the factors proposed by Martin (2003). The two remaining items (2 and 4) had significant loadings on Martin's factors (Learning Focus and School Value, respectively), but also had significant (and slightly higher) loadings on another factor (Self Belief and Learning Focus, respectively). These small differences are possibly due to the presence of boys only in the New Zealand sample. The results shown in Tables 9.2 and 9.4 confirm the original factor structure of ten factors or subscales reflecting the components (boosters and guzzlers) of the *Student Motivation Scale*.

The principle components analysis thus confirms the construct validity of the *Student Motivation Scale* and indicates that this instrument is appropriate for the purpose of analysing motivational factors in the present study.

Table 9.2 Eigenvalues and Total Variance Explained

Component Item	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.582	21.455	21.455
2	5.197	12.992	34.447
3	2.248	5.619	40.066
4	1.828	4.571	44.637
5	1.586	3.964	48.601
6	1.383	3.457	52.058
7	1.239	3.098	55.156
8	1.215	3.037	58.192
9	1.102	2.755	60.948
10	1.000	2.500	63.447
11	.906	2.265	65.712
12	.851	2.128	67.840
13	.814	2.035	69.875
14	.766	1.915	71.789
15	.746	1.865	73.654
16	.688	1.721	75.376
17	.680	1.700	77.075
18	.633	1.583	78.659
19	.611	1.527	80.186
20	.604	1.510	81.696
21	.582	1.455	83.151
22	.507	1.268	84.418
23	.491	1.228	85.646
24	.473	1.182	86.828
25	.465	1.163	87.991
26	.430	1.074	89.066
27	.413	1.034	90.099
28	.407	1.019	91.118
29	.388	.970	92.088
30	.379	.947	93.035
31	.344	.860	93.895
32	.330	.826	94.721
33	.321	.803	95.524
34	.311	.778	96.301
35	.297	.742	97.044
36	.275	.689	97.732
37	.253	.632	98.364
38	.237	.594	98.958
39	.234	.585	99.543
40	.183	.457	100.000

Before proceeding, however, an examination was also made of the reliability of each of the ten factors. Table 9.3 outlines the Cronbach alpha coefficients for Martin's Australian sample (boys only) and the New Zealand sample of this study. As can be seen, the coefficients are relatively high and comparable across the two samples. This

confirmed the internal consistency (reliability) of the 10 *Student Motivation Scale* factors.

Table 9.3 Cronbach's alpha

	Australia	New Zealand
Boosters (Enhancers)		
Self-belief	.78	.81
Value of Schooling	.76	.72
Learning focus	.81	.76
Planning	.77	.81
Study Management	.81	.81
Persistence	.79	.81
Guzzlers (Inhibitors)²⁶		
Anxiety	.77	.73
Uncertain Control	.81	.76
Failure avoidance	.80	.76
Self-sabotage	.80	.73

9.4 Mean Factor Scores

As expected, the mean scores for the boys in this study varied across the ten factors. The mean scores (and standard deviations) for the ten factors are shown in Table 9.5. The six 'positive' or booster factors, where a higher score is more school-positive, are shown first. As may be seen, scores for all six factors were above the mid-point of the scale. The highest factor scores were associated with boys' value for school, their ability to focus on learning, and belief in their personal competence to cope with school. The indication here is that boys generally accepted the purposes of schooling and felt capable in their personal learning. Boys appear to be somewhat less positive about their persistence on school tasks and the management of their study. However, boys were noticeably less positive (some 20 points lower than the average of the booster factors) about their academic planning and goal setting, which involves organising, timetabling and setting goals for study, homework, and assignments.

The shaded area indicates the guzzlers which inhibit motivation

Table 9.4 Item Factor Loadings for the Student Motivation Scale (New Zealand Study)

Factor	Self Belief	Value School	Learning focus	Planning	Study manage	Persist	Anxiety	Failure Avoid	Low Control	Self sabotage
ITEM1	.328	.030	.026	.120	.064	.674	.022	-.024	-.062	-.104
ITEM2	.421	.084	.375	.034	.127	.212	.073	.057	.233	-.269
ITEM3	.263	-.012	.135	.153	.698	.254	.055	-.010	-.064	-.074
ITEM4	.003	.408	.516	.154	.128	.182	.017	.002	-.145	.225
ITEM5	-.050	.079	-.109	-.110	-.024	-.050	-.047	-.050	.144	.725
ITEM6	.013	.014	-.097	-.009	-.124	.059	.047	.008	.787	.121
ITEM7	.490	.193	.262	.152	-.097	.193	.005	.114	.181	-.220
ITEM8	.240	.133	.229	.226	.158	.678	-.080	-.014	-.142	-.114
ITEM9	.181	.093	.027	.187	-.041	.001	.722	.105	.129	-.077
ITEM10	-.026	-.003	.185	.060	.003	-.045	-.015	.769	.158	.110
ITEM11	-.237	.010	.204	.032	.086	-.142	.247	.184	.581	.181
ITEM12	.765	.111	.132	.113	.136	.104	.037	-.008	-.167	-.044
ITEM13	.358	.615	.020	-.042	.262	.187	.025	.078	.011	-.091
ITEM14	-.147	.020	.067	.217	.147	-.090	.185	.093	.671	.244
ITEM15	.185	.004	.069	.457	.625	.195	.071	.033	-.022	-.045
ITEM16	-.026	-.033	-.052	.151	-.041	-.046	.201	.348	.637	.077
ITEM17	.096	.157	.122	-.002	.166	.056	.654	.175	.236	-.110
ITEM18	-.023	-.045	.128	.045	.099	-.096	.099	.790	.167	.181
ITEM19	.252	.081	.065	.724	.150	-.111	.135	.091	.124	.056
ITEM20	.721	-.023	.045	.159	-.003	.340	-.005	-.118	-.130	.039
ITEM21	.052	-.069	.085	.056	.003	-.172	.025	.188	.155	.722
ITEM22	.315	.025	.713	.066	.119	.124	.084	-.036	-.012	-.078
ITEM23	.215	.148	.720	.077	-.015	.081	.140	.100	.052	-.058
ITEM24	.101	.093	.067	.745	.027	.362	.056	-.007	.102	-.077
ITEM25	.219	.165	.141	.248	.238	.630	.031	-.089	-.033	-.056
ITEM26	.042	.010	.111	.769	.106	.260	.119	.097	-.012	-.041
ITEM27	.046	.152	-.140	.049	-.129	.064	.207	.684	-.037	.067
ITEM28	.059	.012	.147	.119	.365	.030	.050	.043	.002	-.109
ITEM29	.645	.188	.130	.138	.163	.157	.095	.020	-.029	-.061
ITEM30	.119	.805	.178	.074	-.099	.077	.028	-.046	.023	.026
ITEM31	-.164	-.010	-.007	.026	-.149	-.014	.092	.242	.149	.715
ITEM32	.230	.169	.067	.175	.246	.718	-.002	.037	.060	-.078
ITEM33	-.201	-.002	.124	.134	-.005	-.092	.686	.021	.071	.209
ITEM34	.029	-.026	-.073	.145	.095	.026	.147	.743	.094	.165
ITEM35	.121	-.043	.010	.727	.269	.160	.066	.162	.123	-.031
ITEM36	.601	.299	.224	.122	.197	.171	.044	.024	-.094	-.124
ITEM37	.484	.591	.091	.020	.190	.164	.070	.095	.032	-.139
ITEM38	-.142	-.079	-.074	-.081	.033	-.031	.132	.245	.041	.611
ITEM39	.109	-.095	.011	.032	.088	.045	.778	.151	.083	.132
ITEM40	.102	.234	.003	.259	.662	.234	.092	.045	.085	-.003

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 9 iterations.

In terms of the 'negative' or guzzler factors, where a higher score is less school-positive, the boys appeared to be relatively anxious about school. The boys were

somewhat less likely to feel a lack of personal control and to engage in failure-avoidance activities. A possible interpretation of this is that they appeared to have a motivational structure that could lead them to undermine their school learning by engaging in aspects of self-sabotage.

These trends are similar to those found by Martin (2003a). Mean scores on the ‘positive’ factors were almost identical, with boys in Australia having a similar dip for planning skills as in this study. The ‘negative’ inhibiting motivation factors were also within two points of Martin’s (2003a) study. Overall the pattern of motivation of the boys in New Zealand appeared to mirror that of boys of similar age in Australia. In this study the weakest positive enhancing motivation factor for the boys is planning, with anxiety being the negative inhibiting factor contributing to boys’ difficulties with school motivation.

Table 9.5 Total Mean and Standard Deviation for Motivation Factors

Factor	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self Belief	78.76	15.08
Value School	80.91	13.32
Learning focus	79.34	13.56
Planning	54.40	19.49
Study Manage	67.26	20.10
Persistence	68.28	16.16
Anxiety ²⁷	58.61	18.24
Failure Avoid	49.74	19.66
Low Control	50.48	16.80
Self Sabotage	45.45	17.57

9.5 School Level and Socio-economic Effects

In preliminary analyses, the factor scores were examined separately as a function of ethnicity, school year level, and school. Ethnic differences were statistically significant

²⁷ The shaded factors are motivation inhibitors and the lower the score the better. Martin (2003) indicates 0-24 as a strength, 25-49 as good and can become a strength, 50-70 needs work, 75- 100 needs more work. For the other factors that are motivation boosters the score is reversed. 75-100 is a strength, 0-24 needs more work.

($p < .05$) on 7 of the 10 scales. There was a tendency for mean scores on both the booster and guzzler factors to be higher for Asian students than for the other ethnic groups. However, there was not a consistent pattern of results across the five ethnic groups. Furthermore, interpretation of the ethnicity results was compromised by the imbalance in the ethnic composition of the sample (Pakeha students comprised 61% of the sample), the presence of very few members in one ethnic group (as few as 2), and the observation that the significant results were most likely a result of divergent mean scores in the smallest ethnic group. For these reasons, and that ethnicity was not a focus of the study, further analysis of ethnicity effects was discontinued.

The preliminary analyses also indicated significant effects associated with school level (Years 9, 11 and 13) and School. As noted earlier the three schools selected for this study were chosen to represent diverse cultural and social groups. The schools socioeconomic groupings ranged from medium to high. Since both school level and school socioeconomic status (SES) were intentionally included in the design of the study, and were represented by reasonably large sample sizes, further analyses of these two variables were undertaken.

In the first instance, the mean scores on all 10 factors were examined in a 3 (School Level) x 2 (School SES) multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) where significant effects (Pillai's Trace) were found for both School Level, $F(20, 526) = 2.16, p < .01$, and School SES, $F(10, 262) = 5.46, p < .001$. The multivariate interaction effect (School Level X School SES) was also significant, $F(20, 526) = 1.83, p < .05$.

In view of the significant effects associated with school level and SES, independent univariate analyses were undertaken for each of the 10 motivation factors. The mean scores for these analyses are shown in Table 9.6. Independent analyses were undertaken to include a larger proportion of the sample (in a multivariate analysis missing data on one factor results in the loss of the participant's scores on all factors), and to simplify reporting of the results.

It should be noted that examination of the pattern of significant between-subjects effects in the multivariate analysis and those in the independent analyses of the effects (10 factor scores for each of the 3 School Levels, and SES Levels and the 3 interactions =

30 effects) revealed the same result on 27 occasions.

Table 9.6 Boys' Mean Factor Scores as a function of Year level and school SES

Year Level	Year 9		Year 11		Year 13	
	Medium ²⁸ Mean SD	High Mean SD	Medium Mean SD	High Mean SD	Medium Mean SD	High Mean SD
Self Belief	77.17 (14.10)	79.95 (16.66)	79.02 (12.40)	71.87 (19.22)	82.63 (13.01)	81.08 (18.62)
Value School	82.27 (11.40)	85.25 (17.24)	82.73 (12.68)	75.26 (14.39)	79.38 (10.95)	78.10 (16.16)
Learn Focus	79.63 (13.50)	79.99 (16.08)	78.10 (13.00)	76.10 (14.56)	81.98 (12.28)	78.65 (13.86)
Planning	56.23 (19.21)	54.51 (20.28)	48.98 (20.01)	56.40 (19.45)	54.27 (18.06)	62.42 (19.13)
Study Manage	66.85 (17.52)	64.57 (18.02)	66.88 (19.52)	62.84 (18.42)	70.14 (24.71)	71.63 (19.92)
Persist	71.68 (14.71)	67.38 (17.74)	66.95 (15.60)	61.06 (19.47)	68.86 (14.42)	71.91 (16.89)
Anxiety	59.52 (17.630)	55.81 (16.96)	57.06 (19.10)	60.56 (15.24)	57.35 (19.34)	64.90 (19.15)
Failure avoid	49.73 (17.49)	55.07 (23.20)	47.42 (17.90)	54.22 (20.69)	43.89 (19.34)	60.63 20.41
Low Control	48.87 (16.18)	56.11 (16.39)	49.31 (16.92)	61.51 (11.56)	43.43 (16.41)	57.06 (15.84)
Self Sabotage	41.92 (16.72)	51.66 (16.94)	44.32 (16.51)	53.04 (17.19)	41.01 (18.29)	53.07 (15.94)

For the 3 remaining comparisons, the independent univariate analyses did confirm one significant School Level effect and two significant interaction effects found in the multivariate analysis making the results of the independent univariate analyses slightly

²⁸ Medium were School W and School M with a decile rating of 5.

High was School K with a decile rating of 10.

more conservative than those found in the multivariate analysis.

The results shown in Table 9.6 indicate that the positive booster factors of Value of Schooling, Learning Focus, Study Management and Persistence are at a very similar level between SES and Year levels. The Self Belief factor appears to be slightly higher at Year 13. The positive booster factor of Planning, which involves organising, timetabling and setting goals for study, homework and assignments, is between 20 and 30 percentage points lower than the other booster factors. The negative guzzler motivation factors show a greater variance between schools but not between Year levels. It would appear that all boys in the study showed that the anxiety factor influenced their motivation to a certain degree.

9.6 Booster Factors

Across the six booster factors, there were significant main effects for Year Level for three factors (of 6), but there was little consistency in the pattern of these scores. Older students (Year 13) had a higher mean score on *Self Belief* than students in the two earlier levels [Y9 = 77.99 (14.88); Y11 = 76.66 (15.29); Y13 = 82.23 (14.61), $F(2, 314) = 3.64, p < .05$]. However, younger students in Year 9 had a higher mean score on *Value for School* than students in the two older year levels [Y9 = 83.19 (13.44); Y11 = 80.31 (13.66); Y13 = 79.03 (12.53), $F(2, 307) = 3.02, p < .05$]. Finally, students from the upper and lower year levels had higher mean scores on *Persistence* than students in the middle year level [Y9 = 70.41 (15.72); Y11 = 65.04 (17.09); Y13 = 69.66 (15.08), $F(2, 315) = 3.81, p < .05$]. This pattern of results is difficult to interpret. It might have been expected that higher scores on all booster factors would be found in Year 13 students, since these were students who elected to stay in school beyond the minimum leaving age (16 years). No significant school level effects were found for *Learning Focus*, *Planning*, or *Study Management*, although the direction of the mean scores was highest in the upper year level for these factors. Thus student age, at least across the 5-year span in this study, was not systematically associated with differences in positive motivation.

For the same booster factors, there was only one significant main effect associated with School SES, suggesting that differences in general positive motivation were also not strongly affected by socioeconomic status. Students in the boys only middle

socioeconomic school, had a higher mean score on *Value for School* than students in the other middle or higher socioeconomic schools, [MM²⁹ = 78.99 (13.19); MW = 83.92 (9.76); HK = 79.47 (16.32), $F(2, 307) = 4.76$, $p < .01$]. It should be noted that this effect was confounded with two other factors, preventing a clear interpretation. The middle socioeconomic school with higher scores was the only “boys only” school in the sample, and also the only school with a substantial sample of rural students. Scores on the remaining five booster factors had no significant association with the socioeconomic status of the schools, although the direction of the mean scores was highest in the middle socioeconomic school for four of these factors. Finally, there were no significant School Level x School SES interaction effects for the booster variables, p range = .08 to .62, mean $p = .31$.

9.7 Guzzler Factors

Across the four guzzler factors, there was one significant effect associated with school level. Older students in Year 13 had a lower (more positive) mean score on *Low Control* than students in the two earlier levels [Y9 = 51.01 (16.51); Y11 = 53.02 (16.46); Y13 = 47.02 (17.09), $F(2, 314) = 3.00$, $p = .05$]. Older students also had lower scores on failure avoidance and self-sabotage, although these were not significant. In general then, the age of the students was not a strong factor in explaining differences in positive motivation.

In contrast, differences in negative motivation were quite strongly associated with socioeconomic status. For the same four guzzler factors, there were three significant effects associated with the socioeconomic status of the school. Students at the higher socioeconomic school had a higher mean score on *Failure Avoidance* [MM = 46.32 (17.60); MW = 47.92 (19.02); HK = 56.24 (21.46), $F(2, 315) = 8.33$, $p < .001$], *Low Control* [MM = 48.17 (15.99); MW = 46.41 (17.17); HK = 58.35 (14.71), $F(2, 314) = 15.91$, $p < .001$], and *Self Sabotage* [MM = 43.31 (17.54); MW = 41.63 (16.76); HK = 52.60 (16.61), $F(2, 310) = 11.81$, $p < .001$] than students in the middle SES schools. The same pattern was found for *Anxiety*, but this effect was not significant. As with the

²⁹ MM, MW and HK; the first letter equates to middle or high socio-economic level and the second letter to the school.

booster factors, there were no significant School Level x School SES interaction effects associated with the guzzler factors.

9.8 Summary of Quantitative Data

Overall, boys were quite positively motivated for school, with higher scores on the booster factors than the guzzler factors. This tendency was more apparent for older boys, though not always significant. The distinction between booster and guzzler factors was more apparent in the analysis of socioeconomic effects. For 5 of the 6 booster factors there were no significant differences between schools of different socioeconomic status, and where a significant difference was found it could not be attributed solely to socioeconomic status. But for the guzzler factors there was strong evidence that students at the higher socioeconomic school were more likely to engage in the maladaptive motivation strategies of self-sabotage, avoiding failure, and perceiving themselves as having low control over their learning. The significance of this will be examined in the discussion to follow.

9.9 Discussion and Analysis

Boys' motivation to learn is influenced by a number of variables that have both positive and negative effects. Martin (2003) and Brophy (2004) and others have claimed that if certain preconditions of learning are in place; factors that contribute to motivation can be taught. Boys can be taught how to develop strategies that will enhance their motivation to learn and avoid or limit conditions that hinder that motivation. The expectancy x value model has important relevance to this research and can be used to explain most of the findings of both this chapter and previous chapters as well.

Much of what researchers have learned about motivation, including implications for teachers, can be organized within an expectancy x value model (Feather, 1982; Pekrun, 1993; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). The *expectancy x value model of motivation* holds that the effort that people are willing to expend on a task is the product of (a) the degree to which they expect to be able to perform the task successfully if they apply themselves (and thus the degree to which they expect to get whatever rewards that successful task performance brings), and (b) the degree to which they value those rewards as well as the opportunity to engage in the processes involved in performing the task itself. (Brophy, 2004, p. 18)

Table 9.7 demonstrates a link between this study's findings from both boys' perceptions of their motivation to learn and preconditions required to learn with the expectancy x value model.

In this study the aim was to use a variety of data collection tools to identify both positive and negative features that contribute to boys' motivation to learn; this proved successful in understanding boys' perceptions of what motivates them in school settings. The *Student Motivation Scale* was found to be reliable for use in New Zealand secondary schools and identified a number of possible factors that contribute to boys' motivation to learn. The use of focus groups and individual interviews added to the depth of understanding obtained through the *Student Motivation Scale* and in fact complemented many of the findings. Two such examples were the booster factors of Value of Schooling and Planning of Learning identified in the data from the *Student Motivation Scale* being also two strong themes that were identified from the qualitative findings. In particular boys' recognising the value of schooling was identified as a positive factor across the three schools and Year levels using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Recognising the value of schooling could possibly be a prior condition for the development of other learning motivational factors.

There seems to be a connection between boys recognising the value of schooling and how they perceive their teachers involvement with them. Brophy (2004) claimed that if a teacher develops a positive relationship with students and that they believe the teacher is sincere, cares and has their best interest in mind, there is more likely to be positive flow-on effects for motivation. In chapters 7 and 8 of this study, it was argued that one of the key components to boys' academic success is the perceived relationship he has with his teacher. A number of researchers (Brophy, 2004; Davis, 2001; Osterman, 2000; Wentzel, 1999) have found that motivation to learn is inclined to be higher when

Table 9.7 Boys' Perceptions of Motivation and Preconditions for Learning linked to Motivation Model of Expectancy x Value.

Boy's Perceptions , identified themes from Present Study	Anticipated Implications Prior to Task Engagement	Reaction to Task Processes during Task Engagement
Boys want to succeed, Boys value schooling; believe education gives options for job, university and future. Boys require sports, physical activity, choices, socialising and working with mates.	<i>Affect:</i> Enjoyment, anticipation of success, reward <i>Cognition:</i> Recognises one can attain goals/rewards with reasonable effort. Focus on meeting stated performance criteria	<i>Affect:</i> Satisfaction as skills and knowledge develops. Pride in success. <i>Cognition:</i> Perception of progress. Attributes success to ability plus effort. Focus on developing ones knowledge and skills
Boys fear or expect failure due to: Poor teacher/pupil relationship Teaching practice that is largely listen, copy, write. Content knowledge seen as irrelevant	<i>Affect:</i> Apathy, resignation, resentment at forced participation, boys just 'hanging-in'. <i>Cognition:</i> Boys' perceive they cannot win. No realistic chance to earn desire rewards/goals/grades.	<i>Affect:</i> Fear of failure, anxiety, and embarrassment. <i>Cognition:</i> Task focus infected by perception of confusion, failure, helplessness. Attribute performance to insufficient ability
Boys engaged and value task. Teaching relevant, practical, collaborative and enjoyable. Teacher explains carefully, listens, cares, responds individual needs, and enjoys humour.	<i>Affect:</i> Eager to learn. Energised. <i>Cognition:</i> Recognition that the task is a subgoal to important future goals. Focus on the "relevant" aspects of the learning.	<i>Affect:</i> Enjoyment, pleasure. Engagement in task reward in it own right. <i>Cognition:</i> Relaxed concentration. Flow ³⁰ . Metacognitive awareness of task and one's response. Focus on academic content when learning and quality of product when performing.
Boys involved in a negative valued task.	<i>Affect:</i> Alienation, resistance. Student reluctant to acquire this knowledge or skill. <i>Cognition:</i> Perceptions of conflict between what task represents and one's self-concept. Anticipation of undesirable consequences to involvement in such tasks.	<i>Affect:</i> Anger or dread. Student dislikes task, which in effect is a punishment. <i>Cognition:</i> Task focus infected by resentment, awareness of being coerced into pointless, unpleasant or negatively valued activity.

Table 9.7 has been developed from Brophy's (2004, p. 19) Table of Students' Subjective Experiences Relating to the Expectancy Aspects of Task Engagement.

students perceive that their teachers care and like them and are responsive to their needs; but that students are more disaffected when they perceive this relationship does not exist. The findings from this present study would suggest that to improve boys' motivation to learn there needs to be established a strong positive pupil-teacher relationship; and that this leads to a boy's increased value of school.

³⁰ Flow is when totally absorbed in doing something under our control and action which is challenging and enjoyable with totally intrinsic motives.

Martin (2003) defines the value of schooling as “how much a student believes what they learn at school is useful, important and relevant to them or to the world in general” (p. 45). Both Martin (2003) and Brophy (2004) suggest similar strategies that can be implemented by teachers to assist boys increase their opinion and attitudes on the value of schooling. Such strategies are:

- Construct links between what boys learn at school and world events.
- Create links between what boys learn at school and how it can be used in other areas of their life.
- Teachers model, showing how they value what is being taught.
- Pupils asked to predict how school learning could be useful for what they might want to do in the future.
- Illustrate and discuss how learning is more than just learning knowledge. Learning is also about thinking, analysing, problem solving and creating.

These strategies have a common theme; make learning relevant for boys so they see the worth of the learning. Creating links between learning and the life of boys was a key factor identified in this study for assisting boys to enhance their learning. Relevance of learning to the learner has been discussed in chapters 7 and 8 of this study.

The data from the *Student Motivation Scale* identified the planning factor to be 20 to 30 points lower than any other booster factor. The qualitative data from this study found that boys tended to fit study, completion of assignments and other schoolwork around other activities in their lives. Most of the boys interviewed tended not to be organised for study or have a plan or a goal for either short term or long-term learning. A number of the boys in this study identified not being organised and being more easily distracted as a possible reason for why girls do better than they do at school. Martin (2003, p. 47) defines planning as “how much students plan their assignments and study and how much they keep track of their progress as they are doing their schoolwork.” Such strategies as being able to break learning tasks into parts, ensuring there is clear understanding of requirements, knowing appropriate strategies to achieve the learning task, monitoring of progress, and keeping a timeline to task completion have been suggested to assist pupils with planning (Martin, 2003).

Associated with planning is the setting of goals. It is through the setting of goals that students learn to measure their performance and appreciate their accomplishments. Researchers (Bandura, 1997; Brophy, 2004; Locke & Latham, 2002) have shown that setting goals and making a commitment to trying to reach these goals increases performance levels. Brophy (2004, p. 68) has identified three aspects to successful goal setting. "Goal setting is especially effective when goals are proximal rather than distal, specific rather than global, and challenging rather than too easy or too hard." This study would suggest that to improve boys' planning for learning schools need to teach specific goal setting strategies. Boys must learn to set goals for both short term learning tasks as well as longer term schooling aspirations; and these goals need to be set in collaboration with the boy and are pertinent to him.

Data from this study suggests one of the boys' main motivations to learn is to have the knowledge and opportunity to gain a 'good' job and gain economic freedom and success. Boys often referred to learning as having to be relevant; this was relevant either for them now or for future careers and economic independence. This theme is related to the concept of 'productive pedagogies' (Lingard et al. 2002) discussed earlier in Chapter 7. Schools need to adopt teaching methods that enhance the attributes of 'productive pedagogies'. Thus learning should: (1) be intellectually challenging, (2) be relevant and connected to students' lives and worlds within and beyond the classroom, (3) be socially supportive, (4) encourages positive risk taking, (5) recognise individual student needs and (6) engages with the students. Productive pedagogies should also be associated with boys setting of short and long term goals and with assistance given to boys' planning and management of their learning.

Anxiety, according to Martin (2003, p. 50), has two parts: "feeling nervous and worrying. Feeling nervous is the uneasy or sick feeling students get when they think about schoolwork, assignments or exams." Worrying, is their fear about not doing very well in their schoolwork, assignments and exams". Martin claimed that if students are too anxious they tend to have greater difficulty concentrating, paying attention, and remembering or recalling knowledge. The data from the *Student Motivation scale* in this study identified anxiety as the motivational guzzler that tended to have the most effect on boys motivation to learn. Table 9.6 showed that similar results were found between the three Year levels, with slightly higher results for anxiety in School K. In fact School

K was also slightly higher in low control, self-sabotage and failure avoidance. This school is an independent, fee paying, well resourced, high socio-economic school and these results may be a reflection on expectations and pressures exerted on students to achieve high standards, to 'do well' by both parents and staff of the school. A number of students from this school, when interviewed, made comment about the high monetary cost parents were paying for them to be there. Added to this, more boys from School K indicated that they were motivated by their parents' expectations for them to go to university and obtain a professional job (lawyer, accountant, own business) than students from the other two schools. It is possible School K boys' slightly higher motivation guzzler factors could be caused by higher expectations and pressures from parents to do well as they were paying for a good education. The school in creating higher expectations of success and to be seen to be a leading school in a market driven economy adds the additional pressure. A school's desire for academic excellence and 'top school' status needs to be balanced against pupils' optimum learning factors and attitudes. An overload of expectations on boys could lead to an increase in motivation guzzler factors and fear of failure that can reduce boys' ability to perform to potential. As Brophy (2004, p. 7) stated:

Students who feel anxious or rejected are unlikely to take the intellectual risks involved in seeking to overcome confusion and construct clear understandings, and even less likely to try to be creative when working on assignments.

In Martin's (2003b) study in Australia the *Student Motivational Scale* was used with both boys and girls. He reported:

Girls are slightly higher than boys in their belief in the value of school, learning focus, planning, study management and persistence. In terms of guzzlers, girls are significantly higher than boys in anxiety while boys are significantly higher in self-sabotage. (p. 52).

Martin claimed that guzzler factors, and in particular failure avoidance and self-sabotage are two factors that are underpinned by a fear of failure. A number of researchers (Jackson, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2006; Mclean, 1997; Martin, Marsh & Debus, 2003) have identified fear of failure as being particularly pertinent to boys and their construction of gender. It has been argued by Jackson (2000, 2003, 2006) that fear of failure can lead to defensive behaviour and actions in the classroom and during assessment situations that can result in limited learning occurring and little attempt to improve.

The study identified a number of boys who felt they had low control. Low control is when students are unsure how to do well, how to control the outcomes of their learning. If students are low in control they can feel somewhat helpless when doing their schoolwork (Martin, 2003). Like girls, boys require that they feel they have the ability and capabilities to succeed on particular learning tasks. They need to feel in control of the situation, but both qualitative and quantitative data from this study would suggest that many boys do not feel this way. Boys who feel they have low control need to be assisted to develop what is termed self-efficacy perceptions. Bandura (1997, p. 3) defined self-efficacy perceptions as “a belief in one’s capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments.” Self-efficacy is concerned with belief in yourself, your ability to succeed. In starting a task or challenge the boy is expecting to succeed and as importantly, he feels his teacher is expecting him to succeed. The findings from this study would suggest that a number of boys do not have the planning or organisation ability or the feelings of control over their learning tasks to achieve self-efficacy; they do not expect to succeed. In chapter 8 it was revealed that a significant number of boys perceived that they were not expected to do as well as girls; a disturbing revelation if many boys feel that is the case.

The expectancy x value model implies that for a boy to be motivated to achieve, the boy needs good reasons to achieve and not just the confidence that he can achieve if he tries. The boys in this study indicated that good teachers made the learning relevant; they gave reasons for achieving the learning. The research of Eccles and Wigfield (1985) reported in Brophy (2004) indicated that there were three major components to creating task value: the reason for doing a task. They are: (1) Attainment value: the importance of attaining success on a task in order to fulfil our needs for achievement, power or prestige; (2) Intrinsic or interest value: the enjoyment we get from engaging in the task; (3) and Utility value: the role that engaging in the task may play in helping us to reach larger goals or future careers. Task value can be closely linked to the qualitative data summarised in Table 9.1 that indicates factors that boys perceive as motivating them to learn. The data recorded in this table indicates that boys place equal value on the three components of task value. The expectancy x value model can be practicably applied to pedagogy. Commentators and researchers (Hawkes, 2002, Martin 2002; Noble & Bradford, 2000; Smyth et al. 2000; West, 2002) on boys’ motivation, engagement and

success with learning tasks have claimed that success encourages an expectancy of more success, especially when this is linked to relevant and useful tasks. The findings of this study support this premise.

In this study boys were most enthusiastic about curriculum or activities where they felt in control and could determine goals and self-regulate their actions. This happens rarely in schools. Deep, powerful learning³¹ where students have engaged in high level cognitive activity, is more likely achieved through intrinsic motivation where the boy is doing an activity because they want to, rather than because they have to or need to. Brophy (2004, p. 10) defined intrinsic motivation as “actions that require no separate motivating consequences; the only necessary reward for them is the spontaneous interest and enjoyment that we experience as we do them.” Classrooms need to be geared towards creating intrinsic motivated activity as this has the potential to produce deep, meaningful learning. Csikszentmihalyi (1993) defined such learning as flow. Flow tends to be experienced when we are enjoying and are totally absorbed in a challenging activity. Csikszentmihalyi listed eight characteristic dimensions that contribute to creating a flow experience. The boys in this study identified these eight characteristics as they identified factors that they perceived enhanced their learning; especially challenging enjoyable activity. The eight characteristics are:

1. The activity has clear goals and immediate feedback.
2. Individual personal skills are well suited to the activity.
3. Action and awareness merge.
4. Full concentration on the task at hand.
5. Loss of self-consciousness, a sense of growth, of being part of something bigger.
6. A sense of potential control.
7. Loss sense of time, time seems to pass quicker.
8. The experience becomes intrinsic; it is worth doing for its own sake.

The challenge for schools and teachers is to create as many learning experiences as possible where the boys have the potential of experiencing flow; that total absorption and enjoyment in their learning.

³¹ Deep, powerful learning is where students have been absorbed in high level cognitive activity.

9.10 Summary

The methodologies used to gain a greater understanding of boys motivation to learn in the school setting proved successful. The *Student Motivation Scale* (2003) ten factors were proven to be reliable for use in New Zealand secondary schools through principle components analysis and Cronbach alpha analysis. Individual interviews and boys' only focus groups contributed narrative text that supported and added depth to the findings from the *Student Motivation Scale*.

Motivation to learn is the key to successful academic achievement. The boys in this study have identified key factors that they perceive enhance their motivation to learn. Such factors as wanting to learn, valuing the importance of school, believing that they are able to learn are important components that the boys rated highly in the *Student Motivation Scale*. Boys' motivation to learn is hindered through lack of planning and management of learning and study, as well as specific motivational guzzler behaviours that can result in anxiety and fear of failure. Both schools and parents need to take care in creating too high expectations and pressures that can result in anxieties and self-sabotaging behaviours that can jeopardise academic success.

Boys are motivated to learn at school largely through future desires for a 'good' job with resultant monetary rewards. Learning for the joy of learning can also be motivating for boys especially if the learning has many of the characteristics of Czikszentmihalyi's flow concept of intrinsic motivation. Schools seem to be hindered in creating the desired learning atmosphere by the requirements of school assessment and external examinations. However for learning, where students are engaged at the highest cognitive levels, schools must attempt to create learning situations where boys can obtain flow and experience maximum deep learning.

CHAPTER TEN

Conclusion and Implications

The glory of a nation rests in the character of her men. And her character comes from boyhood. Thus every boy is a challenge to his elders. Herbert Hoover

10.0 Introduction

This thesis raised concerns in regard to the performance of boys both academically and socially within the New Zealand education system. The focus of the study was to capture the voices of the boys; to obtain their viewpoint on what enhances and hinders their schooling. In obtaining the unique perspective of the boy the study identified possible strategies that could assist boys raise their academic standards, experience success and enjoy their educational experiences. A crucial component of the study was the use of boys as contributors, collaborators and researchers in the gathering and interpreting of information. This study found that boys have unique qualities, values and insights that need to be recognised and admired.

Education has been concerned with doing things for students and not with students. This has especially been the case for boys' education and the difficulties many boys experience at school. There have been a variety of strategies and programmes developed to help boys or 'fix the problem or naughty boys'. The huge majority of these programmes developed without consultation or participation from the boys. In this study boys were the focus; the aim was to give them voice to present their ideas, opinions and perceptions on how schools and teachers could enhance their learning. Giving students voice is a new educational approach as Flutter and Rudduck (2004, p. 135) stated:

The pupil voice movement represents a new departure because it is based on the premise that schools should reflect the democratic structures in society at large. Under this conception the school becomes a community of participants engaged in the common endeavour of learning.

Boys, teachers and schools working together in a democratic and collaborative manner have the ability to raise boys' education to new heights of academic learning and success. The present model of education is very hierarchical, divided, and with little democratic principle or process. The divided hieratical organisation of schools and education is a contributing factor to school failure, especially as many in education are not prepared to listen and accept the voices of those who are receiving that education. The challenge is for schools to develop a culture where the emphasis is firmly focussed on learning and creating democratic learning communities in the true essence of the word.

This chapter reviews this research, its contribution to knowledge and possible implications for a number of stakeholder groups in education.

10.1 Meeting the Aims of the Research

This research's main aim was to seek to understand the perceptions and experiences of boys in order to gain information that could be used to create conditions within schools and classrooms that would enhance their learning; and thus raise their academic standards. There were two important facets within this study to ensure that this occurred. The first was to train a number of boys to become student researchers to work and collaborate with the researcher on this study. The second was to use a consultative group of boys to assist with data analysis to ensure that the voice of boys were not lost through adult researcher interpretation. The overall intention was to yield valuable insights into how boys perceive the issues that enhance and hinder their academic success at secondary school.

The important secondary aim was to identify the factors that increased a boy's motivation to learn and the factors that distracted or deterred the motivation to learn. Martin's (2003) *Student Motivation Scale* was used as a quantitative measurement as it identified six enhancing (booster) factors and four inhibiting (guzzler) factors of motivation. This motivation measurement was found to be extremely reliable for use in the New Zealand education setting. Supporting the data from the *Student Motivation Scale* was qualitative data from interview and focus group that gave an insightful boys' dimension. The *Student Motivation Scale*, individual interview and focus groups were

effectual in identifying a number of factors that enhanced and inhibited motivation to learn.

The research was successful in meeting its aims on a number of levels. The study contains a wealth of rich insights from boys into their education within a New Zealand secondary school, especially the importance of teacher pedagogy, school culture and the influence of best mates on academic achievement and success. The selection of a diverse and broadly representative sample of boys ensured that the study was able to establish a uniformity of viewpoint amongst boys at Years 9, 11 and 13. Significant features of the study were the context that enabled boys to willingly and meaningfully participate, think reflectively and share their experience on schooling. It proved that boys could take on responsible roles as student researchers and work with a university academic in a collaborative way and to ensure that the voices of boys were heard and interpreted correctly. The findings showed that boys value school and think deeply about the issues they face in their schooling; most of the solutions boys offered to enhance their learning could be supported by sound educational theory and research. In summary, the results of the study indicated that it was successful in achieving its objectives.

10.2 Limitations of the Research and Future Directions

This study has provided a number of new perceptions on the issues of boys, motivation and schooling, as well as, supporting findings of similar research completed in Australia and the United Kingdom. However, in conducting this research a number of potential limitations need to be considered when analysing the results and considering the findings.

First, the data was from a limited number of sources, that of boys within three differing Year levels of secondary schooling. Note, however, that the focus of the research was on documenting and interpreting boys own experiences and that the findings of this research could be considered in relation to results from related studies using other stakeholders. To give a broader understanding of what is occurring in secondary schools to improve and enhance boys academic success it would be desirable to use and compare data attained from additional stakeholders within the school e.g. teachers,

parents and girls. For example, asking girls why they consider that girls are doing statistically better at school academically could give a balancing gender perspective to the data collecting from boys on that question. This research examined Years 9, 11 and 13 with justifiable reasons. However, Year 10 also needs careful examination, as it is the Year from which rise the most school disciplinary action, stand-downs, suspensions and expulsions for boys.

Three very different types of secondary schools were chosen so to offer a diverse and broadly representative sample of boys. However, this sample selection could have been further extended to include a larger sample size and a greater spread of schools along the socio-economic decile scale. This would have given a greater spread of diversity and statistical significances and validity to the identified themes and findings. It is important to be aware that there can be large differences from boy to boy even within the same school and Year level. There is opportunity in New Zealand to conduct research into subgroups amongst boys and compare and reflect on differences of kind and construct; similar to the research of Mac an Ghail (1994). Note that as this research shows, it is essential to examine boys' educational experiences and achievement within the context and culture of the school. As this study shows, boys' academic achievement is strongly influenced by the social, ecological and cultural factors both within and outside the school.

A key component of the research was to capture the voice of boys. The use of students-as-researchers and consultants was used within this study to give boys a greater voice and to record their perceptions and interpret the findings as accurately as possible. This proved to be most successful with boys showing a great awareness of their schooling and willingness to share. The boys only focus groups proved that boys could lead, ask questions and reflect on answers without adult supervision. This form of data collection methodology can only improve through boys gaining more experience and additional training. In future similar research, a greater time allotment needs to be given for student researchers to receive training, experience role-plays and receive feedback to improve skills before embarking on the actual research project. This could lead to improved data being gathered by student researchers to improve research and question techniques, confidence and an awareness to lead student participants to more in-depth answers and revelations.

This study is ethnographic in form, relying on social action and social relationship within a community. The essential information is gathered through direct contact with persons within the community or cultural organisation. The ethnographic research methods of interview and focus group used in this study proved successful in gaining in-depth data. There were, however, some limitations that were created by the researcher, the research time frame and the school communities. In ethnography, the researcher is the in-field research instrument and as such, the whole personality of the researcher is involved in the research. In this study the use of student researchers and boy only focus groups were intended as a counter balance to the influence of the researcher's individual traits and beliefs. Ethnography research requires a relationship to be established between researcher and the community and people within; in this case the school and boys. To form relationships takes time, and time restrictions were imposed on this study by school structure and the school curriculum timetable that limited the access to boys. The researcher's other workload commitments also placed restraints on time available to be in schools. It could be assumed that if a longer period of contact time had been established between researcher and the boys within the school community, a stronger relationship may have been possible and the boys may have revealed even richer in-depth insights.

10.3 Limitations of Student Researchers in boy only focus groups

The use of student researchers in the boys' only focus groups produced rich narrative about boys' successful and unsuccessful learning experiences. As a methodology it proved successful in capturing the authentic voice of boys without the presence or guiding support of an adult. However, there are also limitations in using boys as researchers on their own. Learning is a complex phenomenon that involves a variety of factors in constant change and interplay. Boys in this research did not display the experience to understand this complexity from a variety of viewpoints. It also takes time and experience to develop fully the skills to conduct research and questioning a group of participants expertly. This time and experience was limited in this study.

The student researchers had limited knowledge of what is research, the experience in conducting research, the skills required to examine critically verbal comment and the ability to question and develop a line of inquiry. This was evident when listening to the

audio tapes of the focus groups. These limitations were due to a number of factors: (1) the amount of training received for their research role, (2) the lack of opportunity to practice and receive feedback on conducting a research group, (3) the degree of confidence in working with an unknown group of boys, and (4.) the lack of established relationship and trust between the student researcher and the participating boys within the focus groups. An adult researcher would have the skill-set to follow lines of inquiry and obtain elaboration on comments made, and would most likely have gained information of a different complexity to that obtained by the student researcher. Nevertheless, the student researcher and the methodology developed for this study proved a success by obtaining a richness of boy narrative.

10.4 Boys' Research and Education so Far

There is an ever increasing volume of research literature on various aspects of boys' education and the issues that boys face as they transverse the difficult journey from boy to young man during schooling. Many schools are making changes to their school programmes and structures in the attempt to improve boys' academic success at school. However, as the result of previous research (Irwin, 2003) has shown, these decisions are not always based on quality assessment within the school when implementing programmes or strategies for boys.

To move forward the research on gender inequities in academic achievement and schooling, a participatory research methodology needs to be devised for schools which use the students not only as subjects but as an integral part of the research process. The boys in this study have shown that they can effectively engage as student researchers and have the maturity and knowledge to be active participants in the culture of their school. Researchers who have listened to student voice and involved students in the research process (Fielding & Bragg, 2003; Flutter & Rudduck, 2004; Slade, 2002; Smyth et al. 2000) have all found that students can be honest, sensitive and knowledgeable in contributing to, or collaborating with serious research within their schools or communities. Chu (2005, p.18), claimed the boys she worked with in her research to be excellent co-researchers.

The boys showed themselves to be self-aware, sensitive to others, and attuned to their peer group culture, including dynamics of interpersonal relationships and expectations

of boys' behaviours.

The research methodology of the future needs to place greater emphasis on conducting research with boys. Research in regards to issues concerning boys should see boys involved as participants and co-researchers and not just as research subjects. Steps need to be taken to increase the use of boys in decision-making and collaboration within the change of process in schools. From this perspective, the best and most effective approaches will be in those in which school leaders and teachers include boys in the information gathering, planning and decision-making process.

10.5 Contribution to Knowledge

The data presented in this study supports and adds to the current understandings of boys and their motivation to learn; the learning strategies and pedagogy that support boys; and research where students are participants and co-researchers within a research project. The findings of this study, based on an analysis of boys involvement and self reports apply to both 'big picture' and specific education strategies. These findings are based on an analysis of boys' perceptions and experiences within different school contexts and Year levels. This examination across different contexts and Year levels found that even though boys may be in different educational contexts they have very similar viewpoints on teaching, learning, motivational factors and teacher qualities.

A major contribution to this study was the use of boys as student researchers. Boys are able to take on responsible roles in research. The training and support material given boys before the data gathering stages proved effective. Boys showed that they can learn the skills necessary to be student researchers and accept a valuable role in the research process; contributing to question formation, data collection and interpretation. The boys demonstrated in this study that they can work beside a researcher offering valuable insight, skills and abilities.

Motivation has been identified as a crucial factor to academic success and improvement in this research and by many other researchers (Brophy, 2004; Eggen & Kauchak, 2007; Martin, 2002, 2003). This study found that boys, even though from different social, cultural and educational contexts are generally motivated by similar activities and interests; namely sport and physical activity, and hanging out with mates. Boys from

across three diverse school cultures also had very similar findings when completing the *Student Motivation Scale* (Martin, 2003). Boys generally indicated limitations in the managing and organising of their learning and study time. Pupil anxiety was also a factor that could effect motivation to learn if pupils feel under too greater a pressure and expectations from school and parents. The findings of this research would indicate that motivation to learn is effected by a number of crucial factors (discussed in Chapter 9) but that an important key to feeling motivated to learn is the boy's perceived relationship between himself and his teachers.

Such specific facets of boys' learning and motivation identified in this research should enable educators to be better placed to design and implement more targeted strategies to address the factors that contribute to lack of motivation and hinder boys' learning. The targeting of boys specific learning preferences and interests could see a marked improvement in boys' achievement.

- Boys³² value schooling and do not want learning to be easy. Boys want hands-on, relevant to their world or future, challenging learning activities.
- Activity is crucial for boys learning and happiness. Boys enjoy activity-based learning and also need the activity, challenge and fun provided by sports on a regular basis
- Mates play a number of important roles in assisting boys manage school and understand curriculum knowledge.
- Hanging out with mates is important for development of self, social relationship and education. The large majority of hanging-out activities are harmless, passive, and non-threatening.
- There is a growing feeling amongst a number of boys that they are not expected to perform as well as girls. Attitudes and expectations for boys and young men must change. School and society needs to examine how masculinity is portrayed.

The challenge within schools is to develop whole school strategies and programmes that

³² In using the global term boys it refers to a majority of boys who expressed or perceive this was so in this study.

address areas of concern in relation to boys while continuing to develop and maintain girls' academic and schooling achievements. The challenge can be met if students are consulted and become part of a collaborative administration structure designed to raise student expectation and standards. If administration structures within schools make students part of the solution process, schools will see a new pupil/teacher relationship established which could bring a new insight to many of the educational inhibiting factors and issues identified in today's schools.

10.6 Implications for Boys

The implication this research has for boys depends largely on others, namely teachers, school leaders and the Ministry of Education. It relies on the Ministry of Education to provide direction and a priority to solving the issues many boys face during their education. The first step for school leaders is to approach the issues facing boys in education at a whole school strategic level with every member of the school staff involved. Secondly to be prepared to listen to boys and give them greater participatory powers in the decision-making processes of their learning and school. Teachers have the most difficult task, as it requires a change to the power structure within the classroom. It requires the teacher to be prepared to share power with the students and to create the time to form pupil-teacher learning relationships based on respect, trust, individual concern and need.

There are a number of implications for boys indicated in this research that, if addressed, could have an immediate impact on their academic success. The boys in this study indicated an alleged tendency that they, as boys, were not to be expected to do as well as girls. The boys perceived girls were expected to work harder, be more responsible, and complete work to a higher standard. If this perceived attitude expressed by boys has some reality to it, immediate changes are required. Boys need to be in a school environment where the emphasis is on learning; learning with challenge and an expectancy of high standards. The 'personal best' approach for boys adopted by many schools, needs to be raised so that standards achieved, are those same standards expected of girls. For too long the slogan has been 'Girls can do anything' and it would seem to be to the detriment of boys. The slogan needs to be 'Girls and Boys can do anything'. Direct action on changing attitude towards boys' achievements and raising

expectations could have immediate positive implications for boys.

A significant number of boys have indicated during this study that they are unsure of their goals; what they want to do or achieve during or after school. The *Student Motivation Scale* used in this research indicated that boys need assistance with the planning and managing of their learning. During interview and focus group discussion many boys often indicated a lack of direction. Schools can adopt programmes to assist boys to plan, timetable, organise short term and longer term goals that could result in boys enhancing their learning and raising their expectations.

The large majority of boys in this study reported a strong preference for activity and challenge, both within the context of classroom learning and outdoor pursuits and sports. The boys' perceived activity was essential for their learning in the classroom. Activity is also a crucial part of a boy's fun, friendship, competitive nature, physical development and release of stress and worries. Challenge is also a critical ingredient that needs to be included in the learning, activity and sports mix. Boys enjoy a challenge; an activity that requires thinking and raises curiosity within a competitive environment. Brophy (2004, p. 35), along with other researchers agree with what the boys want with learning.

The key to the effectiveness of good activities is their cognitive engagement potential – the degree to which they get students actively thinking about and applying key ideas, preferably with conscious awareness of their learning goals and control of their learning strategies. The most valuable activities are not merely hands-on, but minds-on.

Boys have shown in this study that they have many of the solutions to increasing their academic success; educators need to create the time to invite dialogue and initiate action together.

10.7 Implications for Teachers and Schools

A number of researchers (Hattie, 1999; Lingard, 2002; Rowe, 2003) have through analysis and research, demonstrated that it is the teacher that has the greatest impact on the learner. Hattie (1999, p. 10) stated, "teachers make the difference, but only teachers who teach in certain ways." It is also interesting to note that the same researchers have emphasised the need for teachers to raise students' expectations and achievement and to

make learning more challenging. This is exactly what the boys participating in this study wanted in their education; challenging learning and clear expectations. The boys identified teachers who taught in a certain way and possessed certain qualities that they perceived, enabled them to learn and experience greater success (Table 7.6). The practical implications are for teachers to adopt pedagogy, resources and activities that are made boy relevant, clearly structured and challenging.

The importance of establishing a positive and caring teacher/pupil relationship with the emphasis on learning and helping the individual boy was deemed crucial to successful learning, by the majority of boys. The findings would suggest that pupil/teacher relationship is critical to a boy liking and achieving to his potential, in a curriculum area. This study would argue that there are four crucial components that teachers need to incorporate in to their classrooms: clear boundaries and expectations, explicit instruction, activity-based learning incorporating hands-on tasks, clear links between learning and relevance to outside world. These four components need to have woven through them a fifth component, that of humour and enjoyment. A teacher who is able to create a positive pupil/teacher relationship and incorporate the five identified crucial components in to the classroom is more likely to engage boys in the learning process and achieve academic success.

To achieve success, boys need goals and the expectations that they will succeed. The establishment of supportive relationships and collaborative learning structures and activities can encourage boys to develop and accept goals (Brophy, 2004). This study identified that many boys find planning and the ability to manage their study and learning difficult. Teachers can assist students to establish goals and demonstrate the skills necessary to manage study and learning. This could also assist boys be more resilient against academic setbacks, study pressure and school stress. Martin (2003b, p. 36) identified “resilience as students’ ability to deal effectively with academic setbacks, stress and study pressure”. Teachers could greatly assist boys by collaboratively setting goals with them and ensuring they have the skills to manage learning content and study.

There is a great danger of schools, driven by accountability, performance and results, to over emphasise performance and content knowledge to the detriment of learning and the

individual needs of the student. Education is being packaged as small 'bits' of content knowledge and skill acquisition required to pass exams and gain academic qualifications. A number of boys in the study have described teaching practices where the emphasis has been on content knowledge required for external examinations. These same boys have described a teaching pedagogy of text book learning, copy and write being adopted by some teachers. Boys in this study indicated such strategies had a largely negative impact on their learning. There is a great danger in this approach to pedagogy for boys to perceived learning as an acquisition of skills or fixed content of knowledge to pass examinations. This is a very limiting view of knowledge and learning. Similar studies (Duffield et al. 2000; McCullum et al. 2000) as this present research, have found students with similar definitions of learning.

Many schools declare aims of developing life longer learners and adopting a socio-constructivist approach to pedagogy, but in reality, seem to implement a traditional content approach to teaching and assessment. Schools need to adopt a change of focus so to be able to move away from the traditional content and performance approach. Firstly the emphasis is placed on learning rather than content knowledge, and the second emphasis is again on learning instead of performance. A number of researchers (Hughes, 2002; Jackson, 2006) warn against to greater emphasis on establishing performance climates; as such a climate encourages and fosters defensive behaviours among students who fear failure. Learning needs to be deep, complex learning and not shallow "packaged learning" which is threatening to invade the secondary school curriculum. New Zealand secondary schools are in danger of teaching to NCEA criteria or other external examinations rather than the individual learning needs of the child. The challenge for our schools is to develop a connected curriculum; a curriculum which is connected to the boy's personal experiences and future goals, as well as being connected to the in-depth, powerful ideas and processes within and across curriculum.

During the study a number of boys expressed the belief that they are not expected to behave or perform as well as girls. Further study is needed to determine how boys reach this belief. Boys are exposed to both direct and subtle negative messages within schools and society. For example, media and entertainment programmes tend to portray negative male images. (See discussion Chapter 2). Even in schools it appears often that there are more girls are in positions of leadership and achieve the majority of academic

prizes. This should be of great concern to all educators, schools and parents. Schools and teachers need to assess how their schools socially construct and demonstrate masculinity. Boys are surrounded with a variety of messages on masculinity and it is important for schools to consider how they encourage productive masculine behaviour in their school environment. Schools must examine their culture to perceive how masculinity is portrayed; also how the school constructs messages on motivation, learning and success.

The highly structured school timetable where students move every period needs scrutiny by school leadership. This would seem to be a critical factor, especially in the first two years, in secondary schooling where boys are struggling to establish relationships with teachers and a connectedness with a new school. A number of boys in this study identified this transition time as difficult and a factor which hindered learning. Boys suggested such strategies as fewer transitions so that positive teacher/pupil relationships can develop. A school induction programme at beginning of year based around activity, competition and challenge is a possible way to develop school pride, tradition and expectations that could make transition easier for the new pupil. Starting time of schools and length of teaching periods need to be explored by schools. Fewer transitions and longer teaching periods could result in teachers being able to vary pedagogy and develop more in-depth learning. A number of boys raised the issue of school starting time and feeling tired. There is some research on adolescence sleep patterns that would suggest starting school later would mean more alert students in the first periods of school.

The findings of this research would suggest that schools needs to incorporate into their school organisation structure and culture the following strategies and conditions to further enhance and maximise the learning for boys:

- An emphasis on learning throughout the school.
- Set high expectations and standards across all school activity.
- To develop connectedness and pride in the school and pride and self worth in the boy.
- Ensure sport on a regular basis. Sport needs to be increased in most schools to meet the physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs of boys.

- An opportunity for expression and development of creativity through the arts.
- Well-staffed and supportive pastoral care programme.
- A mentoring programme, which also incorporates successful men as guest speakers. Boys need to see, hear and learn from quality males.
- An induction programme to the school for all new boys. Transition is a difficult time. Schools need to introduce boys to its culture, its expectations, its traditions and opportunities.
- Use boys' love of activity, competition and challenge in a positive way within school and extra-curricular activities.

A school that develops programmes and strategies in collaboration with staff and boys could see improved academic and personal performance from its pupils.

10.8 Implications for Policy

In New Zealand, there is lacking a clear policy and guidelines for increasing boys and young men's involvement and success in education. There are far too many boys not achieving in education; too many leaving school with minimal or no qualifications, too many involved in drinking and drugs, or ending up in trouble with the law. This study offers possible suggestions for improving school environments and developing classroom strategies that could enhance boys' opportunities for educational success. However, there is also required a countrywide unified strategy for rescuing so many of our boys and young men who are not succeeding.

This study would argue that the curriculum content of our schools is overcrowded. An overcrowded curriculum can result in teachers developing pedagogy that does not meet the learning needs of boys as the concentration is all on delivery of content knowledge. Teaching in such a situation becomes the delivery of large blocks of content knowledge and the acquisition of certain skills aimed at examination passes and not learning needs. In an overcrowded curriculum it is a struggle for teachers to develop inquiry, activity based learning pedagogy geared to the needs of individuals or for in-depth study and learning to occur. The Ministry of Education needs to strive for an improved balance between learning and assessment; and more importantly an assessment system that is fair and equitable for both genders.

At present there is a lack of acknowledgement of the problems facing boys, or appropriate programmes that prepare teachers to work with boys. Providers of Teacher Education and teacher professional development can assist by investigating the issues boys face in education and preparing teachers with strategies to meet boys' needs. It is the teacher in the classroom that can make the biggest difference. The Teacher Education providers need to be preparing both new and registered teachers who can meet the challenges presented by boys in our schools.

The deficit theory that the problem lies with the boy and the attitude that boys require fixing to function in education needs to change. Boys do not need fixing; they need appropriate, challenging and meaningful forms of education and a clear message that it is 'OK to be a guy'. Slade and Trent (2000, p. 207) argue that teachers "must avoid the narrow, misleading focus on fixing up the boys." This requires a change of attitude from seeing boys as suffering from some illness or problem, to seeing the school and social climate and environment, as needing the change. Boys and young men possess great qualities that need to be recognised, valued and developed. This requires school and society to develop, admire and value such qualities. At the moment this is not happening.

10.9 Final Remarks

Alice is lost and asks the Cheshire Cat, "What way should I go from here?" The cat responds, "Where do you want to end up?" Alice says she doesn't care, then the cat says, "Then it really doesn't matter which way you walk."

From Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll.

There is a definite gap between boys and girls academic achievements and over representation of boys in behavioural and remedial programmes. This needs to be widely acknowledged and accepted by teachers, education policy advisers and the Ministry of Education, before any constructive progress can be made at a national level to solve these issues. At the moment, boys' education is in a confusing state with no clear policy direction or leadership. This leads to many schools wondering what to do and how to proceed in meeting the needs of boys; particularly boys who are just "hanging in" at school or are failing and dropping out. Suspension and expulsion are short-term solutions for a school, but offers no solution for the failing boy.

The schooling of boys at the moment is in a dilemma, just like Alice in Wonderland when she asks, "What way should I go?" This study has shown that many of the issues facing boys today have an excellent chance of being solved if boys were only given a voice and the opportunity to participate actively in their schooling. It is time that we stopped trying to 'fix' boys, as if they had some contagious disease, and made them part of the solution. Some boys can be disruptive, ill-mannered, boisterous and lacking in motivation and direction. To succeed these boys, plus their school and community have to make changes so that the boys' social behaviour and academic success to improve. In this study boys were largely found to be responsible, caring, astutely aware and knowledgeable about their schooling. Too many boys are rebelling in our schools and communities; these boys have the potential, if given clear direction and active pedagogy and the right to participate in their schooling to succeed. Boys can offer valuable contributions and solutions to their learning, schools and communities.

Throughout this study, boys have indicated their desire for more activity through out their schooling. Boys both need and require more sport and physical activities than most schools are offering at present. Within the learning environment the boys perceived that they learn best where there is discussion, activity and opportunity for hands on involvement. In educating boys, the schools must remember to engage the body and engage the mind equally if they are to successfully raise boys' achievement; 'Cut the talk, increase the do!' Many schools want their students quiet and compliant but every indication from this study indicates that this is not the learning environment that enhances boys' learning. Countless schools miss one important ingredient from curriculum and pedagogy, that ingredient is activity. This study would strongly suggest that to engage a boy successfully in education; teachers and schools must incorporate activity to engage both a boy's body and mind on a daily basis.

The New Zealand Herald on Saturday, July 21, 2007 ran the headline "The Trouble with Youth." There are a lot of issues and trouble that our youth face, and a small percentage of mainly boys and young men are in a great deal of trouble, or as Judge Andrew Becroft describes "they are like unexploded bombs" (New Zealand Herald, 2007, p. B3). The problem with our boys does not lie solely with them, but also with the families, schools and communities in which they belong. Boys' have the qualities and

potential to achieve to the highest standards; what is required is a 'fix' for the classroom, the school, and the community in which they belong.

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Appendix A Student Motivation Scale



Office Use Only

Student Motivation Scale

Dear Student

This is a survey that looks at your motivation, how you study, and what you think of yourself as a student.

THIS IS NOT A TEST. There are no right or wrong answers. Just make sure that your answers show what you really think about yourself.

When answering the questions, if you want to change an answer, just cross it out and circle the answer that you prefer. If you are not sure which answer to circle, just circle the one that is the closest to what you think. You should have **ONLY ONE** answer for each question. Do not leave out any questions.

There are some questions that are very similar to each other. This is not a trick. It is just that this type of survey needs to ask some similar questions in slightly different ways. Just answer them in a way that shows what you really think about yourself.

Before you start, here is an example:

	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Agree Strongly
I work hard at school	1	2	3	4	5	⑥	7

This student circled Number 6 ('Agree') because he does work quite hard at school. He didn't circle Number 7 ('Agree Strongly') because he doesn't work hard all of the time. He didn't circle Number 5 ('Agree Somewhat') because he works harder than most other students.

Ask your teacher or counsellor if you have any questions. You can now begin.

Surname _____ First Name _____

ID Number _____ Grade/Year _____

Gender (Circle) Female Male Age _____ years





Student Motivation Scale

	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Agree Strongly
1. If I can't understand my schoolwork at first, I keep going over it until I do	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I feel very pleased with myself when I really understand what I'm taught at school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. When I study, I usually study in places where I can concentrate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I'm able to use some of the things I learn at school in other parts of my life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Sometimes I don't try hard at assignments so I have an excuse if I don't do so well	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. When I don't do so well at school I'm often unsure how to avoid that happening again	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I feel very pleased with myself when I do well at school by working hard	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. If my homework is difficult, I keep working at it trying to figure it out	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. When exams and assignments are coming up, I worry a lot	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Often the main reason I work at school is because I don't want people to think that I'm dumb	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. When I get a good mark I'm often not sure how I'm going to get that mark again	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. If I try hard, I believe I can do my schoolwork well	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Learning at school is important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. When I get a bad mark I'm often unsure how I'm going to avoid getting that mark again	1	2	3	4	5	6	7





Student Motivation Scale

	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Agree Strongly
15. When I study, I usually organise my study area to help me study best	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. I'm often unsure how I can avoid doing poorly at school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. I worry about failing exams and assignments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Often the main reason I work at school is because I don't want people to think bad things about me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. I usually have at least a rough study timetable or study plan when I study	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20. If I don't give up, I believe I can do difficult schoolwork	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21. I sometimes don't study very hard before exams so I have an excuse if I don't do so well	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22. I feel very pleased with myself when what I learn at school gives me a better idea of how something works	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23. I feel very pleased with myself when I learn new things at school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24. Before I start an assignment, I plan out how I am going to do it	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25. When I'm taught something that doesn't make sense, I spend time to try to understand it	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26. I try to plan things out before I start working on my homework or assignments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27. Often the main reason I work at school is because I don't want to disappoint my parents	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. When I study, I usually try to find a place where I can study well	1	2	3	4	5	6	7





Student Motivation Scale

	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Agree Strongly
29. If I have enough time, I believe I can do well in my schoolwork	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. What I learn at school will be useful one day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. I sometimes do things other than study the night before an exam so I have an excuse if I don't do so well	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32. I'll keep working at difficult schoolwork until I think I've worked it out	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33. When I do tests or exams I don't feel very good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34. Often the main reason I work at school is because I don't want my teacher to think less of me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35. I usually stick to a study timetable or study plan	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36. If I work hard enough, I believe I can get on top of my schoolwork	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37. It's important to understand what I'm taught at school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38. I sometimes put assignments and study off until the last moment so I have an excuse if I don't do so well	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39. In terms of my schoolwork, I'd call myself a worrier	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40. When I study, I usually study at times when I can concentrate best	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

END OF QUESTIONS

CHECK YOU HAVE ANSWERED ALL THE QUESTIONS

THANKYOU FOR YOUR TIME

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PO Box 380 Summer Hill NSW 2130

Appendix B: School Information Sheet



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Te Kōwhiri o Te Mātauranga



Department of
Learning & Teaching
Albany Campus
Private Bag 102 904,
North Shore M.S.C.,
Auckland,
New Zealand
Telephone: 64 9 443 9688
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To the Chairperson
Board of Trustees

BOYS' MOTIVATIONAL STUDY INFORMATION SHEET

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Michael Irwin and I am currently doing Doctoral research focusing on understanding what enhances and inhibits boys' motivation and success at school. I am writing to request permission to undertake research with selected Year 9, 11 and 13 students in your school during Terms 2, 3 and 4 of this year. Your school is in a process of change as it looks for ways to improve the academic performance of boys. The school's positive management and attitude to boys' education makes it an ideal school for me to conduct my research. Your school would be one of three involved in this research project.

My interest lies in boys' educational achievement, and I believe that the core to the success or failure of boys' educational achievement is motivation. My research at your school would attempt to identify factors that enhance or hinder educational motivation and success amongst boys.

This work will have four distinct phases, so that, in-depth data can be collected from the students involved. The phases are:

1. The establishment of focus groups that will be asked to identify factors that enhance or inhibit boy's motivation to succeed at school. These focus groups will consist of six boys and will be led by a student leader. By using students to run the focus groups, it is hoped that the students will be more relaxed and honest. The focus groups will be audio taped and the information from the tapes will be transcribed. Three focus groups will be formed from each of the three Year levels. This will involve a total of 54 boys from each of the Years.
2. The data from the focus groups will be used to develop a motivational questionnaire that will be suited to New Zealand schools. The motivational questionnaire will be based on the Motivational Scale developed by Dr Andrew Martin in Australia. Once developed the motivational questionnaire will be given to 75 boys from each Year level. A copy of the Motivational Scale has been attached so you can understand what the boys will be involved in.
3. Individual interviews will be held with selected boys from each Year level. The aim of the interviews will be to explore trends and clarify ideas that have arisen from the questionnaire responses. Approximately 20 boys from each Year level will be interviewed to gain an in-depth understanding of the findings generated from the motivational questionnaire.
4. Boys from the focus groups will form Reciprocity Groups to make final comment on the findings of the research. These groups will have the opportunity to discuss the findings and

Te Kōwhiri o Te Mātauranga

Inception to Infinity: Massey University's commitment to learning as a life-long journey

the conclusions reached before the final report is written. This will be a chance for the boys to have a final say on the research.

The time that students are involved in the different aspects of the research is as follows:

Focus Groups	40 minutes
Motivational Questionnaire	20 minutes
Individual Interviews	40 minutes
Reciprocity Groups	40 minutes

Not all students will be involved in every aspect of the research as there is random selection for the different groups and the interviews. It is possible that some students could be involved up to two hours and 40 minutes, spread over three school terms.

Written consent from the boys and their parents or caregivers will be sought before they can take part in the study.

All research data will be stored in a secure location with no public access and used only for this research and any publications arising from this research. After completion of five years, all data pertaining to this study will be destroyed in a secure manner. All efforts will be taken to maximize confidentiality and anonymity for participants. The school name and names of all participants will be assigned pseudonyms to maintain their anonymity. A final summary will be provided to the school.

Please note your Board has the following rights in response to my request for your school to participate in this study.

- decline to participate;
- withdraw from the study at any point;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

If you have further questions about this project you are welcome to discuss them with me personally:

Michael Irwin: Massey University (Albany), Department of Learning and Teaching. Phone: (09)4439635. Email: M.Irwin@massey.ac.nz ;

or contact either of my supervisors (co-directors of *The Boys Motivational Study*) at Massey University-Albany

- Associate Professor Ken Ryba: Department of Learning and Teaching. Phone: (09) 4439688. Email: K.A.Ryba@massey.ac.nz
- Dr.Eileen Piggot-Irvine: New Zealand Principal and Leadership Centre. Phone: (0). Email: epiggot@massey.ac.nz

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, ALB Protocol NO/NO (*insert protocol number*). If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor Kerry P Chamberlain, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee: Albany, telephone 09 443 9700 x9078, email K.Chamberlain@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix C: Human Ethics Approval



Massey University
AUCKLAND

22 March 2004

Michael Irwin
College of Education
Massey University
Albany

OFFICE OF THE
DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR
Private Bag 102 904
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T Deputy Vice-Chancellor -
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Dear Michael

HUMAN ETHICS APPROVAL APPLICATION – MUAHEC 04/006
“Boys’ Motivation and School Success”

Thank you for your application. It has been fully considered, and approved by the Massey University, Albany Campus, Human Ethics Committee.

If you make any significant departure from the Application as approved then you should return this project to the Human Ethics Committee, Albany Campus, for further consideration and approval.

Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, a new application must be submitted at that time.

Yours sincerely

Associate-Professor Kerry Chamberlain
Chairperson,
Human Ethics Committee
Albany Campus

Appendix D: Boys Information Sheet



Department of
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BOYS' MOTIVATIONAL STUDY

STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Michael Irwin and I work at Massey University in Albany as a lecturer and researcher. I am very interested in boys' learning and school experiences and I am currently doing Doctoral research on what factors enhances or inhibits boys' motivation to learn at school. Your school is one of the schools that I will be working in over the coming year. I will be interviewing and working with boys from Years 9, 11 and 13.

You have been selected to be one of the boys involved in this research and I am writing to seek your permission to be involved. The research may involve you taking part in all or one of the following:

- A Discussion Group. In this group you will be asked to share your ideas about school and what you think about learning and how you succeed at school. It will take an hour.
- A Motivational Questionnaire. This will involve you answering 40 questions about the way you feel about school and the things you do at school. It is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. This will take about 15 minutes to complete.
- An Interview. This will be with a university researcher who will ask you questions about school, how you learn and what you see yourself being successful in. This will take 45 minutes.

If you were selected to be involved in each part of the research it would take approximately two hours over the time of the research.

All information collected from you will be stored in a secure location, with no public access and will be used only for research. In order to maintain confidentiality the school name and name of all participants will be assigned pseudonyms in any publications arising from this research. At the end of the year, a summary of the study will be provided to the school and made available for you to read.

Please note you have the following rights in response to my request for you to participate in this study.

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study after the focus groups;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded;
- have the right to ask for the audio tape to be turned off at any time during interviews.

If you have further questions about this project you are welcome to discuss them with me personally:
Michael Irwin: Massey University. Albany. College of Education. Department of Learning and Teaching.
Phone: (09) 4439635 Email: M.R.Irwin@massey.ac.nz

Or contact either of my supervisors:

- Associate Professor Ken Ryba: Massey University. Albany. College of Education. Department of Learning and Teaching. Phone: (09) 443 9688. Email: K.A.Ryba@massey.ac.nz
- Dr. Eileen Piggot-Irvine: Massey University. Albany. New Zealand Principal and Leadership Centre. Phone: (09)443 9710. Email: epiggotirvine@massey.ac.nz

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BOYS' MOTIVATIONAL STUDY

CONSENT FORM: STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE (5) YEARS

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to be audio taped during focus group discussions and interview.

I agree/do not agree to answer the Motivational questionnaire at a later date.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature:

Date:

Full Name - printed

Appendix E: Parent Information Sheet



Department of
Learning & Teaching
Albany Campus
Private Bag 102 904,
North Shore MSC,
Auckland,
New Zealand
Telephone: 64 9 443 9688
Facsimile: 64 9 443 9717

BOYS' MOTIVATIONAL STUDY

PARENT INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Michael Irwin and I work at Massey University in Albany as a lecturer and researcher. I am very interested in boys' learning and school experiences and I am currently doing Doctoral research on what factors enhances or inhibits boys' motivation to learn at school. The school your son attends is one of the schools that I will be working in over the coming year. I will be interviewing and working with boys from Years 9, 11 and 13.

Your son has been randomly selected by the school to be one of the boys involved in this research and I am writing to seek your permission for his involvement. The research may involve him taking part in all or one of the following:

- A Discussion Group. In this group your son will be asked to share his ideas about school and what he thinks about learning and how he succeeds at school. It will take approximately hour.
- A Motivational Questionnaire. This will involve him answering 40 questions about the way he feels about school and the things he does at school. It is not a test and there is no right or wrong answers. This will take about 15 minutes to complete.
- An Interview. This will be with a university researcher who will ask your son questions about school, how he learns and what he sees himself being successful in. This will take 45 minutes.

If he were selected to be involved in each part of the research it would take approximately two hours over the time of the research.

All information collected from your son will be stored in a secure location, with no public access and will be used only for research. In order to maintain confidentiality the school name and name of all participants will be assigned pseudonyms in any publications arising from this research. At the end of the year, a summary of the study will be provided to the school and made available for you to read.

Please note your son will have the following rights in response to my request for your son to participate in this study.

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study after the focus groups;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that his name will not be used;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded;
- have the right to ask for the audio tape to be turned off at any time during interviews.

If you have further questions about this project you are welcome to discuss them with me personally:
Michael Irwin: Massey University. Albany. College of Education. Department of Learning and Teaching.
Phone: (09) 4439635 Email. M.R.Irwin@massey.ac.nz

Or contact either of my supervisors:

- Associate Professor Ken Ryba: Massey University. Albany. College of Education. Department of Learning and Teaching. Phone: (09) 443 9688. Email. K.A.Ryba@massey.ac.nz
- Dr. Eileen Piggot-Irvine: Massey University. Albany. New Zealand Principal and Leadership Centre . Phone: (09)443 9710 . Email. epiggotirvine@massey.ac.nz

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, ALB Protocol NO/NO (*insert protocol number*). If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor Kerry P Chamberlain, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee: Albany, telephone 09 443 9700 x9078, email K.Chamberlain@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix F: Student Researcher Informational Study



Department of
Learning & Teaching
Albany Campus
Private Bag 102 904,
North Shore MSC,
Auckland,
New Zealand
Telephone: 64 9 443 9688
Facsimile: 64 9 4439717

BOYS' MOTIVATIONAL STUDY

STUDENT RESEARCHER INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Michael Irwin and I work at Massey University in Albany as a lecturer and researcher. I am very interested in boys' learning and school experiences and I am currently doing Doctoral research on what factors enhance or inhibit boys' motivation to learn at school. Your school is one of the schools that I will be working in over the coming year. I will be interviewing and working with boys from Years 9, 11 and 13.

My interest lies in boys' educational achievement and I believe that the core to the success or failure of boys' educational achievement is motivation. My research at your school would attempt to identify the factors that increase or decrease educational motivation amongst boys. This research will involve focus groups of boys being asked to identify what helps and hinders them at school. These groups will be led by student researchers.

You have been selected to be one of the boys involved in this research as a student researcher and I am writing to seek your consent to be involved. The research will involve you taking part in all or one of the following:

- As a focus group leader or recorder.
- Involved in training sessions for your researcher role.
- Collaborating with the researcher on the research findings.

If you consent to be involved in the research it would take approximately six hours over the time of the research.

All data recordings will be stored in a secure location, with no public access and used only for this research. In order to maintain anonymity, the school name and name of all participants will be assigned pseudonyms in any publications arising from this research. At the end of the year, a summary of the study will be provided to the school and made available for you to read.

Please note you have the following rights in response to my request for you to participate in this study.

- decline to participate;
- ask questions about the study at any time during participation.
- withdraw from the study after the focus group discussions.
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded

If you have further questions about this project you are welcome to discuss them with me personally:

Michael Irwin: Massey University. Albany. College of Education. Department of Learning and Teaching.
Phone: (09) 4439635 Email. M.R.Irwin@massey.ac.nz

Or contact either of my supervisors:

- Associate Professor Ken Ryba: Massey University. Albany. College of Education. Department of Learning and Teaching. Phone: (09) 443 9688. Email. K.A.Ryba@massey.ac.nz
- Dr. Eileen Piggot-Irvine: Massey University. Albany. New Zealand Principal and Leadership Centre. Phone: (09)4439710. Email. epiggotirvine@massey.ac.nz

Te Kōwhiri ki Pūrehuroa

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STUDENT AS RESEARCHER CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand and accept the responsibilities of being a student researcher as outlined below.

The need for confidentiality means that I will respect the rights of others by:

- Not revealing or discussing personal information I learn about others from the interviews or from participating in group discussions.
- Not revealing or discussing any research data or findings I learn from others in interviews or from participating in group discussions.
- Handling all research material in a confidential manner.

Participation in group tasks and activities means that I will:

- Respect and listen to the participants in the research.
- Lead and cooperate in group discussions and activities.
- Work collaboratively and supportively as a group member.
- Receive all information in a positive manner.

I agree to accept the above responsibilities and participate in this study under the conditions set out in the information sheet.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix G: Instructions for Focus Groups

This is a guide to assist you in the running of your focus group.

Before focus group starts check

STEP-by-STEP INSTRUCTIONS for FOCUS GROUPS in BOYS' MOTIVATION

CHECK

- Tape/Tape Recorder.
- Pen and Paper
- List of focus group members
- Ensure room set-up for group discussion
- Is tape recorder working? Test sound recording quality.
- On tape record Year Level (Year 9, 11 or 13) and school name.

FORMAT to follow with GROUP

- Get group sitting in circle around tape recorder.
- WELCOME the group. INTRODUCE yourself and recorder.
- SAY *“You have been selected to take part in a research project being run by Massey University. The research is about boys and schools. What boys think about school, how they feel about leaning and success, what helps them succeed at school, what stops them from doing well at school? This research aims to gain a greater understanding of boys’ ideas and attitudes about school, success and learning. For the next hour it is hoped you will speak openly and freely about school. What you say is confidential. We are more interested in what you say not on who says it. So speak freely and honestly.”*
- SAY: *“To take part in research you must read the information sheet and sign a consent form giving your permission to take part in the research.”*
- Give out INFORMATION SHEET for group members to read.
- Give out CONSENT FORM to sign
- Collect in signed consent forms and place in plastic sleeve. Ensure you have every boy’s form.
- SAY: *“For our discussion we will follow the following rules of discussion.*
 1. *Every one has the right to have their say.*
 2. *All ideas and opinions are accepted.*
 3. *One person speaks at a time.*
 4. *No put downs.”*
- EXPLAIN your role and the recorders role.

SAY: *“My role is to chair the discussion to ensure everyone has a chance to have their say and is listened to. I will ask questions to gain understanding and ensure that I understand what you mean.(recorders name) will ensure we get all your ideas and will offer support and encouragement.”*

- SAY: *“We are going to turn on the Tape Recorder. Speak clearly and towards the tape.”*

- TURN ON TAPE RECORDER. Get each boy to say their name and then ask the first question.

SAY: *“What do you think helps you to be motivated and achieve at school?”*

Let every boy have their say. Then go on to next major question.

SAY: *“What do you think stops you or hinders you from being motivated and achieving at school?”*

If you are asked “What do you mean by motivated?” Explain motivated as wanting to learn, wanting to succeed, wanting to do well. That desire to achieve.

Let the discussion run freely. Ensure you understand what is being said. Ask open ended and probe questions so you get full answers that you can understand from the group.

- In the discussion make sure the following topics are covered or questions asked:

What pressures do you experience at school?

How do you deal with these pressures?

In what subjects are you having your greatest success in at school and why?

In what subjects are you having your greatest failures in at school and why?

How does your family influence the way you work and think about school?

How do your friends and peers influence the way you work and think about school?

What are some other influences that can affect your work and attitude to school?

Why do some boys want to leave school?

What motivates you to succeed and try hard at:

School

Home

Outside of School?

In the last question I am trying to identify the factors/things that get boys motivated. What gets boys excited so they want to try hard and succeed whether in school or outside of school?

- END OF SESSION ask: *“Is there anything further that anyone wants to contribute?”* If no further contributions ask the recorder to summarise what has been said during the session. A brief review of what the group thinks about school, influences, success and motivation.

- TURN OFF TAPE RECORDER.
 - SAY: *“Thanks for being part of this group and for your contributions. The information from this group is going to be used to gain a better understanding of boys’ education and to assist in identifying teaching practices that boys think work best for them. Thank you once again, it was a great session, you can now return to you class?”*
-

On completion do the following:

CHECK:

- Remove tape from recorder and put in plastic sleeve with consent forms.
- Any written notes or summaries from the focus group put in same plastic sleeve.
- Return room to normal. Leave room tidy as you found it.
- Take tape recorder, plastic sleeve with all materials back to staff member responsible.
- Report to staff member how you think it all went. What would you do different next time?

Thank you very much. I hope you found it an enjoyable and challenging experience.

Michael. Irwin.

Appendix H: Student as Researcher Handout

STUDENTS AS RESEARCHERS.

The idea of using students-as-researchers is new in educational research. It is hoped that by using students in the research process that more in-depth information and knowledge can be obtained.

In using Student Researchers it is expected that they will be able to work more closely and collaborative with other student participants. To be able to discuss and probe the research issue at a greater depth and with more honesty than an adult researcher can “observing from the outside”.

Roles in the groups.

Group chair.

All meetings need someone to manage the task of the group in the available time. The group chair is responsible for asking the questions that will gather the most in-depth data from the participants. The chair uses open-ended and probing questions to collect the necessary information . The other responsibilities include:

- Displaying confidentiality for all research data collected and respecting the rights of participants.
- Being confident and positive with the participant.
- Being in active listener.
- Encouraging all the participants to be fully involved.
- Receiving all answers in a positive manner.
- Restarting the discussion when it gets stuck or appears to be going around in circles.
- Summarises the contributions of all members of the group.
- Thanks and praises the members of group for their participation

Group recorder.

The group recorder is there to give support to the chair by:

- Showing confidentiality for all research data and respecting the rights of participants.
- Ensuring the necessary equipment is ready. (Tape Recorder, Written Material).
- Recording all the questions and answers from the group sessions.
- Offering moral support to the chair.
- Keeping an eye on the time available and reminding group when only 10 minutes remains.
- Giving feedback to the chair at completion of interview.

- Ensuring the tape recorder and all material are returned to the researcher or staff member in charge.

SKILLS of a GOOD STUDENT RESEARCHER.

As a student researcher it is important to develop the skills of active listening, probing questioning and confidentiality.

Active listening.

In a research situation, the research participants need to know that you have listened to what it is that they have been saying. Listening doesn't just happen with the ears. People use their whole body when listening, their eyes, their physical posture are just as important as their ears.

A relaxed and open body posture is best. This means that the interviewer shouldn't close off their body by folding their arms or turning their body away from the participant.

Be aware of how facial expressions might reveal that the interviewer is uninterested in the conversation.

Interrupting

Sometimes people talk in a monologue, and it seems as if the conversation is going around in circles and getting nowhere. This is a time when the chair could interrupt by making a summarising statement or asking a probing or open question.

Questioning

Probing questions.

Probing questions can help the participant to focus on an issue and to provide more information. They can be used to help people stay on track. Probing questions should not make the participant feel as if they are being interrogated. It is important not to overuse probing questions.

Example of conversation and probing question.

Participant. *I felt all the stuff they were teaching me at school was a waste of time, you know. All that stuff about Pythagorean theory was a load of rubbish. It was a waste of time, and it wouldn't help me get a job.*

Researcher. *So you find that some of school is not relevant. What do you find you are getting out of school?*

Open questions

An open question is one which does not require a yes or no answer.

- Open questions allow participants to provide more information.
- Open questions are used as a way to find out what people may know and think about a topic.

- Open questions help people to talk more freely.

Closed or loaded questions

A closed or loaded question limits the response from participants.

- Closed or loaded question results in data which is of little value.
- Close questions may also only serve to reinforce what the researcher believes to be true
- Close questions or so require more questions to be asked for desired data to be collected.

Examples of closed and the opening questions.

Closed question. *Did you leave school because you found the work to be too difficult?*

Open question. *Could you tell me about some of the reasons why you left school?*

Closed question. *Do you find school boring?*

Open question. *Could you describe some of the ways that school is made difficult and uninteresting for you?*

Closed question. *Does school help you prepare for work?*

Open question. *In what way do you believe that school has been useful in preparing you for work or life outside of school?*

Handling research information.

All research data must be handled in a confidential manner and all participants must have fully protection from disclosure.

Researchers do not reveal or discuss any information they learn from or about others while participating in research. Participants take part in research because they know what they say will be treated confidentially. It is most important that there is this trust between researcher and participant, so that the participant will speak openly and share freely during the research.

Michael Irwin

Researcher

Massey University-Albany.

Tele. 09 4439635.

Appendix I: Student Interview Guide for Pilot Study

STUDENTS' INTERVIEW GUIDE: Pilot Study

ICE-BREAKER

How's school this year? Why's that?

SCHOOL

What is your school like? Can you describe your school in three words? Why do you say that?

What's the best thing about school or being at school? Why?

What do you learn from being at school?

What's the hardest thing about being at school or the hardest thing you have to do at school? What makes it hard?

Are there some things or people that hinder or stop you from learning? What? How?

What would you change about school to make it a better place for boys? Why would you like to make that change?

What do you think schools would learn from students if they listened?

MOTIVATION

What motivates you at home? At school?

How are you motivated to learn?

How do teachers assist and motivate you to learn?

What are the three best things you like to do?

CURRICULUM

Think of the subjects you do your best work in, what is it that brings out your best in those subjects?

Probe further to cover: the way it is taught. The person teaching the subject. The

subject/content. The classroom environment.

Think of the subject where you do not do so well or you are not so interested in, what is it about those subjects you do not like? Probe as above.

If you find certain subjects/work hard at school, what things do you do to deal with this?

What type of help would make it easier?

PEERS and FRIENDS

What do your friends say about school? Do you think that influences the way you think about school? How? In what ways? *Probe further. Trying hard. Value of school. Homework?*

PARENTS and OTHER INFLUENCES

What do your parents think or say about school? How much do you think this influences what you think about school? How?

Do your parents make it easier or harder for you to try to do well at school? In what ways?

Are there any other out of school influences that stop you from working hard at school? *Probe further. Sport. Work. Church. Interests. Friends. Girls. Drugs?*

CONCLUSION

Are there any other comments you would like to add about what we have been talking about?

Something more on your ideas about school, the teachers, your friends or parents that we haven't talked about?

Appendix J: Student Interview Guide for Main Study

INTERVIEW FORMAT for MAIN STUDY

Code:..... Date.....

Icebreaker

1. What are the three best things you like to do?

SCHOOL

2. What is your school like? Can you describe it in words/short phrases?
3. What is the best thing about school?
4. What is the hardest thing about school?
5. What would you change about school to make it a better place for boys?
6. What are your best subjects? Why?
7. What are your most difficult subjects? Why?

LEARNING-MOTIVATION

8. Where do you go to get help when you need it?
9. What makes you want to learn *or* what motivates you to learn?
10. What distracts or stops you from learning?

11. How do you learn best *or* what are the teaching practices that help you learn best?

12. Think of a good teacher. What are the things they do that makes them good?

13. What's your biggest worry?

MATES

14. Mates seem to be important to you. Why are mates so important?

15. What makes a good mate?

16. What do you do with your mates?

17. Are friends/mates same or different? How?

18. Is there anything else you can tell me about mates?

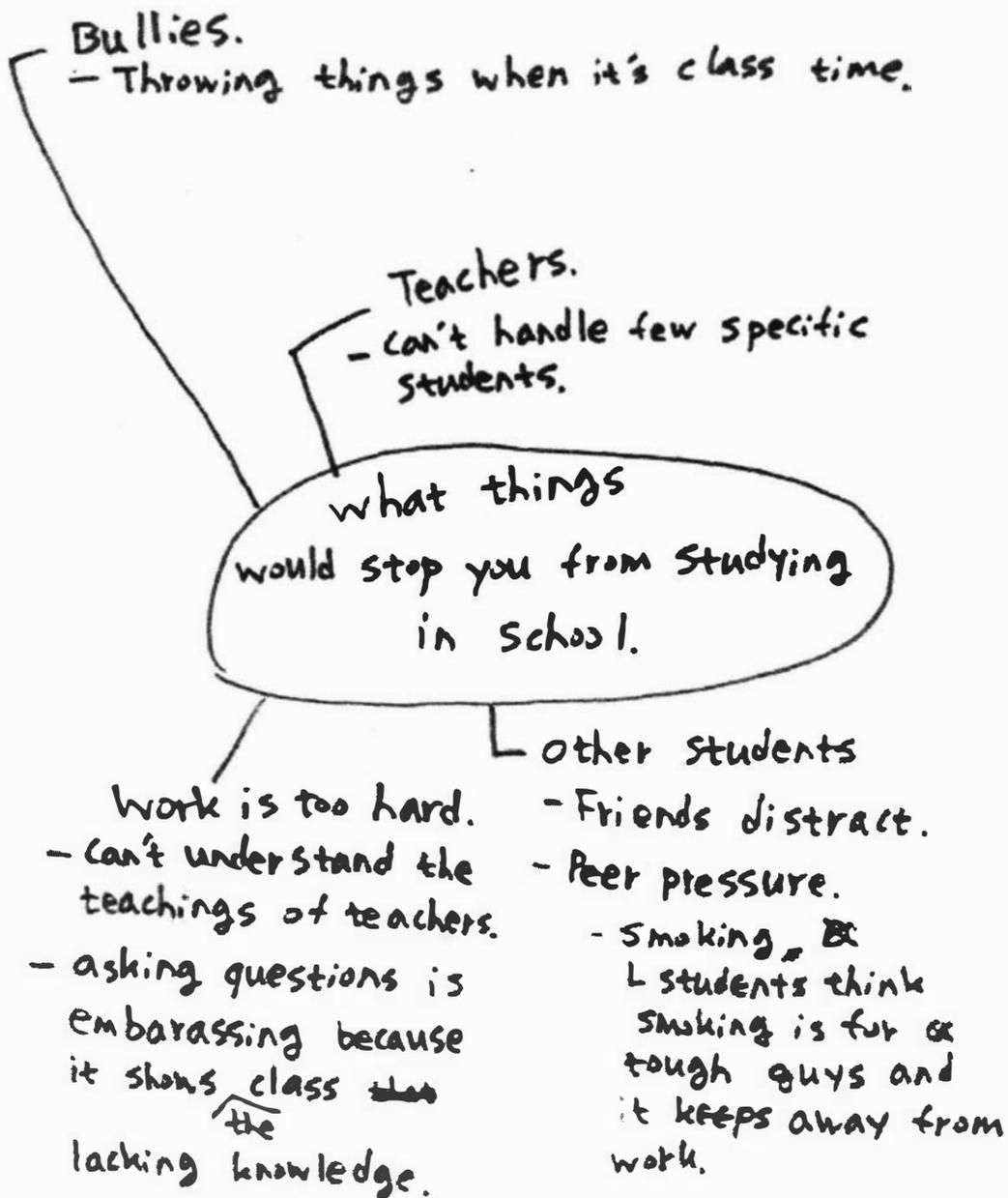
GIRLS RESULTS

19. Statistically girls' results at school are generally better than boys? Why do you think that might be so?

CONCLUSION

20. Is there any other comment you want to say about boys and school, learning or mates or anything else?

Appendix K: Focus Group Brainstorm Examples



Interesting to note:

Work is too hard when you can't understand the "teaching of the teachers". A common theme through out the research.

Peer pressure associated with smoking. "Tough guys smoke"!

Bullies throw things in class.

What Stresses you @ School?

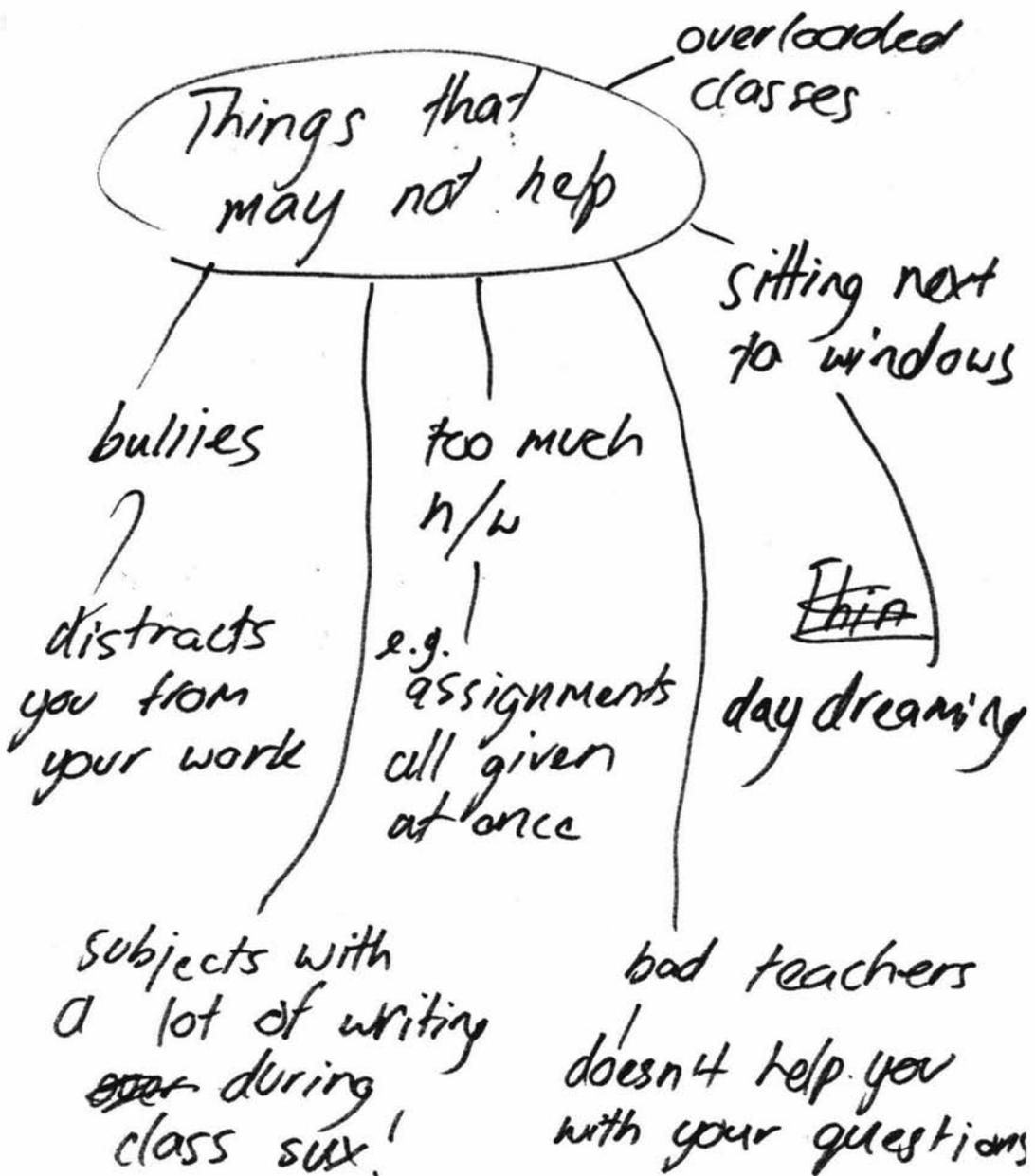
- Assignments that are due
- leaving things to the last minute
- Peers around you
- How everything seems to come at once from all subjects.
- Assemblies
- Spelling I.D card mistakes
- Not being able to find a car park
ESPECIALLY WHEN ITS RAINING!!
- Heavy bags
- Interruptions
- Getting up so early
- when your peers make comments that offend you.
- when people take things too serious.

Notes of interest:

Life is tough when it rains and you can't find a carpark!

Assignments, more so when they are all due at once and they cannot all be done the night before.

School starts too early. Getting up so early can stress you out.



Interesting to note:

Bad teachers are those that don't help you with your questions.

Curriculum subjects 'sux' if there is a lot of writing.

Too much homework often equates to assignments that are all due within short period of time. Windows can equate to daydreaming