

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY-
BASED PARENTING INITIATIVES: ENGAGING
EVERYDAY PARENTS TO PREVENT
MALTREATMENT**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Science (Psychology)

Lucia Madeleine King
Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand

2012

ABSTRACT

A population initiative to improve parenting knowledge and support is important for preventing child maltreatment. Traditional parent training programmes are expensive and unacceptable to many New Zealand parents, thus an alternative is indicated.

Common change principles and proposals from research suggest that interventions use supports for self-determination - relatedness, competence, and autonomy - as well as relevance, flexibility, and inductive qualities and attention to specific engagement factors. The SKIP population-based initiative uses many of these principles in their efforts to engage and support New Zealand parents. This project investigated two types of SKIP initiatives by assessing parents' perceptions of their efficacy and acceptability, and the factors that contributed to these perceptions.

Study 1 analysed the impact of a booklet disseminated to shoppers, and provides some evidence that supports for relatedness and autonomy, and an inductive approach, contributed to its effects. These included positive thoughts and feelings about parenting, reflection on parenting values and an intent to reflect more in future, as well as increased parenting confidence and decreased parenting stress.

Study 2 investigated parents' perceptions of two community-based parenting groups: their effects and the factors that contributed to them. It provides strong evidence that all of the aforementioned principles were important to the outcomes. Parents described an increase in parenting

knowledge, confidence and support, and increased comfort with talking about parenting with others. Other common factors that contributed to success in these initiatives are discussed also.

This project suggests that initiatives such as these, with alternative conceptions of how to achieve education and support, can be highly acceptable and beneficial to 'everyday' parents, who might not engage with traditional parent training programmes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research project has been challenging, exciting and fulfilling at once, throughout the process. Without the support and sacrifices of many people this could not have been achieved, and I am ever-grateful to them for their contributions.

The drive to continually discover and learn, and to achieve great academic heights comes from my mother, Caroline. I am grateful to her for my inquisitive spirit and the excitement I get from new knowledge. Thank you for this great part of me, and thank you also for your continued practical support while I insufferably continue chasing this dream!

I am particularly grateful to the participants who took part in my studies - without their gifts of time and insight I would be little more knowledgeable than when I started and would have no project to discuss. The facilitators, both of the groups I studied and those I did not, I thank for your time, support and enthusiasm. You all do fantastic work in the community, and I hope this work illustrates the wider effects of your efforts. Also the team at SKIP: without your openness and generosity with your time, knowledge and resources my ambition to discover this exciting field could not have been achieved. Thank you and I hope you can take something from this work.

My supervisor, Ian Evans, an interesting and ever-entertaining person charged with guiding my project to completion, will I'm sure be celebrating my eventual completion. His great ideas and dauntless spirit are the reasons I was able to carry out these studies, and I am grateful to him for his continued

support. I was also lucky to have Ruth Gammon support me during Ian's absence overseas, and I very much appreciate the time and encouragement she gave me as well.

I have been lucky to be a part of a wonderful group of people at the CHERUBS lab, who provide friendship, laughter and support to each other during the pressures of post-graduate study. Thank you all for your empathy, understanding, and helpful ideas, without which this time would have been much more arduous.

The people who have given most, however, are my friends and family. They have stood by me through my struggles, and given up their daughter, sister, friend or partner innumerable times. Their generosity with support, when I was often unable to return it, is humbling. My greatest thanks to them all, particularly my brother Rob, my close friend Freya, and most of all my partner Josh. I will never be able to repay you, but I know you will share the reward of this achievement with me. Thank you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	3
TABLE OF CONTENTS	7
FOREWORD.....	13
INTRODUCTION.....	17
Overview	17
Parenting: What it is and Why it is Important.....	18
What is Good Parenting?	19
Attachment Theory	20
Baumrind’s Parenting Styles.....	20
Self-Determination Theory	21
Hoffman’s Inductive Parenting	22
Grusec’s Integrating Theory	23
Cultural Differences in Optimal Parenting.....	25
Influences on Parenting.....	25
Parental Factors.....	26
Contextual Factors.....	29
Traditional Parenting Interventions.....	32
Recent History	32
Factors Important to Population Initiatives.....	35
Current Principles of Psychological Change	36
Integration of Five Current Models of Change	36
Implications for Parenting Initiatives	40
Current Messages From Research	41

Relationship-focussed.....	42
Autonomy-supportive.....	43
Strength-focussed	44
Relevance and Sensitivity	45
Inductive	45
Adherence to a Model of Change	47
Increasing Emotional Communication	47
Encouragement of Natural Supports.....	47
Practitioner Attributes.....	48
Universality.....	48
Engagement Factors	49
Issues and Conclusion.....	50
Newer Initiatives	51
Optimisation of Traditional Parent Training Models	51
Contemporary Models	53
Current Issues	56
The SKIP Approach.....	56
The Current Project.....	58
STUDY 1: THE IMPACT OF A BOOKLET ‘CELEBRATING BEING A MUM’	61
Introduction.....	61
Rationale	63
Expectations	64
Design	65
Method.....	66
Setting	66
Materials and Measures	66
Participants.....	67

Procedure	67
Data analysis	68
Results	69
Demographic information.....	70
Resource-related information	72
Quantitative Responses to the Resources	74
Current Levels of Parenting Thoughts and Behaviours	76
Perceived Change Following Exposure	77
Awareness of SKIP and Desire to See More.....	80
Correlations	80
Qualitative Responses.....	83
Effect of Booklet on Parenting Thought/Reflection.....	87
Correlations of Theme Processes with Outcomes	90
Discussion.....	91
Engagement.....	91
Changes Resulting from This Initiative	92
Processes by Which Change Occurred.....	94
Previous Awareness of and Current Desire to Engage with SKIP.....	95
STUDY 2: PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTING GROUPS	97
Introduction.....	97
Rationale	100
Expectations	101
Design	101
Method.....	102
Recruitment.....	102
Setting	103
Procedure	106

Materials and measures	107
Data analysis	109
Results - Fathers Group.....	110
Participation.....	110
Pre-/Post Reports.....	110
Verbal Retrospective Reports.....	112
Qualitative Responses.....	113
Results - Young Parents Group.....	138
Participation.....	138
Pre-/Post- Reports	138
Verbal Retrospective Reports.....	140
Qualitative Responses.....	141
Discussion.....	170
Engagement Factors	170
Changes Invoked by the Groups	174
Factors that Contributed to the Changes.....	177
Other Findings.....	181
OVERALL DISCUSSION.....	187
LIMITATIONS	197
CONCLUSION.....	200
REFERENCES.....	203
APPENDICES	223
Appendix A: Integration of Models of Change	223
Appendix B: The ‘Mum’ Booklet (Study 1).....	228
Appendix C: Survey (Study 1).....	229

Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet (Study 2)	231
Appendix E: Participant Consent Form (Study 2)	233
Appendix F: Transcript Release Authority (Study 2).....	234
Appendix G: Interview Schedule (Study 2).....	235
Appendix H: Pre-/Post Test (Study 2, Fathers).....	239
Appendix I: Pre-/Post Test (Study 2, Young Parents).....	241

FOREWORD

This thesis aims to examine the effects of two types of community-based positive parenting interventions, and the processes by which they exert their influence. The two interventions are representative of a population-based initiative to improve parenting called SKIP, conducted by the Ministry of Social Development in New Zealand. SKIP is an acronym for Strategies with Kids | Information for Parents.

Despite often being thought of as a safe place to bring up children, New Zealand has a significant and long-standing problem with child abuse and neglect. Even non-abusive parents in New Zealand have an inclination to use power-assertive parenting, highlighted by the widespread opposition to the 2007 'anti-smacking' law: 87% voted against it in a citizens-initiated referendum (Ministry of Justice, 2009).

Such statistics are very concerning, given evidence that abusive parents may not be otherwise categorically different from many non-abusers (Rose, 1992): abuse risk is currently understood to be based on an aggregate of personal and social factors rather than any specific underlying cause, and risk factors are many and varied (Dubanoski, Evans, & Higuchi, 1978; Milner, 1994). Social epidemiologist Rose (1992) suggested that the most effective strategy might be to attempt moderate change in the circumstances, attitudes, and behaviours of the general population rather than tackle individual cases only to have them replaced quickly by others. This inspired the focus on 'everyday'

parents: the range of parents who make up a community, who may benefit from both increased support and a social change towards more positive parenting.

Such a change does appear to have started. While documented child abuse occurrences are rising (Ministry of Social Development, 2011), it is generally accepted that this is due in part to a rise in reporting, which may reflect a societal change in attitude towards the protection of children from physical assault (Ellen, 2012). This has likely been prompted by Governmental programmes such as the 'It's not OK' campaign, which seeks to raise awareness of family violence and promote its treatment. National and international focus on positive parenting has grown over the last decade (Shulruf, O'Loughlin, & Tolley, 2009), and public concern over highly publicised cases of severe child maltreatment indicate there is a popular feeling of change being necessary. All of this public and political interest makes it timely to consider the encouragement of positive parenting across the nation.

I came across SKIP in a reference by the Ministry of Justice to long-term prevention initiatives to reduce criminality. I was interested in correctional psychology, but frustrated by learning that the track of life-course offenders generally begins in the early years (Andrews & Bonta, 2006). A population-wide prevention initiative was clearly indicated, but how to address the multiple risk factors for criminality on a sustainable and effective scale? I come from a pragmatic, humanistic worldview: I have always believed that to have any genuine and long-lasting effect on behaviour one needs to work with a person's natural drives rather than against them. SKIP's positive, community-building approach seemed to me like an initiative likely to inspire change, happiness, and

pride, which might eventually be self-sustaining: to run on its own positive energy. This coming from a government department, where deficit-oriented treatment programmes abound, made me excited and inspired. When I began my Master's research, SKIP came immediately to mind.

INTRODUCTION

Overview

In order to provide a full background on the psychological issues surrounding parenting, I first elaborate on what is known about the importance of parenting for children's outcomes. As it is not easy to specify precisely what is 'good parenting' I present four of the most common conceptual models psychologists have introduced in order to understand parenting, and summarise a fifth, very inclusive approach that tends to bring together the concepts underlying the other four. As New Zealand is multicultural, I also introduce the caveat that almost all of the psychological research is based on Western models and research assumptions.

This leads into a discussion of the factors that influence parents' beliefs, behaviours, and competencies. The large range of influences suggest that to support parents over the course of their parenting role, society - policy makers, governments, social agencies - will require flexibility and versatility to work with them: one size will not fit all. Additionally on a population scale it will not be feasible to treat deficits - rather success will come from building resilience.

To be successful on this level it will be important to integrate current knowledge of human psychological change into the structure and ethos of initiatives, focusing on the principles that promote change or at least allow adults to examine their parenting roles and practices. This focus on principles rather than rigid programmes has been suggested by Evans (in press) for

psychotherapy also. Common principles of change are reviewed, along with some current recommendations from parenting researchers.

Despite this illustrated need for flexibility, formal programmes do exist in social, educational, and clinical services for parents. While the protocols for ‘training’ parents have been carefully described and evaluated, they do not suit all parents, nor target the broader ecological and social context that parenting exists in. I review parenting initiatives of the twentieth century, followed by a brief overview of some popular contemporary methods, and end this introduction by providing an overview of the SKIP initiative and why it merits careful consideration from a psychological perspective.

Parenting: What it is and Why it is Important

In a population context, a useful definition for parenting is that of the actions or inactions of a person raising a child: charged with promoting and supporting that child’s physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development. These actions or inactions have huge significance on the lives of the child and the community around him or her.

It is well-accepted that parenting behaviours are an extensive influence on the psychological outcome of a child, and that much of this influence occurs in the early years of a child’s life, when the brain is most plastic and foundations of adaptive behaviour are set in place. Children who experience adaptive parenting are more likely to be psychologically healthy, while those who do not experience such parenting have a higher risk of psychological disorders (Ranson & Urichuk, 2008). These range from the predominantly cognitive disorders of attention and

learning, to the more emotional and social disorders, such as internalising/externalising disorders and behavioural disorders, as well as complex issues such as schizophrenia and personality disorders. The presence of maladaptive parenting has also been noted as a contributing factor to criminality, particularly life-course offending (Andrews & Bonta, 2006).

The psychological effects of early experiences are usually enduring, often requiring significant intervention to change, or affecting that person - and others around them - for the duration of their lives. In contrast interventions that focus on improving family interactions in the early years are generally considerably more successful and less costly (Heckman, 2006). For this reason the importance of encouraging positive parenting cannot be overstated.

What is Good Parenting?

My focus on psychological outcomes of parenting leads me to define good, or positive parenting, as that which produces cognitively, socially and emotionally healthy children and adults. An immense amount of research over the last century has produced a wide range of theories for influencing children's healthy development. Four of these theories with significant research support are Bowlby and Ainsworth's attachment theory, Baumrind's parenting styles, Ryan and Deci's self-determination theory and Hoffman's induction theory. I will describe these briefly, and then highlight a new, fifth theory, that attempts to integrate the important concepts of those preceding it into one superordinate theory of socialisation.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory was developed by Bowlby and Ainsworth in the 1950s and 60s, and states that an infant or young child needs to experience a warm, intimate, and continuous relationship with an attachment figure, in which both derive satisfaction and enjoyment, in order to grow up psychologically healthy (Bowlby, 1951). Ainsworth studied individual differences in infant-mother attachment and found three clusters, which she called secure attachment, insecure attachment, and disorganised attachment, and found that the clusters were correlated with the sensitivity of the mother to the needs of the child. Attachment theory posits that by continually meeting the emotional needs of the child the parent becomes regarded as a secure base where the child finds comfort from danger, and that this secure bond is essential to the child's current and future mental health. There exists strong research support for the importance of secure attachment for a range of positive biopsychosocial outcomes (Ranson & Urichuk, 2008).

Baumrind's Parenting Styles

A second theory is that of Baumrind's theory of parenting styles (e.g., 1971). She found that different types of parenting behaviour correlated with different traits of children, and determined that optimal parenting was that of the Authoritative parent: (behaviourally) controlling and demanding in a rational, issue-oriented manner, but also warm and receptive to the child's communication and encouraging of the child's autonomous and independent strivings. Styles that correlated with less-positive outcomes for children were deemed Authoritarian, Permissive and Neglectful. These four styles have been

differentiated by Maccoby and Martin (1983) by their levels of care/support and (behavioural) control/regulation: Authoritative consisting of high support and high regulation.

Authoritative parenting has been associated with a range of positive outcomes including self-esteem, resilience, emotional intelligence, internalising and externalising behaviour, and lower risky behaviour in youth (Chan & Koo, 2011; Luyckx et al., 2011; Zakeri, Jowkar, & Razmjooe, 2010).

Self-Determination Theory

Ryan and Deci's self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000) is a model of psychological needs and human motivation. It holds that good parenting is that which satisfies the basic, intrinsically motivating needs of their child, and encourages the child to actively seek and satisfy these needs for themselves, resulting in higher levels of wellbeing and success (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Levesque, Gingras, Philippe, Koestner, & Fang, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The three basic psychological needs suggested by self-determination theory are those of relatedness, autonomy, and competence.

Relatedness describes a feeling of interpersonal approval and support; the need for it is satisfied by supportive emotional connections from others. Autonomy, the freedom to determine one's own thoughts and actions, is encouraged when others allow this psychological freedom. Competence is supported through positive social evaluation of skills and abilities, and is developed in learners through the provision of structure, in order that progressive gains can be made (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Hoffman's Inductive Parenting

Hoffman's research (e.g., Hoffman, 1975; Hoffman & Saltzstein, 1967) highlights the effects of different forms of discipline: power-assertive and inductive. He states that power-assertive forms of discipline - those that use power to overrule unwanted behaviours - are associated with the development of a moral orientation based on fear of external detection and punishment, and little comprehension or respect for the morality or benefit of the rules in question. Alternatively, inductive discipline - prompting thought about the consequences of actions - is correlated with a moral orientation characterised by internalisation of social rules and adherence to them independent of external sanctions. This latter moral orientation is associated with social competence (Maccoby & Martin, 1983).

This theory has been extended by Applegate and colleagues (1985) to include the importance of acknowledging the disciplinee's emotions that drive the unwanted behaviour. The researchers found a parallel relationship between children's emotional competence and the degree to which parents acknowledge, legitimise, and help understand the child's feelings, rather than stifling them or dissuading their expression. Applegate and two of these colleagues (Applegate, Burleson, & Delia, 1992) then went on to suggest that such accepting and reflection-enhancing messages are key to socio-cognitive competence, and that this principle is found in many other theories of parenting, including being the differentiating factor between Baumrind's authoritative and authoritarian styles.

This acknowledgement of common principles is scientifically mature, and is the base of another, new and integrating theory of child socialisation.

Grusec's Integrating Theory

Grusec (2011) integrated these four and other important parenting theories into a comprehensive review of child socialisation. Five domains of important parenting behaviours are described, and optimal parenting is said to involve correctly interpreting the child's current need and responding within that domain, sufficiently to soothe the need. Grusec's five domains are: protection, mutual reciprocity, control, guided learning, and group participation.

Protection involves providing a safe environment and responding sensitively to distress: soothing, comforting and removing the source. As we have seen this leads to secure attachment, and research indicates that this predicts a child's later self-regulation of negative affect, empathy, trust and associated compliance.

Mutual reciprocity involves reciprocating good deeds. If a parent responds positively to a child's requests, then the child is likely to respond willingly to theirs. This is parental sensitivity to needs, but differs from that under 'protection' in that it is not distress-related, and the relationship is one of equals - learning to work together for mutual happiness. This is the basis for prosocial development.

The domain of behavioural control has been heavily researched, and this integration is complex and thorough. Grusec states that parents, because of their greater knowledge, must use their greater power to modify children's actions in order to ensure learning and adopting of social norms. Importantly, this must be done in a specific way, in order for the child to internalise the norms and maintain autonomy. This is done using high monitoring of behaviour, openness

to reasoning and discussion with each decision, and power-assertive behavioural control when necessary, but without hostility and in conjunction with a warm relationship. This style of socialisation is similar to Baumrind's authoritative and incorporates the fundamentals of Hoffman's induction and Ryan and Deci's autonomy.

The domain of guided learning uses principles of Vygotskian origin (e.g., Vygotskiê & Cole, 1978) and self-determination theory's continuance, stating that learning must be within the child's zone of proximal development, and must be scaffolded, explained and supported with warmth. Guided learning refers not just to cognitive skills, but social and emotional skills as well. Children whose parents provide detail, structure and feedback on emotion-laden past events show a more advanced understanding of emotions, and those whose parents coach them in social skills have better peer interactions and fewer behaviour problems.

The final domain, group identification, draws from social learning theory, and involves engaging children in rituals and routines, modelling appropriate behaviour and managing their children's environment to ensure influences are appropriate. Here a child learns the customs of a social group and bonds with others, building connectedness and thus social and emotional health.

Grusec's theory of socialisation is impressive in its integration of many strong parenting theories, and its perceptive acknowledgement of the importance of matching response to need - the principle underlying attachment's sensitivity. This attention to, accurate perception of, and suitable response to the child's need appears to be an elemental factor in positive parenting.

Cultural Differences in Optimal Parenting

Valuable and comprehensive as these conceptual models might be, an issue of concern is that most research into the effects of parenting, and indeed the necessities of child development, has been conducted in the Western world. Because of this, they are naturally based in a Western context: the underlying desires for children are those of the Western culture, and findings are applicable to this population only. While cross-cultural studies exist, there is as yet little agreement over the commonalities and differences between parenting principles in Western and in other cultures. Some research indicates similarities, such as that of Olson and colleagues (2011), who found that the parental use of harsh punishment had similar negative effects on children from the United States, China and Japan. Other researchers, notably Dwairy (e.g., 2010), reject the suggestion of this cross-cultural similarity, asserting instead that psychological ill-health is a product of a parenting style that is inconsistent with that of the surrounding society, whether that be authoritarian or authoritative.

This current equivocality gives little ability to state specifically the effects of parenting in different cultures or across cultures. Thus, despite the multicultural environment of New Zealand, my research is based on that knowledge which is more certain: that based in Western culture. This is a limitation, but an unavoidable one when working with current empirical research.

Influences on Parenting

Parenting, as with any psychologically driven activity, is influenced by a vast range of factors. Belsky (1984) categorises the influences as the

psychological attributes of the parent, the context of the parenting, and the psychological attributes of the child. While child factors are certainly important and affect parental behaviour, their primary source of malleability is parenting itself, and they are sideline to this thesis on improving parenting of the general population.

Parental Factors

Belsky proposed (1984), and a range of studies supported (e.g., Woodworth, Belsky, & Crnic, 1996), the primary influence on parenting to be the psychological knowledge, skills, and attributes of the parent. A large range of these exists, including level of general psychological development (Belsky, 1984), personality type (Prinz, Stams, Deković, Reijntjes, & Belsky, 2009), level of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977), coping style (Maupin, Brophy-Herb, Schiffman, & Bocknek, 2010), and the content and complexity of parenting schemata (Newberger, 1977). The most effective targets for a population approach are likely to be those that are most proximal to parenting behaviour. Parental schemata, coping style, and self-efficacy are perhaps the most relevant here.

Parenting schemata. Parenting schemata, termed internal working models by Bowlby (1969), are the mental representations of parenting: beliefs and attitudes about the nature of appropriate parenting behaviour (Azar, Nix, & Makin-Byrd, 2005). Schemata consciously and subconsciously filter and interpret external information according to perceived relevance, and provide a framework of suitable responses (Azar et al., 2005). The content and the complexity of these schematic representations affect the parenting behaviours parents use. An accurate and complex set of schemata is needed for optimal

parenting, in order to yield behaviours that are appropriate and sensitive to a range of diverse needs.

Beliefs about parenting are understood to develop initially from internalisation of both cultural norms and the parenting experienced as a child (Azar et al., 2005). These schemata are augmented or modified by new information and events, such as education, personal or vicarious experience, or discussions with others (Azar et al., 2005). New information, however, is subject to the filtering and interpreting of the schema themselves, and is integrated or discarded in a manner that makes sense to the perceiver based on their current understandings. In this way information that may appear to an outsider to be relevant and important for a person may be discarded or interpreted differently, for reasons the outsider is not privy to.

Schematic complexity develops from the regular consideration of a range of perspectives to an issue. One prompt for this consideration as a child is the parental use of reflection-enhancing messages (Applegate et al., 1992). This practice of reflection may then be internalised and become an adult habit.

It is clear then, that the content and complexity of a person's parenting schemata are in large part dependent on the parenting that they experienced during their own upbringing. This is also true for many other parent traits: psychological development, coping strategies, and general self-efficacy are all in part determined by the parenting behaviours of our parents. This cyclical effect has been called intergenerational transmission in attachment research, and its existence has been widely documented (Critchfield & Benjamin, 2008).

Parental coping style. A second important parental attribute is that of coping style. An active coping style, where the cause of the problem is attended to and resolved, is important for effectively coping with stressors (Thoits, 1995). Mondell and Tyler (1981) found that such a coping style is linked to more positive parenting. Coping styles are primarily learned through internalising the behaviours of parents or significant others during upbringing, though, like many psychological attributes, can be amended with attention.

Parenting self-efficacy. A final important parental attribute is that of parenting self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief that oneself is capable of completing an action and achieving the desired outcome, and this plays a major part in motivation for action (Bandura, 1977). Without a perception that one's attempts at socialising one's children will be successful there will be limited attempts to do so, or limited attempts to use particular techniques (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy has thus been demonstrated to strongly predict positive parenting behaviours, and also to play a mediating role in the effects of other positive parenting correlates, such as social support (Coleman & Karraker, 1998). This mediation and other forms of linking are common within the field of parenting influences: the ranges of personal and contextual factors are highly linked and interdependent. Self-efficacy can develop from perceptions of personal accomplishment history, vicarious experience and/or verbal persuasion (Bandura, 1989).

Contextual Factors

Belsky's second category of influences on parenting behaviour is that of the parenting context. This is the sum of changeable environmental influences on a parent, and includes sources of stress and support (Belsky, 1984).

Stressors. There are many stressors that can negatively affect the ability of a parent to parent to their best. These include physical illness (Mensah & Kiernan, 2011), psychological illness (J. A. S. Cohen & Semple, 2010), poor sleep quality and fatigue (Kienhuis, Rogers, Giallo, Matthews, & Treyvaud, 2010; Treyvaud, Rogers, Matthews, & Allen, 2010), low income (Callahan & Eyberg, 2010), marital ill health, and parenting discord (Yates, Obradović, & Egeland, 2010). While each has its own specific effects on parenting, all ultimately create an increased demand for resources. When this demand is perceived by the parent to exceed current availability stress is the result. Parental stress has been demonstrated to have significant negative effects on both parenting behaviours and child outcomes (e.g., Rafferty & Griffin, 2010; Shea & Coyne, 2011; Whittaker, Harden, See, Meisch, & Westbrook, 2011)

Supports. Positive contextual factors provide support to parents, reducing demands and the associated stress (Belsky, 1984). The most relevant support factor in this individual-level, population intervention approach is that of social support. While an individual's coping style is an internal moderator of the effects of stress, social supports provide an external moderator.

Social support is crucial to human wellbeing, particularly during times of stress, influencing physical and psychological health (Bruhn, 2009). The most important functions of social support are generally agreed to be socioemotional,

informational, and instrumental aids (Jack, 2000; Thoits, 1986), though Belsky adds a fourth: the provision of social expectations that serve as a guide to socially appropriate behaviour (1984). Thoits (1986) conceptualises social support as 'coping assistance': reminding the person of and assisting them with adaptive coping mechanisms.

Thoits' astute theory of coping assistance also states that the most effective supporter is one who is perceived as: (a) socioculturally similar and (b) having experienced a similar situation and reacted similarly. These attributes enhance the likelihood that empathy will be perceived as true and supportive, and that suggestions will be perceived as relevant and effective. One exception to this is when a dissimilar supporter is perceived as expert, for example a psychotherapist (Thoits, 1986). The long-term benefit of specific social support will depend on the effectiveness of that advice, for example the advocacy of active versus avoidant coping (Aldwin & Werner, 2009).

In general, though, social support has been repeatedly shown to be a significant positive factor in parenting (Ghazarian & Roche, 2010; McConnell, Breikreuz, & Savage, 2011; Prelow, Weaver, Bowman, & Swenson, 2010). Jack (2000) highlights a consistent finding that parents need to have at least one close, confiding bond with another adult to help reduce stress and stave off depression, and Guerrero (2009) found that the only predictor of child maltreatment risk in men taking parenting classes was a low frequency of conversations with others about their problems.

Clearly social support is essential, but not all attempts at support are received as supportive. Gameiro, Moura-Ramos, Canavarro, and Soares (2011)

found that for fathers, emotional and instrumental supportive actions from the extended family were positively associated with stress, whereas such support from friends had a negative association. Dunst and colleagues (1997) determined that informal personal relationships which are characterised by endurance, equality, trust and personal autonomy, tend to be most effective.

Social capital. As the health of a person depends on the size and quality of their social networks, on a wider scale the health of a community depends on these attributes also (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Social capital is a measurement of the capital held by a society based on the prosocial interactions between network members, both individual and organisational (Bruhn, 2009). Communities with high social capital demonstrate better health and lower rates of social problems than those with lower social capital: that is, social capital is a preventative factor against social problems (Bruhn, 2009; Jack, 2000). The development of social capital is complex, but increasing the number of equal, prosocial interactions amongst members of a community is generally understood to be helpful in increasing it (Bruhn, 2009; Jack, 2000).

The combination of this large range of personal and interpersonal factors plays a significant part in determining the parenting behaviours that parents use. Interventions may be successful if they aim to improve the accuracy and complexity of parental schemata, increase active coping and parenting self-efficacy, reduce parenting stress and increase parenting support individually and as a community. Over recent history there have been a wide range of interventions aiming to do many of these things.

Traditional Parenting Interventions

Recent History

Parent groups. From the early 19th century when mothers formed associations to discuss parenting information and support one another, parenting initiatives have developed broadly (Campbell & Palm, 2004). Parent groups have used information from professionals in a range of ways: written material and didactic lectures were common initially, followed by interactive discussions from the 1940s, as understandings of small group dynamics became more widely known and a more active role for parents was recommended (Campbell & Palm, 2004). Auerbach (1968) provides a clear and perceptive account of group parent education during the 1960s, describing the benefits that parents received from sharing experiences with others, gaining a broader understanding of child behaviour and parenting strategies, and deepening their own personal understandings through reflection on the different perspectives brought by the group.

Parent training. A parallel line of history is that of interventions for troubled children and parents. The concept of treating child delinquency by training the parent was conceived of in the early 20th century (Briesmeister & Schaefer, 2007; McLoughlin, 1982). Psychoanalytic strategies were used first, with limited effect, but the field proliferated following the development of behavioural techniques in the 1960s (Briesmeister & Schaefer, 2007). Structured programmes were developed, social learning and coercion theories were included, and a call for empirical research was made in the 1970s (Shaffer, Kotchick, Dorsey, & Forehand, 2001). Shortly afterwards, attachment theorists

joined in, with training programmes for parents whose young children were insecurely attached (Bretherton, 1992). Currently a number of non-profit and commercially developed programmes exist, with vast body of knowledge describing their effectiveness at treating attachment and behavioural problems in children, and many are now being expanded for use as preventive measures (Bakermans-Kranenburg, van Ijzendoorn, & Juffer, 2003).

Behavioural parent training has become established as a successful treatment for behavioural disorders in children, regularly producing moderate effects on parenting and child behaviour following treatment (Lundahl, Nimer, & Parsons, 2006; Nowak & Heinrichs, 2008; Stewart-Brown & Schrader-McMillan, 2011). Attachment interventions have developed more broadly, and have had more varied success: effects on parenting and child attachment have ranged from nil to moderate (Berlin, 2005; Bunting, 2004; Stewart-Brown & Schrader-McMillan, 2011). Most behavioural and many attachment initiatives have become manualised and highly structured, generally taking place in weekly sessions over eight to twelve weeks, teaching parenting strategies and initiating group discussion of them (Bunting, 2004). Programmes have been used successfully in a range of populations, of different income levels, countries and ethnicities (Reid, Webster-Stratton, & Beauchaine, 2001; Stewart-Brown & Schrader-McMillan, 2011).

The effect of these programmes, however, often does not extend to entire target populations. Uptake and retention in parent training programmes are often unreported, and when they are reported are rarely high (Bunting, 2004; Dumka, Garza, Roosa, & Stoerzinger, 1997; Ministry of Education, 2012; Moran,

Ghate, & Van der Merwe, 2004). The issue of 'parental engagement', as it has become known, has been noted as a problem with parent training programmes for decades, particularly in the most at-risk populations (Lucas, 2011), where the greatest potential benefit lies (Zepeda & Morales, 2001). It has been reported that it is the parents who are already predisposed to change who participate (Zepeda & Morales, 2001). While these programmes may be successful for some, they do not appear to be for others.

Parent support. A third line of parent intervention history is that of charitable and governmental prevention initiatives for families deemed to be at risk of negative outcomes. While these have existed throughout history in different forms, current strategies began in the 1960s and 70s (Asmussen, 2011). The United States initiative of Head Start was launched in 1965, initially as a holiday programme to prepare young children for kindergarten, then expanded to a year-round early childcare and parent support initiative (Asmussen, 2011). In the 1970s the strategy of supporting parents through home visits was increased, through a range of organisations including the successful Nurse-Family Partnership (Asmussen, 2011).

These parent support initiatives are hugely varied in their intent, content and application, but have the common purpose of providing support and information to parents. They range from home visitation by professionals or paraprofessionals (Howard & Brooks-Gunn, 2009), to mentoring from successful parents (Z. Johnson et al., 2000), to joint parent-child childcare groups (Woolfson, Durkin, & King, 2010), and support groups with and without facilitation (Cornille, Barlow, & Cleveland, 2005; Crowley & Curenton, 2011).

Along with this range of structures comes a range of levels of success: effects have ranged from nil to moderate (Howard & Brooks-Gunn, 2009; MacMillan et al., 2009; Stewart-Brown & Schrader-McMillan, 2011). The greatest effects have been achieved by programmes with high adherence to strong theoretical models, most of which have been one-on-one home visiting programmes using professional visitors to visit high-risk families and encourage self-efficacy (Howard & Brooks-Gunn, 2009; MacMillan et al., 2009). Support programmes have significantly higher rates of retention than parent training programmes, however, especially for high-risk audiences (MacMillan et al., 2009).

Each of these threads has developed alongside and with the others, sharing knowledge and practical application. Preventive initiatives currently include a range of parent training and home visiting supports for parents at risk, and the field has become a hugely important one to governments around the world.

Factors Important to Population Initiatives

While we celebrate the achievements made by previous initiatives, we also look forward, to building on those achievements in the future and providing better and better services to the population. To do this, a number of factors are important, and these include effectiveness, engagement and cost.

Parent training appears promising for the treatment of behavioural disorders, though only for those parents who attend. As a preventive initiative it is likely to be expensive and impractical on a population basis, though appears indicated for parents of children at high risk of developing behavioural disorders - again at least for those who attend.

Support programmes also appear promising for a different population. The higher engagement of parents ensures a greater number of at-risk families are likely to be positively influenced. Attention to those models that provoke the greatest outcomes will be important. Additionally, the relatively high cost of one-on-one professional service means that its cost-effectiveness will depend on the allocation to high-risk families, where the greatest effects are likely to be gained.

Meeting the needs of families at lower risk statuses is also important. As we have seen, all families have a need for information and support. While some will proactively utilise a range of available resources, others will benefit from additional intervention in one or many areas. The best mode of provision of this is yet to be determined: it is clear that research on the possibilities for effective, engaging and economically pragmatic population initiatives is justified.

It is useful, now, to examine current broader, non-programmatic understandings of the processes by which human change occurs, and relate this to the area of parenting interventions.

Current Principles of Psychological Change

Integration of Five Current Models of Change

A range of theories of human change exist, in relevant fields such as psychological development, education, population health promotion, and social change. I examined five models: the aforementioned self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), Prochaska's transtheoretical model of change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983; Prochaska & Velicer, 1997), Orlinsky and Grawe's psychotherapeutic change factors (Gassmann & Grawe, 2006; Grawe, 1997;

Orlinsky, Grawe, & Parks, 1994), Rosenstock's health belief model (Rosenstock, 1974), and Kelman and Warwick's model of social change (Kelman & Warwick, 1973).

By attending to the commonalities of a range of change models, from a range of areas of psychology, crucial principles of human psychological change are likely to be elicited. Importantly, many of the change theories included in this analysis describe change in people at a range of levels of intent to change. These principles, then, are more likely to describe the process of change for a broad range of parents, including those who do not engage with traditional parent training programmes.

These models arise from different areas of psychology, but they have much in common. Each of the models either explicitly or implicitly acknowledges the significant forces that act to preserve the status quo of behaviour. Behaviour is believed to exist based on personally-assimilated informational and motivational schemata and social systems of goal achievement (Kelman & Warwick, 1973), thus in order to effect change these must be unravelled and new supported systems that achieve all the currently-attained goals put in place. This requires significant effort, as well as trust: trust that the new behaviour will meet all the goals, and that the emotional discomfort of uncertainty will be tolerated and outweighed by the improvements gained. All of the models refer to a number of important components of the change process, which I have grouped and categorised as intrinsic motivation, attention and reflection, and evidence (see Appendix A for the details of this amalgamation).

Intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation, from self-determination theory, is my first category of components: the best conditions for psychological change to occur are when a person is intrinsically motivated to consider the potential change. The change theories' commonalities include each of the three components of intrinsic motivation - supports for relatedness, autonomy, and competence - though often described in different terms. As discussed earlier, relatedness is the state of feeling securely accepted and supported by social peers, autonomy refers to having freedom and choice about one's actions rather than being coerced by some external motivator or restriction, and competence is similar to self-efficacy: a feeling of capability and of perceived capability by others. Support for each of these three mental states is important in these theories of change.

Attention and reflection. My second category of change mechanisms is that of attention and reflection. Integration of the change theories implies that both attention to a current functional system and reflection on the suitability of that system are required for change to occur. A person's attention may be drawn to a situation by an external influencer, or simply through everyday observation. Reflection, a secondary process, may also be prompted by an external influencer, perhaps through the provision of new and interesting information, or a direct suggestion to think about it. Alternatively reflection may be self-initiated through a habit of reflecting - as discussed earlier often the result of an upbringing with many reflection-enhancing messages, or through natural curiosity. Reflection here describes assessing whether the current system of efforts to achieve goals is the most efficient and value-adherent, or if other alternatives may be better.

Evidence. The final change component is evidence. For change to occur the person must perceive that a change in behaviour is the most suitable course of action, and important enough to take that action. This must take into account not only the new behaviour's different ability to meet goals, but the internal and external difficulties involved in the making the change; and the analysis will always be based on the schemata the person currently holds. An influencer can facilitate change here by drawing attention to greater suitability of the new behaviour, and by working to reduce internal and external barriers to change.

Other relevant issues. In addition to these common points, Kelman and Warwick (1973) discuss some further issues which I feel are particularly relevant to this field. Firstly, the perceived influencing power of the influencer is not mentioned in many of the other theories examined, rather it appears to be taken for granted. This, I think, is a key factor in the efficacy of interventions with people who are not currently seeking information, especially in groups who may have negative perceptions of government and organisational messages. The authors explain that for internalised change to occur (the change we seek), the influencer must be perceived as expert and trustworthy.

The authors also discuss characteristics of the influencee that affect their likelihood of making change, including time awareness, interpersonal, authority-orientation, efficacy, and ideological factors. Intentional change is optimally possible in a person with a desire and ability to conceptualise and plan for future improvement, interpersonal trust high enough to accept knowledge and support from others, social development high enough to encourage reciprocal social support where required, a congruent authority orientation to that of the

influencer, self-efficacy high enough to encourage an attempt, and an ideological orientation congruent with role of discussing parenting. Finally, they make the point, as discussed previously, that the expression and retention of these new chosen behaviours requires self-efficacy, understanding, skill, social support, and low stress.

Implications for Parenting Initiatives

Thus we see that psychological change is dependent on a number of contextual and interpersonal factors. This differs from traditional education models, which assume a more straightforward, one-way interaction, where people will logically adhere to expert instruction. It is now clear that some traditional parenting initiatives may have weaknesses relating to these change mechanisms.

The first is the importance of intrinsic motivation. Without feeling that attending an initiative supports their needs for relatedness, competence, and autonomy, parents are likely to be in a state of ego defence. In this state attention is given to protecting oneself from criticism, reducing the likelihood of reflection on issues that demonstrate incongruencies in schemata. This reflection is crucial to the process of change. Thus without considering supports for intrinsic motivation parenting initiatives risk failing, through participants either not engaging at all, or not being in a position to honestly reflect on information.

This may be a reason for engagement problems with traditional treatment programmes. Many were designed as self-referral and user-pays, and thus assume parents attend with an intrinsic motivation to learn solutions to their parenting problems in the manner in which the programme prescribes.

When these programmes are supplied free to externally-referred parents, who may be coerced to go, this assumption is not always correct - in fact the referral situation may even work against intrinsic motivation. Without specific attention to these factors initiatives may fail to effect changes in parents' behaviours.

Secondly, the importance of attention to relevance. It is clear that the goals and proposed solutions used must be relevant to the participant in their current system of living and understanding, and important enough to them to warrant current attention. This may be another reason for limited engagement in structured parenting programmes: their limited flexibility to meet a range of needs and situations that may differ from those intended by the initiative, or the perceived irrelevance of the facilitator's or organisation's beliefs to the parents' lives.

Clearly the process of influencing parents, particularly those who are not actively seeking to be taught information, is complex. Attending to these theoretical models of change may help to explain some non-engagement in traditional parenting programmes and aid in creating newer initiatives that meet the needs of a greater number of people.

Current Messages From Research

Researchers in the parenting intervention field have proposed a range of new strategies for future interventions, many of which align with these above principles of change. These include creating strong relationships, using an egalitarian structure, focusing on strengths, attending to relevance and individual specificity, and using more inductive modes of transmitting

information. These are parallels of the previously noted change ingredients of supports for relatedness, autonomy, competence, attention, and reflection.

Two other new suggestions, not directly aligned with the change principles above, are aiming interventions universally, and encouraging parents' natural supports in addition to providing support through the intervention. Additionally, meta-analyses provide some tried-and-tested principles of successful practice, including the importance of adherence to a defined theoretical model, the importance of increasing emotional communication, attention to the differing effects of professionals versus paraprofessionals, and attention to engagement factors.

Unfortunately, some of these newer suggestions have drawbacks as well as advantages, and not all are completely compatible with the principles of previously successful initiatives. The importance of compromise and balance will become apparent.

Relationship-focussed

Researchers in the parent education field are calling for a renewed focus on warm and supportive facilitator-parent relationships (Fonagy, 1998; Mahoney & Kaiser, 1999). Many researchers suggest a client-focussed ethos, where the values and needs discussed are those of the parent, as this is likely to have the effect of increasing perceived supportiveness (Mahoney & Kaiser, 1999). Attachment researchers state that this support is crucial to achieving change in parenting schemata, as the facilitator provides a secure base for the parent to explore their (necessarily emotional) beliefs and experiences around parenting (Berlin, 2005; Bowlby, 1988). Perceived support and acceptance from

peers as well as facilitators was found by Kane, Wood, and Barlow (2007) to be crucial to engagement in parent training, and they noted the importance of skilled facilitation to achieving this.

Autonomy-supportive

Greater respect for parent autonomy is a second proposal for future parenting initiatives (Fonagy, 1998; Mahoney & Kaiser, 1999). Patterson and Forgatch's (1985) evidence that therapist behaviours 'teach' and 'confront' produced client resistance (whereas 'facilitate' and 'support' reduced it) formalised clinical awareness of a paradox in trying to influence others: that, unless a person has autonomously decided to obey directives, those directives will provoke resistance through their intrinsic threat to autonomy. While parents who have chosen to be trained by an expert may feel autonomous in this setting, those who have not may feel their autonomy is being affronted by being expected to adhere to a particular view. Thus, on a population level, the parent training method is problematic.

The recommended alternative is the use of collaborative, egalitarian relationships. Borkowski, Smith, and Akai (2007) state that respect for parents' opinions, suggestions and goals produces a relationship of mutual respect, where parents feel practitioners are 'partnering with them' rather than 'trying to fix them', and that this is essential to effective prevention initiatives.

On a wider scale, this egalitarianism has also been proposed for the structure of initiatives. While government initiatives are necessarily 'top down' in origin, 'bottom-up' strategies such as participatory action research have been used within them to achieve specific goals while empowering and building the

social capital of communities (Bruhn, 2009). Copas and Action Inquiry Contributors' (2011) review discusses their proposal for how authentic collaboration with the community could work in New Zealand, using 'power with' rather than 'power over', and recognition that those serving and those served are one and the same - one community of people, in it together.

Strength-focussed

Another important recommendation from current research is for a positive, accepting, strength-focussed and health-promotion atmosphere (Copas & Action Inquiry Contributors, 2011; Mahoney & Kaiser, 1999; Stewart-Brown & Schrader-McMillan, 2011). Supports for competence are important for intrinsic motivation, and this may be most important for high-risk or disadvantaged parents who may experience criticism of their competence more than most. Most parent training is deficit-focused, aimed at remedying deficits described by others; it is easy to see that this may affront intrinsic motivation for many parents.

An important facet of this positive atmosphere is said to be an open-minded acceptance of the varied strategies parents make use of in order to raise their children (L. R. Johnson, 2009). Lucas (2011) suggests the use of parenting principles rather than strategies, in order that personal and cultural variations are legitimised. Finally, a focus of health promotion rather than problem prevention is indicated, as this aligns better with most parents' goals, ensuring much greater participation (Dumka et al., 1997).

Relevance and Sensitivity

Intention to attend parenting interventions has been found to be highly influenced by positive attitudes to it by oneself and one's social group (Thornton & Calam, 2011). Research calls for consumer-relevant initiatives (Borkowski et al., 2007), and advises the use of consumer input during development to ensure this (Mahoney & Kaiser, 1999). Copas and Action Inquiry Contributors (2011) describe their principle of co-producing services that meet the needs and motivations of families, and Sanders and Kirby (2012) discuss a range of initiatives through which this collaboration has been tried.

In addition to sociocultural relevance, research also calls for flexibility and sensitivity to individual needs, to encourage engagement and outcome success (Kane et al., 2007; McCurdy & Daro, 2001). While heavily structured interventions have the advantage of predictability, measurability and the ability to be implemented by people with less training, their rigidity means they are less able to adapt their processes to meet varied needs (Lucas, 2011).

Inductive

Another research recommendation is that parents should be prompted to reflect on new information and its interaction with their current parenting schemata, rather than to learn and repeat specific behaviours. Bond and Burns (2006) criticise the behavioural training approach for attempting to change surface parenting behaviours without investigating the schemata that underlie them, stating that the complexity of parenting schemata determines the use and effect of these behaviours and thus this should be the target of interventions (see also Cassidy et al., 2005; Slade, Grienenberger, Bernbach, Levy, & Locker, 2005).

Bond, Belenkey and Weinstock (2000) successfully increased cognitive complexity of young mothers using “high-quality, reflective dialogue, individual and group narrative, and collaborative problem-solving”, and related this to the theory that cognitive complexity correlates with authoritative parent approach (Bugental, 2000; Gerris, Deković, & Janssens, 1997; Newberger, 1977). Bond and Burns (2006) later demonstrated this theory with another group of parents, and thus argue that parenting interventions should “foster parents’ epistemological development rather than dwell on individual parent behaviours” (Bond & Burns, 2006).

Bond and Burns’ ideological intention may compromise efficiency and acceptability of parenting initiatives if taken literally: parents often seek and benefit from information about specific parenting behaviours (Mahoney & Kaiser, 1999). The principle of addressing and developing schemata through reflective discussion, however, has been recommended by many (E. Cohen, 2004; Powell, 1996; Slade, 2005), and Lundahl and colleagues (2006) argued for a combination of the two approaches following their meta-analysis. In addition to their greater efficacy, inductive strategies are likely to have long-term effects, as parenting are trained to think critically about parenting principles as children grow, and they are less likely to be used incongruously than rote-learned behaviours (McLoughlin, 1982).

Six other current recommendations from research (not directly related to my components of change) are for adherence to a theoretical model of change, increasing of emotional communication, encouragement of natural supports, use

of appropriate practitioners, universality of intervention and attention to engagement factors.

Adherence to a Model of Change

One of the strongest findings to come from evidence-based practice is the importance of development based on and adherence to a theoretical model of change. Meta-analyses have determined this to be perhaps the most common correlate of success in parenting and prevention initiatives (Borkowski et al., 2007; Moran et al., 2004; Stewart-Brown & Schrader-McMillan, 2011). Presumably in this vein, Moran and colleagues (2004) also found that interventions that have measurable, concrete objectives as well as overarching aims are more likely to have success.

Increasing Emotional Communication

Another overarching finding from one meta-analysis was the importance of increasing emotional communication and relationship skills (Stewart-Brown & Schrader-McMillan, 2011). This is likely of importance as it has the potential to benefit not just the parent-child relationship, but a range of other important relationships within the parent's life, further enhancing their network of social support and a range of life-course outcomes.

Encouragement of Natural Supports

In a related manner, encouraging natural support systems is proposed to be highly important in successful parenting initiatives. Thoits (1995) collates what is known about social support: the importance of providing support from programme staff as a key component, providing education and training in

specific coping skills, and attempting to strengthen existing natural supports. Abusing and neglecting parents have been found to have reduced social skills and social network use (Crittenden, 1985), so increasing these skills, likely including inductive methods, may be of benefit to parents. Additionally, attempts to broaden or strengthen existing supports are likely to be valuable. Formal support relationships often have little effect on long-term parenting outcomes, and rarely increase social support (Mahoney & Kaiser, 1999; McConnell et al., 2011), an area that Jack (2000) suggests should be given more focus.

Practitioner Attributes

The skill and training of practitioners is another strong correlate of success (Moran et al., 2004). The use of paraprofessionals is generally less effective than the use of professionals, especially with higher-risk clients (Stewart-Brown & Schrader-McMillan, 2011; Zepeda & Morales, 2001). They do have the benefit, however, of possessing more attributes that may be perceived as trustworthy: commonalities of demographic and experience, and reduced power and authority. For this reason they are ideal for outreach to these clients, and may be essential in the building of trust (Heaney & Israel, 2008; Stewart-Brown & Schrader-McMillan, 2011). This building of trust may be the best chance of engaging clients who are wary of standard services.

Universality

A final proposition from research is that of universality. Many parenting intervention researchers argue for universality, as risk factors for negative parenting are many and varied, and early intervention produces by far the most effective and durable outcomes (Moran et al., 2004; Stewart-Brown & Schrader-

McMillan, 2011). Mass media campaigns are very useful in this respect, as they arguably reach all parents, including those who do not engage with services (Bunting, 2004). They also hold the potential to change public attitudes toward seeking support, a goal that is regarded as necessary for optimal parental engagement (Moran et al., 2004), and has been previously achieved in this manner by the 'Are You Ok?' domestic violence awareness campaign (Ministry of Social Development, 2012). Universal access to services also reduces stigma associated with attendance, a known barrier to intrinsic motivation and engagement.

Engagement Factors

Attracting and continuing interest in interventions is clearly an important issue to focus on. Moran and colleagues (2004) provide a comprehensive review of a range of factors in practical, relational, cultural/contextual, strategic, and structural domains. They suggest innovation in meeting these goals. Practical factors include relevant marketing, convenient timing and location, provision of childcare, and a comfortable and non-stigmatising venue. Relational factors include trust, empathy, an ability to relate to others, and a positive, partnership focus. Cultural, contextual and situational factors include awareness of ecological situations of parents, good interagency referral practices, and adaptability to a range of personal and cultural factors. Strategic factors include persistent efforts to remind and reduce barriers to engagement, including one-on-one contact throughout, and incentivising attendance by providing benefits that are not necessarily related to parenting. Structural factors include using interactive and 'fun' rather than didactic styles, the use of alternative modes of intervention

where necessary, and provision of relevant and engaging supporting materials (Moran et al., 2004).

Issues and Conclusion

Thus overall there is argument for a new generation of parenting interventions that achieve greater engagement and effectiveness through use of the principles above. At the extreme of these recommendations is a model where communities are encouraged to work together to meet their own chosen goals for the community. Input from experts would be available, but only on an autonomous, egalitarian level - not required to be asked for or adhered to.

Such a model, despite its promise for community social capital and the associated social and health gains, would be unlikely to be accepted by policy makers. Its inherent unpredictability of outcomes and non-adherence to specific funding criteria make it unalignable with governmental policy and funding strategies. There would be no guarantee that parenting outcomes would even increase under such a scheme - community goals may differ widely from this, and it is well-known that community-building takes much longer to achieve effects than more top-down approaches. This hypothetical model, then, is just that for now.

Somewhere on the continuum from didactic instruction to complete client direction, however, is a range of options that might be considered. These range from directed community action initiatives to more traditional parent groups and support services that have an emphasis on autonomy and client focus. Clearly, though, there is a challenge in meeting a range of needs, and compromise must be made in some places. It may be better to reach high-risk parents gently,

encouraging them to attend less-intensive interventions to build trust and engagement slowly, rather than attempting to force attendance at intensive, non-autonomous programmes that may further increase resistance to support. This will require significant patience, however, which may not be available in policy. The field is constantly developing, and much learning is yet to come (Jack, 2005).

Newer Initiatives

Increasing the acceptability and effectiveness of parenting initiatives in recent years has been enacted in a number of ways. Some initiatives have taken the above principles and used them to improve the functioning of traditional programmes. Others have used the principles to create new initiative structures that are closer to the environments conducive to change in these models.

Optimisation of Traditional Parent Training Models

Behavioural Parent Training. Webster-Stratton (1998) describes methods of increasing attendance at behavioural parent training programmes in low-income areas. A range of strategies relating to the principles above are suggested, including supportive relationships, collaborative and empowering interactions, a positive ethos, community involvement in implementation, principle-based instruction, individual as well as group interactions, engagement factors (motivational interviewing, joining with resistance), incentives (money) and barrier reducers (providing dinner and childcare), adhering to a well-established model of change, improving coping and support strategies, and offering the programme universally. However, the intensively-funded initiative still misses some points according to the principles discussed here.

The use of collaboration and empowerment may appear to improve autonomy, but the strength of this effect may be limited: the initiative still directs parents to a particular mode of action, demonstrating a 'right way' and a 'wrong way' of parenting. This direction prompts little personal reflection on the underlying reasons for the parenting behaviours, meaning that they are less likely to be integrated fully into underlying schemata and more easily forgotten or discarded following setbacks (Lundahl et al., 2006). Use of financial incentives to attend is believed to inhibit intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000): this theoretically may reduce effectiveness, though it may be compensated for by the benefit of increased attendance. Overall this intensively funded initiative may be very useful, but there may be more cost-effective and intrinsically motivated modes of developing parenting on a population scale.

Mindfulness Training for Parents. A newer type of parent training is that of mindfulness training. Mindfulness is the self-regulation of attention to that of immediate mental and physical experience, and the concurrent adoption of an orientation of curiosity, openness and acceptance (Bishop et al., 2004). It is thus one of observation and reflection: the interventions train parents to think in a new way rather than providing instructions for behaviour. Singh and colleagues (2010) demonstrated that mindfulness training for parents reduced child noncompliance, with no other information or support provided. The mechanisms may be those attributes that Carmody, Baer, Lykins, and Olendzki (2009) found to increase following mindfulness training: mindfulness, re-perceiving, self-regulation, values clarification, cognitive and behavioural flexibility, and active coping.

This approach is inductive, and less 'top-down', as it does not advocate one way of parenting, rather encourages personal direction. It still requires the parent to submit to the role of a learner, but after this point it is autonomy-provoking. Mindfulness training, and/or the use of mindful principles, have the potential to be integrated into broader initiatives also.

Contemporary Models

The Triple P Positive Parenting Program. This five-level intervention ranges from media promotion at a population level, to intensive parent training programmes for those with the most complex problems (Sanders, 1999). Each level is designed to raise awareness of and refer into the next, and the media strategies aim to normalise parenting advice and raise awareness of modes of procuring it (Sanders, 1999). In two full (five-level) implementations the initiative has demonstrated improved child and parent (Sanders et al., 2008), and population (Prinz, Sanders, Shapiro, Whitaker, & Lutzker, 2009) outcomes. An infotainment-style television series based on the principles from a Triple P programme was aired in New Zealand, and was rated highly acceptable to consumers, while achieving child and parent outcomes in an experimental set of parents (Sanders & Montgomery, 2000). The primary author has since written about the importance of collaborating with parents as active consumers in order to encourage engagement from parents who do not engage with traditional programmes (Sanders & Kirby, 2012).

There are likely to be many benefits of this approach. The use of collaboration can only increase relevance, and the use of media is promising for reaching a wide range of parents in a relatively inexpensive, non-committal and

inclusive way. One principle that the Triple P approach has not embraced so far, however, is that of strength focus. Throughout Sanders and Kirby's (2012) discussion of collaboration in parenting intervention a deficit focus was still apparent: consumers have problems that need solving, and the solution is through institutional support. This is a belief that many parents may not subscribe to; rather it may provide an affront to perceived competence and thus engagement. It also appears that the approach does not encourage natural social supports nor contribute to empowerment of parents and communities, likely leading to greater costs and reduced benefits over initiatives that parents play an active part in.

Sure Start. Sure Start is a population strategy in the United Kingdom, initiated in 1998 to improve child outcomes through the promotion of health, parenting and family support. It was developed as a community-building strategy, where local organisations and parents formed co-operatives with statutory agencies to create 'bottom-up' local initiatives to improve child outcomes in the area (Glass, 1999).

Controversially, the initiative did not require local developers to adhere to any theoretical model of change, though optional guidelines were provided (Asmussen, 2011). Its implementation and assessment were also marred by a range of factors, including slow engagement of disadvantaged communities, expansion prior to trial evaluations, and assessments being done at developing initiatives and on children with less than full exposure to the initiative (Glass, 2005). These latter issues contravened both the wishes of the developers

(Asmussen, 2011; Glass, 2005), and recognised implementation strategies (e.g., Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005).

Results of the assessments were mixed: the less-disadvantaged children generally showed improvements, but the more disadvantaged children demonstrated worse outcomes than their correlates in non-Sure Start areas (Belsky et al., 2006). Rutter (2006) argues that the implementation issues contributed to these limited effects, and others suggest that the slow uptake by disadvantaged communities caused the disparity (Belsky et al., 2006; Glass, 2005). From 2004, before the strategy could be refined, local initiatives were dismantled and replaced by government-run childcare initiatives similar to the US programme Head Start (Glass, 2005).

A 2008 study then found positive effects of Sure Start on the previously negatively affected vulnerable children and parents (Melhuish, Belsky, Leyland, & Barnes, 2008), but as the study did not describe at what point in the changeover assessments were done the meaning of these is unclear. It is unfortunate that the initial strategy was not initiated and trialled optimally, as it represented a revolutionary mode of improving parenting and communities across a nation.

Two findings were gained, however. The greatest child and parent outcomes were achieved by the local programmes which followed the principles of the initiative most closely, and the most predictive of these eighteen principles was that of empowerment of parents (Melhuish et al., 2007). Unfortunately for these parents this empowerment is likely to be reduced under the newer

government-run programme, which may affect engagement, effectiveness, and broader community social health.

This situation is a clear demonstration of the paradox of providing autonomy while expecting timely and defined outcomes. While it is possible to surmise that with a longer development the local programmes could have moved with intrinsic motivation toward 'what works', it will unfortunately never be known whether this could have happened.

Current Issues

A current issue in research, then, is the balance of the call for more collaborative and autonomy-supportive initiatives, with the validated principle of adherence to a model of change and the necessary promotion of outcomes. Traditional parent training programmes do not align well with broader principles of change, and thus do not suit all parents. These programmes are, however, some of the best-validated and most reliably effective of all parenting initiatives, for those who do attend. New models are indicated, on a population scale, but early evidence suggests this balance of parent satisfaction and outcome generation may be difficult to attain. More research is needed on newer models to determine not just their effects but also the processes by which effects occur.

The SKIP Approach

SKIP (Strategies with Kids - Information for Parents) is an initiative by the New Zealand Ministry of Social Development aimed at increasing positive parenting nationally. It has three strands: resources that are promoted directly to the public, partnerships with key children's agencies, and funding for local

community organisations. SKIP was informed by two large bodies of research: a review of parenting research done by the University of Otago Children's Issues Centre (2005) and a report of parental attitudes and factors that contribute to change, by Gravitas (2005).

SKIP was developed with five strategy fundamentals: a positive, empowerment approach, self-efficacy, affirmation of the parenting role and experience, normalising parenting support, and a whole-of-life approach focusing on the schemata and ecological systems that underlie parenting behaviour (Gravitas, 2005). Prochaska's stages of change model was used, demonstrating an awareness of parents who are not actively seeking to change, and attention to processes that can move them through his stages.

The implementation of SKIP appears to have included many of the discussed recent proposals from research. Point Research reported a range of strengths of the initiative (2009), many aligning with the principles described above.

SKIP is highly focused on relationships, and encourages them to be non-judgemental, trusting, and collaborative. These same relationships are used with both organisations and with parents: healthy relationships are thus modelled and an intrinsic part of the initiative's operation. SKIP appears to foster autonomy through its principles of empowerment, community building, taking a non-expert position and taking the lead from parents. A strength focus is stated, and this is evidenced by their positive ethos and their principle of celebrating small successes.

Taking the lead from parents has the benefit of ensuring the initiative is both relevant and flexible to needs. SKIP has a core principle of reflection and consciousness, both for the running of the initiative and for parents in their roles.

SKIP appears to encourage natural supports by connecting parents and encouraging the sharing of stories, as well as building communities, which encourages supports on a broader scale. The initiative is universal, it is said to balance social entrepreneurship with adherence to goals, and it gives great consideration to engagement processes, again by taking direction from parents, and by removing barriers to attendance such as cost, childcare and transport.

Other strengths listed by Point Research include having a long-term focus, fostering innovation and opportunity, acknowledging the culture-bound nature of parenting and parenting interventions and allowing the flexibility to meet these needs.

One of the pertinent difficulties noted by the authors, however, is that some initiatives are struggling with how to evaluate their work. The report notes that support for these initiatives in this area would be beneficial.

The Current Project

The purpose of this project was to evaluate a sample of SKIP strategies using a psychological framework, to gather information on the effects they have and the processes by which they achieve those effects, with particular consideration given to engagement of parents.

Evaluation of all social interventions is notoriously difficult, and parenting interventions more so, given the personal and emotion-filled context in which

they exist. While an objective understanding of outcomes would be useful, in practice such assessments are unsuited to this form of social intervention. Their expert nature and intrinsic power can evoke fear and mistrust in parents, thus they can be a barrier to engagement, both in the assessment and by association in the initiative they are being used in. In this initiative, where empowerment and respect for parents' expertise in their own lives are valued, and engagement of parents is central, conventional, top-down assessments are less appropriate.

The alternative is the use of subjective assessments, where the parent is in the position of power as they are able to choose the information that they provide. Subjective reports are less suitable for understanding the objective impact of an initiative, however quantitative measures can still be used to assess change in parents' perspectives over time. Subjective reports also provide significant insight into the informant's perceptions of outcomes, which are particularly important for engagement, as well as the internal processes that occur to effect the change.

Research on SKIP has so far been almost completely qualitative, and rarely from a psychological standpoint. My research aims to use subjective quantitative as well as qualitative assessments to determine whether change occurs based on a range of interventions, and if so, the processes by which this happens.

This research comes from an essentialist/realist epistemology: that is, that human beliefs, motivations and social reality can be studied from a somewhat objective point of view: that social reality is there and viewable by anybody in a similar way.

STUDY 1: THE IMPACT OF A BOOKLET

'CELEBRATING BEING A MUM'

Introduction

The purpose of Study 1 was to explore the effect of a very brief and low-level intervention that SKIP performs each year.

In collaboration with The Warehouse, a low-cost chain of department stores, the SKIP initiative gives away copies of a booklet called "*Love being a mum, it's worth every moment*" (Appendix B) in stores around Mothers Day each year. The booklet was is made up of photos and quotes collated by a group of women at a set of SKIP parenting workshops, chosen to represent what was important to them about being a mother.

The intention of giving the booklet away is to provide a positive, enjoyable reminder about a range of parenting values. This may provoke the audience to reflect on their own values, and potentially on how well their current parenting behaviour aligns with these values. If this reflection indicates a discrepancy between current behaviour and values then it may also prompt an intention to change behaviour and potentially to repeat this reflection more often. Even without conscious reflection occurring, the reminder of values may prompt more value-adherent parenting behaviour. The booklet may also have other positive effects such as reducing parents' stress or increasing their confidence as parents.

Until this point there had been no research on whether this intervention achieved any of these objectives. My research aimed to rectify that: to provide an indication of whether the booklet prompted any reflection or other types of thoughts or feelings, and whether these were resulting in any changes in parenting thoughts or behaviours. I also aimed to find out whether these were linked in any way, potentially providing an indication of some of the processes occurring.

The booklet meets many but not all of the parenting intervention principles described in the Introduction. It does not involve a relationship, though it uses written supports for the feeling of relatedness using positive, empathetic, and encouraging messages, and pictures of smiling faces. It does not explicitly recognise readers' competence, though it reduces the possibility of perceived affront to it through its focus on positive principles and its peer-to-peer manner. The booklet supports readers' autonomy through its non-directive sharing of a range of points of view and the promotion of each as equally legitimate.

Some relevance to all parents is likely, as it was designed by a group of the target audience, though it is inflexible (being a printed document) so is not able to guarantee individual relevance or meeting of needs. It is inductive, prompting reflection through its range of non-directive personal statements. It does not build natural relationship supports, but is universally aimed and distributed. No practitioner, as such, exists, though the creation of the booklet was overseen by staff that are highly knowledgeable about promotion of social change. The dissemination is based on a defined model of change: that media is successful in

reaching a range of parents, and that positive, relevant and inductive messages are likely to promote positive feeling toward and reflection on parenting. Some of the messages reflect the importance of emotional awareness and communication, and engagement has been attended to through the use of the target audience to collate attractive photos and positive, autonomy-supportive messages.

Rationale

In order to investigate effects of the booklet on a wide range of the population, a survey approach was taken. The target audience was chosen as any adult who stopped at the stall to take a booklet. While the influence of the booklet may appear to be most relevant to primary caregivers of young children, the theoretical grounding of my research and SKIP's focus in fact encourages the inclusion of secondary caregivers and non-caregiver members of the general population. This is due to the community framework of SKIP, where non-parents are included as they are likely to have relationships with parents and/or children. SKIP's philosophy is that the positive parenting message is most effective if it reaches all members of a community, thus it was relevant to find out what all members of a community think of the message.

I was, however, only intending to target people who demonstrated an intrinsic interest in the booklet or the stall. According to the change principles discussed in the Introduction, intrinsic motivation is required for change. Attempting to force a person to attend to information against their will may reduce their motivation to attend to and/or respond positively to that information. It was not the place of this brief intervention to coach uninterested

parties into attending to the booklet, so the target audience was left at those who demonstrated an interest of their own accord. The SKIP staff and I assumed that this would primarily be parents and caregivers of young children, given the higher salience of this information to them.

I decided to investigate a range of factors relevant to the booklet and to SKIP as a whole. The first purpose of the assessment was to determine participants' perceptions of acceptability and enjoyment of the booklet, as these are likely to have a significant impact on a range of subsequent outcomes. Secondly I wanted to investigate the thoughts, feelings, and behavioural changes prompted by the booklet and any relationships between them. Finally SKIP was also interested in what happened to the booklet after its first browse: whether it was thrown away, or whether it was kept or shared, continuing its influence. I also took the opportunity to find out whether respondents had an awareness of SKIP and were interested in their work.

Expectations

Given the intrinsic motivation of the participants, the encouraging nature of the booklet, the booklet's expected relevance to the audience, and its inductive nature, it was expected that the booklet would provoke reflection in at least some respondents. According to the theoretical model of change it was expected that this reflection might lead to changes in parenting attitudes and behaviours. Four parenting attitudes and behaviours that SKIP try to promote are thinking about parenting, talking to others about parenting, feeling confident about parenting, and reducing stress about parenting. As seen in the Introduction these are very relevant to parenting, as strong influences on parenting behaviour. My

primary hypothesis was that the intervention would lead to increases in thinking about parenting, but I was interested in any effects on the other behaviours also. It is possible that reflection may influence parents to change their levels of these behaviours and attitudes, for example to decide to talk more with others about parenting, or to feel less stressed about it.

It was also expected that there may be interactions between the changes in attitudes and behaviours and other variables, for example the pre-exposure levels of these parenting factors. Participants who rarely think about parenting pre-intervention may be more likely to reflect and notice discrepancies with their values, due to unconscious habits not being noticed. These people may be more likely to state that they will now think more about parenting, as they may be more likely to have incentive to. Other interactions may occur with demographic variables such as age or gender. Of course the power of the survey to detect such interactions depends on the response rate, and for this initial investigative study such interactions were not a primary focus.

Design

A cross-sectional survey design was used in order to investigate the perceptions of a large number of the target audience. The self-report style of surveys is generally accepted as reliable and valid for assessing respondents' current perceptions (Haefel & Howard, 2010), which is the type of information sought in this study.

The study was reviewed and amended by SKIP staff members, my peers, my supervisor, and the department's Māori cultural consultant. It was then

submitted to the ethics committee under the 'Low-Risk Notification' scheme, and given approval by a member of the ethics committee.

Method

Setting

A brightly-coloured stand was set up in the foyer of The Warehouse in Lyall Bay, Wellington on the weekend of Mother's Day 2010 (8th-9th May). It was manned by two members of the SKIP staff, and it displayed the Mum booklet and a range of other SKIP resources.

Materials and Measures

I created an informal survey with 25 questions covering the stated research objectives (Appendix C). Response was primarily by circling the response most relevant; some responses required short written answers. Where relevant, participants were encouraged to circle all appropriate responses. Measurement of attitudes and behaviours used a five-point Likert-type scale, with subjective anchor-point descriptions ranging from 'hardly ever' to 'almost all of the time'. Subjective points were chosen over specific quantities such as 'once per day' or 'less than once per week' because the relevant information to this study was the person's perception of their state compared to their perception of normality, rather than any objective status. Assessing whether parents reflected on the information in the booklet was done through analysis of a range of responses.

Participants

Participation was open to any person over the age of 16 walking past the SKIP stall at the entrance to The Warehouse during the time of the dissemination, 10am-3pm Saturday 8th May 2010. This is not a true population approach, however the audience is likely to be broad, due to the popularity and acceptability of The Warehouse across a range of community demographics, and the timing of Saturday, a day when many are available to shop. Participants are however likely to be of lower income than the average in New Zealand, both due to the type of store and its location in a lower income area, and are likely to be residents of Wellington City, particularly the south-eastern suburbs.

Five hundred surveys with freepost return envelopes were handed out. This number was chosen for convenience, as it was a realistic number of the target participants that would visit The Warehouse over the two days, and even with a 20% response rate it would provide enough responses to identify strong trends. The study was small in nature and was not expecting to discern specific statistical interaction effects, rather larger trends and processes, as well as qualitative impressions. There was no measure of the representativeness of either the sample compared to the population, or the respondents compared to the sample.

Procedure

It was intended that myself and an assistant would join the SKIP staff at the stall, and hand out the survey to the members of the public who stopped for the booklet. We would ask for participation, discuss the project if required, and offer a chocolate as a token gesture in appreciation of their time and opinions.

In practice the dissemination of the booklets and surveys was forced to go quite differently. We had overestimated the amount of time and curiosity that shoppers would have, and incorrectly assumed that they would be attracted to the bright stall. Instead the vast majority of people rushed past the stall, even avoiding eye contact and pulling children away.

A new strategy was adopted, of folding the surveys and attached envelopes inside the booklet and offering it to people as they walked past. This increased dissemination, though meant recipients were less motivated than originally intended. Few people stopped at the stall, though those who did appeared to have engaging, if brief, conversations with the SKIP staff.

The interaction with most potential participants was very brief, in passing, but approximated the following: 'Hi there, would you like a Mothers Day booklet? Its celebrating being a mum, there's a survey inside too, have a chocolate and fill it in later if you can'. The 500 surveys were handed out over Saturday the 8th, so we did not return on the Sunday.

Participation was deemed to be providing consent, and the survey introduction specified that participation was voluntary, in both the survey as a whole and each specific question. Responses were not able to be included in results if they arrived more than three weeks after the intervention.

Data analysis

Data were reported by frequency, and correlated using the 0.05 level of significance. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data, because of its simplicity and its relative objectivism, and Braun and Clarke's (2006)

description of the process was used. Based on the purpose of the study being an exploratory one, data were analysed inductively, looking for intrinsic themes rather than searching for data relevant to a specific theory. It is important to reiterate that no qualitative analysis will be truly objective, as the prior experience of the researcher will always colour their perceptions of the themes in the data, however I aimed to be aware of my own preconceptions and mindfully assess the origin of each theme as recommended by the authors.

I chose to study semantic rather than latent themes. This was for simplicity, as the study encompassed many facets, and thus needed to be broad rather than deep, as well as being due to the brief and thus easily misinterpreted nature of the data. To assess reliability, a sub-set of the statements was categorised by a second coder experienced in research and working clinically with parents, and the categories compared. Some of the categories were labelled differently, but the same general distribution was found; discrepancies were resolved by discussion.

Results

Thirty-five surveys were returned within three weeks of the dissemination and thus analysed. None arrived after this time so none were excluded.

Due to multiple responses being encouraged where relevant, some totals are higher than 35. One participant circled two responses on a Likert-type scale of change in behaviour. These responses were mutually exclusive so the text written alongside was used to interpret the most appropriate response, and this

was recorded. Many participants did not answer all questions, so some totals are lower than 35.

Demographic information

Relationship to children (Q1)

Relationship	Count	Percentage
Mother	29	83%
Father	2	6%
Grandmother	2	6%
Grandfather	1	3%
Aunt	2	6%
Great aunt	1	3%
Friend of mums	1	3%
Foster mother	1	3%
No response	0	0%

The latter three responses were written in by participants

Number of children (Q2)

Number of children	Count	Percentage
1	8	23%
2	15	43%
3	9	26%
4	1	3%
9	1	3%
200	1	3%
No response	0	0%

The participant who reported parenting two hundred children had stated she was a foster parent, explaining the large number, though it seems likely that she included children she no longer currently parents, contrary to the intent of the question.

Participant age (Q3)

Age	Count	Percentage
25-34	12	34%
35-44	8	23%
45-54	12	34%
55-64	2	6%
No response	1	3%

Ethnicity/culture (Q4)

Ethnicity/culture	Count	Percentage
European/Pākehā	20	57%
European	2	6%
Māori	8	23%
Pacific	3	9%
Asian	2	6%
New Zealander	2	6%
Fijian Indian	1	3%
German	1	3%
Global Citizen	1	3%
Something Else	2	6%
No response	0	0%

Two participants circled only the 'European' part of 'European/Pākehā'. The responses 'New Zealander', 'Fijian Indian', 'German' and 'Global Citizen' were written in by participants. The category 'Something Else' was circled by two respondents without specification.

Resource-related information

Resources received (Q5)

Resources received	Count	Percentage
Mum booklet	33	94%
Other resources	7	20%
No response	2	6%

Due to the mode of dissemination it is presumed that all participants received the booklet. This is supported by the fact that the two who did not respond to this question reported other actions related to the booklet. As certainly fewer than 20% of people handed the booklet stopped at the stall, it appears that the subset that did are overrepresented in this study.

Time spent viewing them (Q6)

Time spent viewing	Count	Percentage
'For a while'	18	51%
'Quickly'	15	43%
'Didn't look at them at all'	0	0%
'Looked at them later'	1	3%
No response	1	3%

The response 'Looked at them later' was written in by one respondent.

Secondary action(s) (Q7)

Secondary action	Count	Percentage
'Kept to look at again'	19	54%
'Threw it away'	9	26%
'Talked about them with someone else'	8	23%
'Gave them to someone else'	7	20%
No response	2	6%

People the booklet was shared with (Q8)

People shared with	Count	Percentage
No-one	12	34%
Spouse/partner	11	31%
Son/daughter	7	20%
Brother/sister	5	14%
Friend	4	11%
Mum/dad	3	9%
Children	3	9%
Organisation '(Tamariki Ora)'	1	3%
'No-one yet'	1	3%
No response	2	6%

The response 'No-one yet' was written in by one participant. Many participants reported sharing the booklet with more than one person, and one respondent named the organisation she shared it with.

Quantitative Responses to the Resources

Cultural and personal appropriateness (Q9)

Level of appropriateness	Count	Percentage
Appropriate	21	60%
'Mostly'	9	26%
'Partly'	3	9%
'Mostly not'	0	0%
Not appropriate	1	3%
No response	1	3%

The respondent who indicated the booklet was not appropriate for their culture or beliefs responded as being of Māori ethnicity, though this may not be the reason for this response. The three who indicated 'partly' indicated they considered themselves Māori & European/Pākehā, European/Pākehā, and European.

Feeling toward the Mum booklet (Q11)

Feeling toward the Mum booklet	Count	Percentage
'Loved it'	8	23%
'Liked it'	22	63%
'Didn't mind it'	5	14%
'Disliked it'	0	0%
'Hated it'	0	0%
No response	0	0%

All four of the participants who responded that the booklet was only 'partly' or was not relevant to their culture/beliefs responded that they 'didn't mind' the booklet.

Feeling toward the other resources (Q14)

Feeling toward the other resources	Count	Percentage
'Loved them'	3	43%
'Liked them'	4	57%
'Didn't mind them'	0	0%
'Disliked them'	0	0%
'Hated them'	0	0%
No response	0	0%

Two participants responded to this question, despite not indicating having received any other resources. One indicated 'not minding' them and one 'liking' them. These two made no other comments on the resources, so it has been assumed that they responded to the question in error and their responses have not been included above.

Current Levels of Parenting Thoughts and Behaviours

Current level of parenting stress (Q16)

Frequency	Count	Percentage
'Nearly always'	0	0%
'Quite a lot'	3	9%
'Sometimes'	15	43%
'Occasionally'	11	31%
'Hardly ever'	6	17%
No response	0	0%

Current level of parenting discussion (Q17)

Frequency	Count	Percentage
'All the time'	4	11%
'Quite a lot'	14	40%
'Sometimes'	13	37%
'Occasionally'	2	6%
'Hardly ever'	2	6%
No response	0	0%

Current level of parenting reflection (Q18)

Frequency	Count	Percentage
'All the time'	10	29%
'Quite a lot'	14	40%
'Sometimes'	6	17%
'Occasionally'	1	3%
'Hardly ever'	2	6%
No response	2	6%

Current level of parenting confidence (Q19)

Frequency	Count	Percentage
'All the time'	5	14%
'Quite a lot'	22	63%
'Sometimes'	5	14%
'Occasionally'	3	9%
'Hardly ever'	0	0%
No response	0	0%

Perceived Change Following Exposure*Change in stress level (Q20)*

Frequency	Count	Percentage
'More than before'	1	3%
'The same as before'	22	63%
'Less than before'	7	20%
No response	5	14%

The seven respondents who reported reduced stress were six mothers (pre-levels of 'hardly ever' (2), 'occasionally' (1), 'sometimes' (1) and 'quite a lot' (2)), and one great aunt / grandmother (pre-level 'sometimes').

The respondent who reported increased stress was an aunt, who initially reported 'hardly ever' feeling stressed about parenting.

Change in level of parenting talk (Q21)

Frequency	Count	Percentage
'More than before'	3	9%
'The same as before'	29	82%
'Less than before'	3	9%
No response	0	0%

One participant circled both 'same' and 'more than before', and wrote 'depending on opportunities and connections'. This response was coded as 'more than before', as the intention to talk more is there, and it appears more talking will be done in at least some circumstances if not all.

The three who reported that they intended to increase the amount they talked to others about parenting were a mother (pre-level 'sometimes'), great-aunt (pre-level 'sometimes') and an aunt (pre-level 'hardly ever')

The three who reported that they would now talk less were two mothers (pre-levels: 'sometimes' and 'all the time'), and a grandfather (pre-level 'hardly ever').

Change in level of parenting reflection (Q22)

Frequency	Count	Percentage
'More than before'	8	23%
'The same as before'	27	77%
'Less than before'	0	0%
No response	0	0%

The eight respondents who reported they would now reflect more were mothers (pre-levels: not reported (1), 'hardly ever' (1), 'quite a lot' (2), 'all the time' (2)), a father (pre-level 'quite a lot'), and an aunt (pre-level 'quite a lot').

Change in parenting confidence (Q23)

Frequency	Count	Percentage
'More than before'	4	11%
'The same as before'	31	89%
'Less than before'	0	0%
No response	0	0%

The four whose confidence increased were mothers (pre-levels: 'occasionally' (1) and 'quite a lot' (3))

Awareness of SKIP and Desire to See More

Previous exposure to SKIP materials or messages (Q24)

Frequency	Count	Percentage
'Lots'	4	11%
'A few times'	7	20%
'Once or twice'	3	9%
'Not sure'	3	9%
'Never'	18	51%
No response	0	0%

Interest in seeing more SKIP materials or messages (Q25)

Frequency	Count	Percentage
'Want to see more'	12	34%
'Don't mind if I see more'	23	66%
'Don't want to see more'	0	0%
No response	0	0%

Four (22%) of the eighteen participants who had never seen SKIP resources before reported wanting to see more.

Correlations

I calculated the Pearson correlation coefficients (two-tailed) between the different variables. Most were non-significant, but not all.

Acceptability to various groups

- Relationship to child vs. degree of liking the booklet
- Age vs. degree of liking
- Gender vs. degree of liking
- Number of children vs. degree of liking
- Ethnicity vs. acceptability
- Age vs. acceptability

All were non-significant at the 0.05 level.

Enjoyment and likelihood to share the booklet

- Time spent looking at the booklet vs. degree of liking it
- Age vs. time spent looking at the booklet
- Degree of liking the booklet vs. sharing of the booklet
- Relationship to child vs. sharing of the booklet

There was a significant positive correlation between liking the booklet and sharing it ($p < 0.01$). No other significant relationships were seen.

Correlations between pre-intervention parenting behaviours

These were done twice, using the data from all of the participants, then again using only data from those who reported being current parents of young children (n=31).

- Stress felt about parenting vs. amount of talk about parenting
- Stress felt about parenting vs. amount of thought about parenting
- Stress felt about parenting vs. confidence in parenting
- Amount of talk about parenting vs. amount of thought about parenting
- Amount of talk about parenting vs. confidence in parenting
- Amount of thought vs. confidence in parenting

The data set of all the respondents showed a significant positive relationship between the amount of stress felt about parenting and the amount of talking done about parenting ($p < 0.05$), and a positive relationship approaching significance of the amount of talking done about parenting and the amount of thinking done about parenting ($p = 0.053$).

When respondents who were not direct parents of young children were excluded, these relationships became non-significant.

This is evidence of the confounding factor of current parent status. The correlation between these variables was not to do with a relationship between them, but rather to their shared relationship to current parent status. Current parents in this study are more likely to feel stressed about parenting, think more about parenting and talk more with others about parenting than people who do not parent children as often.

Correlations between pre-intervention behaviours and change in behaviours

These were also done twice, using two data sets used above.

- Stress felt about parenting vs. change in stress felt about parenting
- Talk about parenting vs. change in talk about parenting
- Thought about parenting vs. change in thought about parenting
- Confidence in parenting vs. change in confidence about parenting

No analyses showed significant relationships between these variables, for either data set.

Qualitative Responses

Thoughts and feelings evoked by the booklet (Q10)

Thirty of thirty-five participants answered this question.

Themes were:

- Happiness/positivity
- Reflectiveness/consciousness about values
- Pride in self as parent
- Encouragement/self-confidence
- Nostalgia

'Happiness/positivity' included such responses as:

- "Positive"
- "Smile"

'Reflectiveness/consciousness about values' included:

- "Reminded me of my ideals but also a little how much I fall short sometimes"
- "[Think] about how I interact with my children"

'Pride in self as a parent' included:

- "I am proud of being a mum"
- "Proud to be a parent"

'Encouragement/self-confidence' included:

- "That I am doing ok"
- "Encouraged, inspired, happy"

'Nostalgia' included:

- "Nostalgic"
- "Nostalgic for the days when my children were babies"

Favourite picture or quote and the reason for this choice (Q12)

Twenty-seven participants responded to this question.

Themes were:

- Reminder to keep values forefront
- I hold this as a value
- Other parents experience the same things

'Reminder to keep values forefront' included the responses:

- "The only achievement I need in life is a happy, healthy family' [because] I am success-driven. It made me remember what's really important"
- "Time goes fast' [because] I'm already shocked at how quickly my children are growing up + aware how little time they are children for"

'I hold this as a value' included:

- "I tell my kids I will always be there for them - when they need support, love and just someone to talk to' [because] having come from a broken family, I know how tough it is without that support"
- "Let them know they can reach the stars' [because] it is important to encourage and let them know they are great and have their own talents and abilities."

'Other parents experience the same things' included:

- "Love them more when things get hard - love them with all you have' Things get hard with kids. It's nice to know other people get that"
- "I knew I was a mum when I heard myself say the same things my mother said to me!' Knowing when I was a mum [child?] my mum thought the same way"

Themes from Question 13: 'The other resources made me think/feel ___'

Five of the seven participants who received other resources responded to this question.

Themes were:

- Positive
- Encouraged
- Reminder of values

'Positive' included:

- "Happy"

'Encouraged' included:

- "There are some resources available to help me be a good mum"

'Reminder of values' included:

- "I agreed with the sentiment expressed: 'Try to say lots more positive than negative things'. Have to remind myself every day to be that way!"

Themes from Question 15: 'My favourite thing about the resources was ___'

Six participants responded. Themes were:

- Useful content
- My child likes it

'Useful content' included:

- "The pamphlets [because] they have great resources in them"

'My child likes it' included:

- "Balloons [because] my nieces/nephews loved them"

Effect of Booklet on Parenting Thought/Reflection

Qualitative data from participants' reasons for liking particular pictures, quotes or resources (Questions 12 and 14) were analysed for demonstration of reflection or thought about parenting. These were combined with participants' quantitative responses to questions 17 - 25 to form an overall understanding of the level of change in parenting thought or reflection that they underwent following exposure to the Mum booklet.

These were coded on a seven-point scale:

- 3: Participant stated will now think more about parenting
- 2: Evidence of reflection
- 1: Evidence of positive thought or feeling
- 0: No demonstration of any effect on thought/reflection
- 1: Evidence of negative thought or feeling
- 2: Evidence of defence
- 3: Participant stated will now think less about parenting

Three examples are presented for the process of data interpretation.

Participant A:

A mother of three children. She reported that she feels stressed about parenting quite a lot, talks to others about parenting all the time, thinks about the kind of parent she wants to be all the time, and feels confident about parenting quite a lot. Her qualitative results were that the booklet "made me think about how I felt + I agreed with the statements". Her favourite

picture/quote was “‘Time goes fast’ [because] I’m already shocked at how quickly my children are growing up + aware how little time they are children for”. Her post-results showed she now feels parenting is not as stressful as before, she will talk to others less than before, she will think about parenting the same as before, and she feels the same level of confidence as before.

This participant stated that she previously talked with others about parenting all the time, and was stressed quite a lot, but following exposure to the booklet she intends to talk less to others and finds it not as stressful. While SKIP generally intends to encourage parents to talk with other parents about parenting, this intervention specifically targeted reflection rather than sharing ideas and support, and from her previous position these results indicate a positive change rather than negative. She has demonstrated reflection about the statements and her choices about parenting, and appears to be highly conscious of the importance of regular attention to parenting approach. Thus in this situation I did not see her reduction in talking with others as a negative effect, and coded her response as ‘Invoked reflection’.

Participant B:

A mother of three children. Her pre-exposure reports were that she feels stressed about parenting sometimes, she talks with others all the time, she thinks quite a lot, and she feels confident quite a lot. She reported that the booklet made her “proud to be a mum”, and her favourite quote was “I will

always be there for them” [because] “I strongly believe this”. She indicated no future change on any variables.

This response set indicated thought and feeling about the booklet (agreement and pride) but there was no evidence of reflection on her current parenting. For this reason I coded her as ‘Invoked thought’.

Participant C:

A grandfather who looks after 2 grandchildren sometimes. He stated that he hardly ever feels stressed about parenting, hardly ever talks to others about parenting or thinks about the kind of parent he wants to be, and he feels confident in parenting all the time. He did not answer any of the qualitative questions so no thought processes could be discerned. He indicated that post-intervention he now feels the same level of stress about parenting, the same confidence about parenting, will think the same amount about parenting, and will talk to others less about parenting.

His pre-intervention results were striking in their polarity, and indicated extreme confidence in his parenting. These traits correspond with those of an authoritarian parent, though it is also possible that these are the traits of an experienced parent who has little need to talk and think about parenting. However the fact that he takes care of two children sometimes and yet does not even think about parenting ‘occasionally’ (the next option on the scale) indicates a rigid manner. For these reasons, his indication that he would now talk to others less about parenting, combined with his previous lowest levels of talking and thinking, and his lack of intention to think about parenting any more, meant that

he was assessed as the intervention having a negative effect on him. I interpreted that his resolve to talk to others less was an indication that he had been did not want to hear other points of view and was now actively going to try to avoid doing so. He was rated 'Invoked defence'.

Results were:

Change in thought/ reflection	Count	Percentage
Will think more	8	23%
Reflection	6	17%
Positive thought/feeling	14	40%
No effect	6	17%
Negative thought/feeling	0	0%
Defence	1	3%
Will think less	0	0%
No response	0	0%

Correlations of Theme Processes with Outcomes

Correlations were run between each of the themes from Questions 10 & 12 and:

- Change in stress
- Change in level of talk
- Change in level of think
- Change in confidence
- Level of reflection demonstrated

All were non-significant except:

- Reduction in stress was correlated with use of the theme 'Pride in self as parent' ($p < 0.01$).
- Increasing level of reflection was correlated with the use of the theme 'Reflection' ($p < 0.05$)

Discussion

Engagement

Results of this survey show that in general the booklet was well received, attended to, and shared by participants. Thirty of the thirty-five respondents (86%) either liked it or loved it. Three participants found it only partly appropriate for their culture and beliefs, and one found it not appropriate. This is very likely to have contributed to these four participants reporting that they 'didn't mind' the booklet rather than liking or loving it.

All of the participants reported looking at the booklet for at least a short time. This is likely to be because in order to find and respond to the survey they would need to at least open the booklet - in the original plan for the dissemination this would not have been guaranteed. Only nine respondents (26%) threw the booklet away after looking at it, the rest kept them to look at again or gave them to another person. Twenty-three respondents (66%) shared the booklet with others. Thirty-four instances of relationships shared with were circled, meaning that at least this number of other people were shown the booklet, if not more, due to the potential for multiple people of the same relationship type.

Changes Resulting from This Initiative

The primary aim of this study was to determine whether the booklet had any effect on its readers. This was assessed using two methods: direct questions about change, and indirect questions about processes that the booklet invoked. Sixteen participants (46%) stated that their attention to the booklet had caused a change in their parenting attitudes and intentions for behaviour: generally reducing stress, increasing intention to reflect and increasing confidence. Equal numbers of participants reported intending to talk about parenting with others more and less than before. Change in each variable was not correlated with the initial level of the variable, meaning that change happened in people at all levels.

Reduction in parents' intention to talk to others about parenting was not predicted, and does not align with SKIP's aims: SKIP promotes talking with others about parenting, for support and information. Analysis of the responses, however, determines that for two of these three respondents this change may not negatively affect their parenting. This booklet did not specifically encourage discussion with others, and in fact prompted personal reflection, which may have built parents' confidence in their own choices, reducing their need to talk to others. This reason was actually specified by one of these respondents. Under this assumption the reduction is unlikely to have negative effects on their parenting as long as their prior levels of parenting talk were moderate to high. Two of the respondents met this criteria. The other respondent had a very low initial frequency of talking with others: he was the one participant rated 'invoked defence' in the overall intervention effect rating, denoting an overall negative effect.

Holistic assessment of the degree to which reflection occurred determined a range of outcomes. Of the thirty-five respondents, eight (23%) reported intending to think more about parenting in future, whereas six (17%) did not report any intention to change future reflective behaviour but stated that the booklet prompted reflection on parenting values. Fourteen (40%) did not display either of these but did display positive thoughts or emotions around parenting. For six respondents (17%) there was no indication of any thought or feeling about parenting from the responses given, and for one (3%) the intervention appeared to invoke defence rather than reflection.

Additionally, the themes taken from the respondents' writing indicated other significant thoughts and feelings being experienced. In addition to reflection on values were positivity, pride, encouragement, and normalisation of experiences. Nostalgia was also a theme, though this was not clearly linked to the aims of this study. Responses to the other SKIP resources showed respondents' thoughts and feelings of positivity, encouragement and a reminder of values.

The effects of this intervention determined here are overwhelmingly positive for the parenting of these respondents. Reflection on values has been shown in mindfulness studies to increase value-adherent behaviour in everyday life. Positive feelings, including pride and encouragement appear to provide a buffer against the stresses of parenting and research shows they may also increase self-efficacy and effort in parenting children, and normalisation of experiences is likely to reduce stress. Only one parent (3%) appeared to be negatively affected by the intervention (the booklet appeared to invoke his defences), whereas twenty-eight (80%) appeared to be positively affected,

through the booklet prompting at least positive parenting thoughts, if not reflection on their parenting, and for some a resolve to think more about their parenting in future.

Processes by Which Change Occurred

Potentially due to the low number of respondents, only two correlations were found between thought/feeling themes and reported changes. The theme of reflection was correlated with the level of reflective functioning demonstrated, though this was a confounded correlation, given that the use of the theme of reflection was part of the criteria for demonstrating level of reflective functioning. The only other correlation found was that the theme of pride in self as a parent was clearly positively correlated with reporting of now feeling less stressed about parenting. This result aligns with previous research demonstrating an inverse correlation between parenting self-efficacy and stress about parenting, though the specifics of reducing parenting stress through avenues such as this booklet would require confirmation with a larger sample and further experimentation to determine if a causal relationship existed. Nevertheless this demonstrates one possible mechanism by which this booklet may have positive effects on parents.

Overall, however, no connection between most of the reported thoughts and feelings invoked by the booklet and the specific changes in respondents' perceptions could be determined from this data.

Previous Awareness of and Current Desire to Engage with SKIP

A final intention of this survey was to ascertain the degree of awareness of SKIP. Eighteen respondents (51%) reported never having heard of SKIP before. Three (9%) were uncertain, and fourteen (40%) had come across SKIP at least once before. Of those new to SKIP or uncertain about having seen it before (21 total), five (24%) reported that they wanted to see more SKIP information, whereas sixteen (76%) reported simply that they did not mind if they saw more.

STUDY 2: PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTING GROUPS

Introduction

Study 1, which explored the potential value of one of the simplest, most cost-effective, and least intrusive forms of influence, revealed a number of interesting points. From a positive perspective it was clear that a simple booklet had the effect of prompting parents and whānau members to think about the nature of parenting and their participation in it. Most of the participants enjoyed the booklet and felt positive about it and the messages it contained. A reasonable percentage indicated that they had or would share the booklet with others, especially partners, and it is this spread of influence across natural social networks that SKIP designers were especially keen to promote.

On the negative side, however, although 500 booklets were distributed in one day, only a small fraction of those who received one took the time to complete the questionnaire that was enclosed and which constituted the novel research component of the exercise. With so few respondents, being able to analyse the data in a statistically meaningful way was not possible. I thus moved on to a second study, of parenting groups funded by SKIP, where participants had committed more to the initiatives and thus might be more interested in and willing to provide information.

These groups had the same value orientation as the booklet: sharing principles of parenting in a positive way, through a relatively low-cost method of

delivery. By evaluating two specific groups I hoped to discern whether the research-advocated principles for improving the parenting of a population or community could be seen to improve the participants' perspectives on parenting, and how this might occur.

The purpose of Study 2, therefore, was to explore the processes and effects of another type of SKIP-funded initiative: parenting support and education groups. Such initiatives are designed by local organisations to meet local needs, and the organisations then apply to SKIP for community funding. While the initiatives are required to describe their plans and report their impressions of the effects they have, there has been no formal psychological evaluation of them. I wanted to find out what effects the groups were having on parents and the processes by which these were being achieved, in light of the known effects of such changes on future parenting that were described in detail in the Introduction.

I was particularly interested in investigating the process of learning: how parenting attitudes and perceptions changed, and what factors contributed to this change. Contributing factors I specifically investigated included whether the parents enjoyed the groups, what they liked and disliked about them, their perceptions of the facilitators and co-participants, and their perceptions of benefit from the groups.

As parent group initiatives are designed and implemented independently it is not possible to state the qualities of all such initiatives. The two that I worked with, however, used many of the parenting intervention principles discussed earlier. They focused strongly on supportive relationships, between

facilitators and parents as well as between parents. They were both strength-focussed with positive approaches to parenting, and both encouraged autonomy in the processes of the groups and the discussions of beliefs and attitudes.

The groups were designed with the targeted audiences in mind. The fathers group was designed by two members of the organisation who were fathers themselves; of a similar demographic to those they aimed the intervention at, though they did not involve any fathers from outside the organisation. The young parents group was designed by two members of the organisation in conjunction with three young mothers recruited from the community. These groups thus had made efforts to be relevant to the needs of the respective communities. They were also flexible: neither had a rigid structure for the content of weekly sessions, rather this was determined significantly by the interests and needs of the participants, both in planning future activities and within each session. SKIP's parenting principles were used for discussion, alongside a range of ideas for strategies that parents could choose from or amend to fit their situations.

Both groups worked in alignment with SKIP's inductive, non-expert ethos, where parents and facilitators discuss parenting ideas and their relevance to and suitability for parents' current situations and worldviews, rather than training behaviours didactically. Both groups aimed to build natural supports by creating supportive relationships between members of the group, as well as encouraging confidence with talking to other non-group members about parenting, and both were open to any member of the target audiences.

It is not clear whether these two groups were designed based on any known or published theory of change. The practice, however, is one of a traditional support/education group, using the principle that sharing parenting ideas and experiences with peers and experts in a supportive and autonomous environment can build confidence and knowledge. As highlighted in the Introduction this model has been used for at least the last century by parents (primarily mothers) seeking support and information.

Both of the groups used the SKIP principles, though did not focus explicitly on emotional communication. At least some engagement factors have been considered: the fathers group was designed by fathers of a similar demographic, and they chose a traditional masculine setting for the group and centred it around a fun, non-parenting activity. The young parents group involved three young parents in determining the content and the process of the group, as well as taking part in the administration and facilitation. It also provided a van pickup service; as for many of the young parents transport was difficult or expensive. Both groups were free for participants to attend, and provided hot drinks and some food. These two groups appeared to have followed SKIP's encouragement to attend to these engagement factors.

Rationale

I initially made contact with the coordinators of a range of community interventions. Based on availability and ability for in-depth study I decided to focus on parenting groups, and to study the parents' perceptions of the group, the changes that the parents went through and the process of such change. The target audience was chosen as any participant who attended at least one session

of the groups, in order to understand reasons for disengagement as well as engagement. An open-ended approach to information gathering was chosen, in order to fully explore participants' perceptions.

Expectations

It was expected that these groups would be acceptable and engaging to the parents, given the attention to supports for intrinsic motivation, relevance, specificity, and engagement factors. It was expected that some attitudinal changes would occur due to the intervention, though how much was uncertain, given the relatively low intensity of the interventions and their relaxed approach towards covering specific topics. A range of factors were expected to be important to parents, including supportive, competence-respecting, and autonomous relationships, as well as specific relevance and engagement factors.

Design

A mixed-methods design was chosen, in order to collect two perspectives of change. Weekly semi-structured interviews were used to investigate parents' perceptions of the interventions, particularly regarding acceptability, engagement, and efficacy. These were thematically analysed to determine common perspectives and understandings. A pre-/post- questionnaire was also used, to objectively assess the change in participants' perspectives of their attitudes and understandings before and after the interventions.

The study was reviewed and amended by SKIP staff members, the organisers/facilitators of the groups, my supervisor and the department's Māori cultural consultant. It was then submitted to the ethics committee under the

'Low-Risk Notification' scheme, and given approval by a member of the ethics committee.

Method

Recruitment

Recruitment of groups. A number of methods were used to source and recruit groups. SKIP staff provided a list of organisations that had received recent funding, with a description of the initiatives. They invited me to a project leaders' day, where organisers and facilitators of these initiatives met and collaborated on ideas, and I discussed my project with a number of people. I also searched the internet for relevant groups.

Representatives from seven organisations, representing eight parents' groups, were contacted and asked about initiatives they planned to run between February and July 2011. I received replies from five organisations. After discussion with the organisations I was offered five groups to study. Two were eight-week fathers groups: one for men who live with anger and violence and one without this focus, from two separate organisations. Another was an eight-week parents group for parents experiencing difficulties, and the final two were continuous young parents groups, from different organisations. From these five groups, four replied with the requested details for me to initiate recruitment of participants: one year-round young parents group was lost.

Recruitment of participants within groups. Participants were recruited in approaches planned with each facilitator, attending to factors they felt most appropriate for their audience. For the general-focus fathers group the facilitator

emailed the group participants in advance of the course. All were willing for the study to go ahead and to personally participate. For the fathers-with-violence group the facilitator was to approach the men in the first session and broach the possibility of the research. When the time came, however, he felt that with this group it was not appropriate to even broach the subject. He felt the group was going to be a difficult one to bring cohesion to, and that this research would be another challenge to that, so he declined to offer participation at all. I visited the remaining young parents group in person and talked about my project, and asked for their permission and participation in person. I also visited the first session of the parents-having-difficulties group and asked for permission and participation, however no members were willing to participate. This study thus investigated the processes and outcomes of one fixed-term fathers group and one continuous group for young parents, both in the greater Wellington region.

Setting

Fathers group. The fathers group was organised by an early childhood organisation, and advertised as an eight-week course for fathers to spend time talking about being a father and making wooden items for their children. It was held for two hours, weekly on a weekday evening during March and April 2011, in the centre's large carpentry workshop. Two men facilitated: an early childhood worker and the owner of the centre, both of whom were fathers themselves.

The group was advertised in the local newspaper as well as in the childcare centre newsletter given to parents. The course was free, including the wood and other materials. Many of the participants had children who either

currently attended or had in the past attended the childcare centre, others were connected by word of mouth.

A typical session contained parenting-related discussion for the first hour and woodworking for the second. The facilitator's aims for the group were to:

- Raise awareness of different parenting styles and their implications
- Create/make available strategies for dealing with challenging parenting situations
- Discuss strategies for dealing with one's own stress and anger
- Raise awareness of the six principles of conscious/positive parenting
- Empower the men with a discourse and the openness to discuss parenting experiences with other parents.

A SKIP-designed quiz based on Baumrind's parenting styles was given and discussed in one session, and pre-planned topics were occasionally used, but the content of the sessions was often directed by the sharing and analysis of the men's parenting experiences during the preceding week. This was prompted by an opening 'round-the-room', where each man talked about one good parenting experience they had had and one 'not-so-good'.

The young parents group. The young parents group was organised by a counselling and support association and held in a community centre. It aimed to encourage parenting support and education for new parents aged 25 and under. Two women organised and facilitated, one with a background in early childhood health and adult mental health, and the other a counselling student. Both were mothers themselves, though not of the same young demographic. Three

members of the target group, all young mothers, had been recruited to provide input in the design phase, and continued to work with the organisers regularly throughout the initiative, providing input and taking responsibility for organising and running some activities and discussions.

Recruitment was through referral from the association itself, as well as other local community organisations and through word of mouth. Young people were invited to attend during pregnancy and continue until the children reached pre-school age.

The group aimed to provide a space for young parents to support each other, talk, share, and learn about being a parent. Children attended with their parents, though during the more formal discussions toddlers were sometimes taken elsewhere by assistants or more experienced parents, to reduce noise and distractions. Sessions were two hours long, typically including informal 'catch-ups' for half an hour, then an hour-long group activity, discussion or presentation, followed by a small provided lunch and further socialising.

Group activities were alternately focussed 'educational' or 'fun' Educational activities included discussions about bonding with babies, the importance of play, and safety in the home. Fun activities included making toys for children or working on scrapbooks for them, as well as celebrating occasions such as Easter. While fathers were encouraged to attend, most sessions were only attended by mothers.

The group aimed to:

- Create a safe supportive environment and reduce the stigma and aloneness of being a young parent
- Provide parenting and personal support and education from peers and facilitators
- Provide healthy role modelling from peers and facilitators
- Build competence and confidence, in parenting and personally
- Have fun
- Teach parenting knowledge and raise awareness of parenting options/strategies
- Raise awareness of other support organisations

The general content of the more formal part of the sessions was decided and planned by the two facilitators and the three assistant parents in advance, though the specific conversations were driven significantly by the needs and wants of the parents at the time.

Procedure

Fathers group. Following the participants' email acceptance of the group the facilitator handed out the information sheet, consent form and the pre-questionnaire during the second session, collected them back in, and handed and collected the post-questionnaire at the last session. Both facilitators were asked to ensure that the participants knew the questionnaire was not for them and that they would not be looking at the responses, in order that a) the participants' privacy be protected, and b) the responses to the pre- questionnaire did not influence the way the course was conducted. I received contact phone numbers

for the men following the third session, so interviews started at that point, and finished following the last week.

Young parents group. On visiting the group to introduce and ask for acceptance of my project I also asked for participants, and handed out the information forms and pre- questionnaires to those interested. I returned the following week to collect them. This group was interviewed after eight sessions over ten weeks (Easter and Queens Birthday fell in this time, so the group did not run on these two public holidays). As attendance was not always regular for all members of this group, the participants consented to the post-questionnaire being asked verbally in the final interview.

Materials and measures

Interviews. Interviews were held weekly in the days following each session, at times suitable to the participants. They were semi-structured and covered:

- Expectations and intent prior to attending the group (asked retrospectively in the first interview)
- Perceptions of the group environment each session
- Perceptions of change each session
- Episodes that had personal meaning in each session
- Overall perception of meaning or change from the group (asked in the final interview)

The general interview schedule is listed: Appendix G.

Pre-/post- questionnaire. I created pre-post questionnaires covering factors that the groups aimed to have an effect on in order to develop the parenting of the participants. Some were generic to both groups, others were specific to one or other. Each question required the participant to circle on a Likert-type scale the degree to which their attitudes or behaviours matched that of the statement.

Both groups were asked to respond to:

- “I am aware of different parenting styles / different ways of parenting, and what they mean for children”
- “I know a range of strategies / ways to deal with challenging parenting situations”
- “I think about and choose the way I parent”
- “I know how to deal with stress and anger within myself”
- “I talk to other people (not just my partner) about parenting ideas and problems”
- “*I feel comfortable* talking to other people about parenting”
- “I feel confident as a parent”

The fathers group were also asked to respond to:

- “I know what parenting behaviours children need from adults in order to grow up happy and healthy”

The young parents group were asked to respond to:

- “I feel supported as a parent”
- “I feel supported as a person”
- “I feel confident as a person”
- “I am aware of other organisations that can support me in different ways”

All were asked:

- Age bracket (categories of five years)
- Ethnicity
- Number and ages of children

The two questionnaires are presented in Appendices H and I.

Data analysis

Quantitative. Differences in ratings of parenting attitudes and behaviours across the pre-/post- assessments were collated and presented in tables. Verbal retrospective reports of the participants’ personal perceptions of whether change had occurred were quantified using a basic assignment of one point for a change, half a point for a small change, and presented in tables also. This conversion, while imprecise, allows some comparison with the pre-/post assessments.

Qualitative. Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis framework was used again for this second study, in the same manner. All of the interviews were transcribed, coded, and the codes organised and condensed into themes. These themes and their subthemes were used to understand the important factors and processes that affect engagement and change in these groups.

Results - Fathers Group

All names of participants have been changed and identifying details removed.

Participation

Eight men consented to taking part, seven of whom responded to phone calls in the first two weeks of interviewing. After receiving no response from the final group member from six phone calls over two weeks this was interpreted as a change of mind.

All seven men were interviewed throughout the duration of their attendance. One man, Mike, attended just one session: the third session of the group, due to difficulties organising childcare. Another, Jason, did not attend weeks 5, 6 and 7 of the group due to unexpected family circumstances. All others attended at least seven of the eight sessions and completed interviews for all they attended. One man, David, concurrently took part in another parenting initiative. Two had attended the previous instance of the initiative; the others were attending for the first time.

Participants were aged 30-49; five reported being New Zealand European and two British European. All were working, and six lived with a wife or partner, while Mike was a solo father.

Pre-/Post Reports

On collecting the questionnaires from the facilitator I discovered that some had not been returned, and only three complete pre- and post-

questionnaire pairs were available. Of these one set (David's) was confounded by the influence of the other parenting initiative he took part in concurrently.

Displayed are the results of the participants' post- report figures less their pre- report figures, for each question. For example, if a participant rated themselves having 'some' awareness of parenting styles and their effects on the pre-test, and as having 'quite a bit' of awareness on the post-test, their score below would be 1, as their awareness had increased by one category. If their pre-test rating was 'quite a bit' and their post-test rating was 'some', their score would be -1, as their awareness had decreased by one category.

Questions were based on:

1. Awareness of parenting styles and their effects
2. Knowledge of strategies to deal with challenging parenting situations
3. Amount of thought and choice about parenting
4. Knowledge of how to deal with personal stress and anger
5. Knowledge of the parenting behaviours children need to be happy and healthy
6. Amount of parenting discussion with others
7. Comfort with talking to others about parenting
8. Parenting confidence

Question #	David (C)	James	John (R)	Total
Q1	0	0	1	1
Q2	1	0	0	1
Q3	0	0	0	1
Q4	1	1	1	3
Q5	0	1	0	1
Q6	1	0	0	1
Q7	1	0	0	1
Q8	1	0	0	1
Total change	5	2	2	9

(C): Confounded

(R): Repeater

Average change per man (excluding confounded): 2

Average change per question (excluding confounded): 0.25

Verbal Retrospective Reports.

The data from this assessment was available for all six men who finished the course. Although the seventh, Mike, described changes he experienced, he was not asked the specific post- questions so his reports could not be included in this section. Participants were asked about changes that occurred specifically due to this initiative.

In this table the figures reflect the verbal reports of change. If a participant stated that there had been some increase in the attribute being

discussed he was given a score of 1. If he reported a decrease in the attribute the score would be -1. If he reported that there had been a change, but it was only small, he was given a score of 0.5 (or -0.5 if it was a decrease).

	Chris	David	James	Jason	John(R)	Rob (R)	Total
Q1	1	0	1	1	0	1	4
Q2	0.5	0.5	0	0	0	1	2
Q3	1	0.5	1	1	0	1	4.5
Q4	0.5	0	-	0	0.5	1	2
Q5	1	0	0	1	-	0.5	2.5
Q6	0.5	0	1	0	1	0.5	3
Q7	1	0	1	1	-	0	3
Q8	-	0	1	1	-	0.5	2.5
Total	5.5	1	5	5	1.5	5.5	23.5

(R): Repeater

(-): Response contradictory or unclear.

Average change per man: 3.9

Average change per man, per question: 0.5

Qualitative Responses

Thematic analysis of the interviews gave rise to over three hundred codes, which were organised and condensed into ten major theme categories.

These were:

- Motivations for attending
- Social environment
- Facilitator qualities
- Co-participant qualities
- The process of discussion
- Emotional/support experiences
- Cognitive experiences
- Perceptions of change
- Benefits of the group
- Feelings about the group ending

Mike, who attended just one session, self-identified as being slightly different to the other participants, stating that his different life experiences meant that he had a slightly different approach to parenting. This was reflected by the fact that his comments did not always align with those of the others. One example was his explicitly stated motivation to learn more parenting skills, as opposed to the statements of others, which referred to developing skills that they already possessed. Where his statements were different to others I have included them with his name beside them, indicating that they are his only.

Motivations for attending

Themes were:

- Enjoyment
 - “Hang out”, have fun
 - Activity of woodwork
 - Meet similar others
- Value of assessing and developing parenting
 - Aim of learning more parenting skills (Mike)
- Combination of enjoyment and value-meeting important
- Material benefit
 - Tools, wood, expertise
 - Personal gift for child

The most salient motivation for the men attending was the opportunity to enjoy themselves. This included having the opportunity to do an activity they enjoyed, to meet, socialise and potentially make friends with people in a similar situation to themselves.

- “Nice to hang out with other dads, you know, doing a dad thing, one night a week” (John)
- “The physical .. making of the objects and working with the tools was a motivation for me” (Mike)

Less overt, though not necessarily less strong, was evidence of a commonly-held value of doing one’s best as a parent, and a motivation of ensuring they were doing this. The men felt that assessing their parenting for appropriateness, and

developing it if there were areas this was possible, was an important thing to do.

Mike voiced this slightly differently, as learning new skills rather than honing current skills.

- “Yeah, you know, you always want to do better for your children if you can, and if you’ve got something to .. learn basically, and you’ve always got something to learn” (Rob)
- “The sharing of [parenting] experiences, I think that’s really valuable.” (John)
- “To learn a bit more about positive parenting” (Mike)

The combination of enjoyment and value-based behaviour was very important to some of the men.

- “If they said ‘come along for a few weeks and we’ll have coffee and talk about fatherhood’ I’m not sure that I would have put up my hand as quickly, but it’s a good kinda combination of things because .. I feel I’m not just going along to do some woodwork, where it would be hard for me to justify the time to do that” (James)
- “It wasn’t just talking about .. parenting and child’s behaviour and stuff like that, there was something there for the dads as well, a bit of man-cave time” (Rob)

This feeling was not shared by all, however. Chris stated that any need he had for parenting support was able to be met through his current networks, and was not looking for any other opportunity to discuss parenting:

- “I suppose for me .. [I was] sucked in by .. using the facilities, [rather] than the parenting .. because that’s not really me. .. But it certainly didn’t put me off” (Chris)

This ended up changing later on:

- “Last night was actually quite useful for me, .. my mindset’s changed towards the group as well. .. I actually learned something I suppose, I saw the benefit of it” (Chris)

The material benefit was also cited as a motivation to attend. Free access to a comprehensive carpentry workshop, with tool use, materials and expertise provided was believed to be an opportunity worth taking, and the men found the chance to build something personal for their own children particularly valuable.

- “Getting the chance to make things for the children and stuff, and having the knowledge base there to ask how to do the certain things you wouldn’t be able to do yourself” (Chris)
- “Not only is it cool and is original and is it functional, but also not having to pay for it, yeah, it’s something that’s gonna be one-off” (Mike)

Social environment

Themes were:

- Non-normativeness of men talking about parenting
 - Some discomfort doing so (despite believing it to be valuable)
- Discomfort reduced by the environment the facilitators had created
 - 'Natural', 'blokey'
 - All-male participation
 - Facilitation

Some men explicitly noted that talking about parenting with other men was not normative:

- “Essentially men don’t really chat about.. you don’t really get a group of guys down the pub talking about bringing their children up, essentially. So what they’ve done is great” (Rob)
- “I think there’s probably just stigma attached with guys getting together to talk about anything other than sport .. anything emotional” (Jason)

Nearly all, however, implicitly referred to some discomfort in talking about parenting due to such non-normativeness, by explaining that the environment made talking easier.

- “The surrounding that they’ve created down there is just conducive to guys to.. feel comfortable, and to sit there and discuss things that maybe some.. guys feel slightly alien you know? .. You’re sort of in a male-dominated situation really, you’re in a workshop, full of tools, and ..

there's a certain amount of sort of machismo and bravado and things like that" (Rob)

- "It was an environment where it was easy to talk about being dads because you felt like a dad, because .. there were no women there, and I think that when men get together in an atmosphere like that we'll act differently to when women are around" (James)

The facilitation of the group was also highly important to the comfort the men felt and their willingness to discuss parenting.

Facilitator qualities

Themes were:

- Style
 - friendly, engaging
 - relaxed/flexible
 - open
 - supportive/encouraging/enabling
 - firm when necessary
- Genuine and passionate about what they do
- Talk from the same level
 - non-threatening
 - bonding/engaging

In addition to the environment, the men stated that the qualities, style and behaviours of the facilitators were crucial to their comfort in and enjoyment of the group, and that this encouraged them to disclose the personal parenting

thoughts and opinions that formed the basis of the fathering discussion. Their behaviours and style were important: they were friendly, relaxed and flexible, open, supportive and encouraging, and able to encourage firmly when necessary to provoke discussion.

- “Absolutely spot on, I think .. they’re both really .. personable people, and the surrounding that they’ve created down there is just conducive to guys to.. you know, just chat, about things really” (Rob)
- “They’re um, friendly and helpful and engaged, and all the things that are [important]” (James)
- “They’re quite open, and ah, able to talk about things, to do with the sort of parenting side, which makes it easier for everyone else” (Chris)
- “[The facilitators] are very encouraging with, when you talk about ‘this is how I handled the situation’ they’re very enthusiastic about it, which is quite nice, you know, you don’t often get a pat on the back, so that’s quite nice as well.” (Jason)
- “The guys that are running it are very good at getting answers out of people and not forcing people to talk but coaxing them and enabling them to talk” (Chris)

The facilitators’ genuine passion for the initiative was felt by the participants, and made a great difference to how it was perceived and the effects it had.

- “They could treat it like a chore and something they don’t want to do .. but they’re not like that, they’re actually part of it .. so it’s done with the right intention, and that makes a massive difference to how you learn I think” (Mike)

- “The facilitators were really flexible, I think that’s important. I mean it wasn’t, it wasn’t six thirty to eight thirty, by any means. And I mean even last week I think they put on an extra session, you know, so if you had a little bit more to do. And so all of that was just great.” [‘So you feel there’s a flexibility to actually meet your needs, rather than just adhering to a..’] “Yeah. I mean, having .. a genuine interest in what you’re up to, and being helpful. And I think, well, for whatever reason they’re motivated to do it, it worked particularly well. That sort of ingredient, I mean, you don’t.. not ‘normally’ get, but it was a special ingredient, and it was great” (David)

Another very important facet was the facilitators’ sharing of their own experiences. This served to ‘set the tone’ of the discussions, reduced the threat of disclosing personal thoughts and experiences, and created a less-hierarchical bond between the facilitators and the participants.

- “[The facilitators] definitely made it a great environment. ‘Cause they were opening up, you know, giving fairly personal details about their experiences as fathers, so that kind of set the bar, and everyone else felt a bit more comfortable then, following suit. So yeah, without them it just would not have worked, at all” (Jason)
- “The facilitators are very good, they’re very supportive and you know, they’re obviously going through their challenges with their kids, and that’s good to sorta see that in that it’s not someone telling you what to do, it’s just someone kinda sharing what they’re going through as well. It makes the bond better, ‘cause you’ve all got a commonality .. everyone feels on the same level” (Jason)

- “They’re both sort of learning at the same time as we are, which makes everybody feel comfortable, in that they’re not coming from an educated.. saying ‘Oh this is what happens and we’re from SKIP and lalalalala’ .. so we’re all on the same level” (Mike)

Co-participants’ qualities

Themes were:

- Adherence to the group’s social rules
- Similarity
 - In parenting values
 - Group cohesion
 - Relevant source of comparison and information
 - As peers
 - To befriend

Qualities of co-participants did not appear to be as important as those of facilitators. Two facets that did matter were adherence to group norms of behaviour and similarity. Group norms included friendliness, openness, engagement, humour, respect and support.

- “Everyone contributes, .. it’s quite respectful” (James)
- “I think generally people had.. you know they were quite easy to chat to, good personalities, good sense of humours, you know, there was no worries about just chatting about different things, you know, it was just quite relaxed and chilled” (Rob)

The second theme was that of similarity. Most important was similarity in values about parenting. It was felt that if these had not been similar the group would have had difficulty bonding and working together.

- “I’m very happy and comfortable with the general way that [the childcare centre] run things, their kind of values if you like, and this is run by.. [the centre], so you know that their kind of attitudes to stuff will be similar, like.. you might go along to a group of guys in another place and they go ‘Oh, gees, don’t you whack, don’t you smack your kids? We love smacking!’” (James)
- “It’s nice to share, with people who are around the same level, I guess” (John)

The other benefit of similarity in parenting approach is that others in the group are relevant as a source of comparison and information.

- “You go along, and you’ve got the same issues as the other guys, doing the same kind of thing, and they all seem to have .. successful families” (James)

Similarity as peers was less essential than similarity in parenting: the group had a range of ages and personalities, and this was no hindrance to most progress and outcomes of the group. The effect that it did have was on the outcome of meeting similar people to make friends. Not all men came with this motivation, and even then it was seen as an outcome that could never be guaranteed, rather it was ‘nice if it happened’.

- “A mix of people and parenting styles, but we get on well” (Jason)

- “Finding other people of your age bracket and .. place in life, to find out you know, whether you can develop any friendships as well” (Rob)

The process of discussion

Themes were:

- Natural social process of group interactions:
 - Initial vigilance
 - Bonds created through interactions
 - Relationships form
 - Social situation becomes clearer
 - Comfort increases
 - Disclosure increases
 - Discussions deepen, increasing benefit
- Semi-structured ideal
 - Comfort with relaxed nature
 - Achieve coverage and fairness
- Balance of enjoyment and seriousness

A natural social process of familiarisation was described by the men, which affected the experiences they had at different times. At the beginning of the group most participants described being a little wary, not knowing what to expect from the intervention, the facilitators or the other men. Introductions gave some initial context, as did the interaction style of the facilitators. Through conversations, both facilitator-prompted and natural, bonds formed and relationships were initiated. This understanding of ‘where people are at’ led to

comfort, and an increased willingness to share more personal information.

Because of this discussions deepened, and thus were more beneficial.

- “The first one’s probably the hardest, ‘cause you don’t actually know anyone, and then after that when you come along the next time you sort of know who the people are, and where they fit in, and how old their kids are and stuff like that” (James)
- “I didn’t really know what to expect. So it probably took me a good week or so to, you know, suss people out essentially, and what they’re all about. But you know, after that it became more and more interesting as the weeks progressed, and the bond .. got stronger and closer. And then I think people are prepared to sort of offer up more information, and you know, the whole group benefits from that as a result” (Rob)
- “The social aspect is becoming more relaxed, you’re sitting around chatting rather than being ‘in a group’ that ‘needs to discuss things’. .. The problem with all sitting around the table and talking is that you’re not getting to know people. .. Whereas with more interaction outside of the ‘we’re here to be parents’ .. you can find out who the people are, have a little chat with them as you’re meandering around” (Chris)

Benefits of the informal and flexible nature of the group were strongly noted, as described earlier, however some structure and control was seen as important for ensuring that everybody got a chance to talk and nobody dominated conversations.

- “It’s reasonably unstructured, it’s not kind of like it’s an ‘eight week course’, you know, ‘Week one we’re covering this, week two we’re

covering this', I don't know whether that would work or not, I suspect it probably wouldn't with a group of guys" (Jason)

- "In general the talking goes on for as long as people want to talk for, you know, and they're quite comfortable with it, and everyone shares stuff. And you can carry on pinging off people's answers and sharing further experiences until you've sort of .. talked it out, and then we just get on with our other stuff" (Rob)
- "You don't really want to organise it too much obviously, the whole point is that it's meant to be a fairly free-ranging discussion, it's just that not everyone got a turn [tonight]" (David)

A balance of fun and seriousness was seen as key to the enjoyment of the discussions.

- "There's a lot of sort of camaraderie and you know, jovial aspects to the talks as well, its sort of fun, and then there's some serious aspects as well, yeah, there's generally a good mix" (Rob)

Emotional/support experiences

Themes were:

- Normalisation of experiences and approaches amongst similar, successful others
 - Leads to relief
 - Leads to confidence
- Empathy
 - Feels good
 - Creates bonds
- ‘Talking out’ problems leads to personal acceptance of them
- Laughter about challenges ‘good for the soul’

Normalisation of parenting experiences and approaches was the most discussed parenting benefit of the course. The men reported a sense of relief when they heard about others’ experiences and found that theirs were similar.

- “[When someone said ‘that’s normal’ I thought] ‘Thank god for that!’ .. Like, well, I knew I wasn’t the only person in the world, but it’s.. yeah, until you share it with your peers you’ve got basically no idea, you can only guess, and of course you sit and go ‘oh their kids are probably perfect!’” (John)
- “A bit of reassurance, that what you’re doing is on the whole ok. You’re forced to be having a look at others and going ‘oh yep, they seem to be having the same problems, doing things the same way’ .. no-one frowns when I describe what I do” (Jason)

Receiving empathy from others that had experienced similar situations was said to feel good, and also to build bonds between the men.

- “There’s definitely that empathy, like when you’re telling stories there’s usually a couple of nodding heads, like so you know other people have gone through it, and that’s quite reassuring” (Jason)
- “It’s nice to be able to relate to someone else that .. maybe has the same thing going for them” (Rob)

Talking about problems was said to be another way that stress was relieved, including leading to personal acceptance of them.

- “We started talking about some issues I was having .. so that just helped me sort of rationalise that, so that was good .. verbalising these things .. and recalling things, as you do that you just sort of.. it just helped to sort of talk about it a bit” (David)

A final emotionally relevant experience was that of laughter:

- “At the end of the day, I mean you can take on board people’s suggestions, but I think it’s just reassuring to know that other people are going through the same stuff. And you know, you can kinda laugh about it, which I think is quite good, because it’s quite good for the soul, once you come out the other end” (Jason)

Cognitive experiences

Themes were:

- Reinforcement of current approach
- Reflection
 - Prompted by discussion
 - Useful to raise consciousness and build and refine schemata
- Others' input
 - Others' experiences useful as information
 - Objectivity allows insight
 - Different perspectives valuable
- Parenting personally constructed

In addition to the emotional benefits of sharing their experiences, there were informational benefits. Sometimes reassurance from others reinforced the belief in a current approach:

- “It is .. reinforcing to me that I seem to be doing ok. Just someone saying ‘look, that’s normal’. .. So it’s affirmation.” (John)
- “It was just sort of reinforcing that I was on the right path” (David)

The reflection prompted by discussions was highly valued, to raise consciousness around one’s own parenting, and ensure behaviours are being chosen for their suitability rather than for simplicity or by default:

- “We share a bit about the problems people are having and stuff like that, and .. it makes me stop and think .. it’s made me perhaps more aware of how I’m behaving and what I’m doing” (Jason)

- “Rather than thinking ‘how can I get this done the most quickly and painlessly’, I’ve been thinking ‘well how can I approach this situation so it’s going to benefit my child?’” (Mike)

The input of others was highly valued also, for information. Others’ ability to see things more objectively was important, and also the different perspectives they might hold due to their differing life experience or personality.

- “You may have put two and two together and got three and a half, and somebody comes along and goes .. ‘but what about this missing half?’ .. and you go ‘Oh, OH..’.. those sort of little eureka-type moments” (John)
- “That’s one of the upsides of the group, is that usually someone’s encountered what you’re going through” (Rob)
- “It’s always good to sort of, bat things around a bit aye, you know, just hear what other people are thinking .. to check you’re on the right track and to understand other views and perspectives.” (David)

Parenting schemata were seen as personally constructed, based on one’s own personality and values.

- “You’re cherry-picking people’s learning experiences that relate to yours, in whatever way. .. It’s totally your choice what you do about it.” (Rob)
- “Some of the other guys would have a different view, or a different say technique, or different things were important to them .. but I kinda came away thinking yeah, I’m pretty happy with what we’re doing.” (James)

Perceptions of change

Themes were:

- Significant change (Mike)
- Already comfortable with approach - not here to 'learn' (Others)
- Change implicit, subconscious
- Reassurance the main effect
- That being said: some change
 - Consciousness
 - Parenting schemata
 - Practical application
 - Comfort with parenting talk

As discussed earlier, Mike's responses differed slightly from those of the rest of the men, in his discussion of learning as a motivation for attending. He also described the parenting changes that he had experienced as being significant, which again differed from the others.

- "I've not only learned quite a bit of practical stuff, but also learning from other people's experiences and stories and stuff like that" (Mike)

Mike noticed some effects on his daughter also:

- 'She seems to understand more, and it might take a bit more time but she's more kind of 'with me' with decision making and stuff like that .. 'cause she understands what I'm trying to do .. [and] why' (Mike)

The themes discussed below relate to the six other men, though it is notable that within these there was still a continuum of the extent of learning reported. Most

of the men stated that they were already comfortable with their parenting approach, many having informed themselves by reading books and talking to a range of professionals. This did not preclude learning, however.

- “We put a pretty decent effort into trying to learn some of the .. basics and techniques of being a parent, and we’ve chosen a particular route”
(James)
- “I was pretty aware of the different parenting styles and .. pretty comfortable with the strategies we had in place to deal with most problems” (John)
- “You’ve always got something to learn” (Rob)

This prior knowledge did, however, perhaps contribute to the common feeling that change from the course would be subtle:

- “Information has a way of seeping in, doesn’t it, but um, no earth-shattering revelations” (David).
- “I suppose there’ve been subtle changes, I mean never anything.. change generally comes quite slowly, and you know, it’s hard to quantify in a way” (Rob)

All of the six completing participants stated that no change had occurred in at least some of the categories enquired about. However all declared at least one area in which their parenting had been affected, all of which were in the desired directions. Described here are examples of change.

Reassurance of the normality and appropriateness of their parenting approach was important, and was the primary parenting effect that most of the men cited.

- “There’s no one thing I can say that.. you know, I’d never thought of technique X before and I’m going to do something really differently now, I think .. out of anything it’s probably that validation thing of .. the things I’m doing as a dad. .. More sort of confidence that we are doing the right kind of things by [our child]. Didn’t really have much doubt before, but [it’s always nice to be reassured anyway]” (James)
- “It’s made me a bit more confident, you know, that I’m doing an ok job, and that I’m not too far off the mark with the strategies I employ” (Jason)

Once this was said, however, most men said that coming to the group had changed something, subtly, about their level of parenting consciousness or their perceptions of their children.

- “It’s certainly made me look at how I would deal with [child] slightly differently. Possibly different ways of doing it rather than just what comes naturally, which is how it was done to you, which is not necessarily the right way” (Chris)
- “It’s probably made me try and think about .. what I say before I say it, and to try and get involved with them now, ‘cause it’s been pointed out that they grow up quickly, to try appreciate them a bit more, and try and pause before I maybe say or do things, .. to be more constructive, less perhaps just knee-jerk reactive. And trying to think of the bigger picture” (Jason)
- “This in association with some other things that I’ve been doing, I’m just conscious that you know, I do need to make an effort to engage with [my child]. The more you just make special time, that’s a good thing .. for

[their] self-esteem and being part of the family unit and that sorta thing.

It's easy to get busy and caught up in other stuff" (David)

Another area of change was a broadening of understandings or ideas:

- "It's made me more aware of the impact of the different [parenting] styles" (Jason)
- "Just hearing the stories, sort of gives you just a bit wider idea of some of the .. techniques that others have used" (James)

A final factor that some men agreed had changed was their level of comfort with talking about parenting, particularly with other fathers:

- "I'd be more inclined to talk to people [about parenting] now than before" (James)
- "I always thought that people that talk about their children were child-bores, which it doesn't necessarily have to be. And you can, I suppose, talk to other people about it and learn some stuff." (Chris)

Benefits of the group

Themes were:

- Fun
 - 'Hanging out' with peers
 - Playing with tools
 - Meeting people
- Opportunity to talk about parenting
 - Only possible in this unique environment

The benefits of the group were aligned with the men's motivations for attending. The fun of hanging out with other similar peers and doing woodworking was highly rated.

- "A bit of male bonding" (Jason)
- "On a personal level it was quite nice meeting new people" (Rob)

The opportunity to get together with other dads and discuss fathering in this supportive and enjoyable environment was noted by all, including Chris, for whom this had not been an initial motivation.

- "The opportunity to get together with other dads from a similar cohort to myself, to be able to talk about stuff, in an environment where it was easy to talk about being a dad" (James)
- "The opportunity to talk about 'Dad' stuff, the opportunity to play with some cool tools, um, meet some nice people. All those sorts of things."
(David)

The group was seen as a unique situation that could not be easily replicated outside of the formal situation due to the lack of societal norms for this kind of discussion for men.

- "Up until then I guess I just did not have any opportunity, other than with my, you know, close friends, but unless they've got kids at roughly the same age, .. although that being said, there was a wide range of ages [at the group]. But I guess you go there with the reason to share. 'Cause you know, when you're catching up with mates, guys just don't generally talk about that sort of stuff. .. It's quite a unique environment" (Jason)

- “There has to be a purpose for a group of guys to congregate .. Playing sport and drinking beer - yeah I’m there! Do you wanna sit around and talk about your feelings? No, I’m alright thanks” (Chris)

Ending

Themes were:

- Satisfaction with gains
- Relief from time commitment
- Frustration/sadness at lost opportunity
 - Impossibility of replicating without facilitation

The end of the course was a source of a range of feelings for the men. Most felt satisfied by the experience: they had enjoyed it and found it worthwhile.

- “Really happy with it, it was great, I would definitely go.. if there was another one run I would definitely do.. a repeat.” (Jason)
- “I’d be strongly recommending any dad that’s interested to go on and have a go” (James)

Many felt also somewhat relieved by the end of the time commitment.

- “In a way somewhat relieved, because it’s quite a commitment, it’s quite a lot of time out” (James)
- “Time-wise it was probably good because my evenings are a bit busier now” (Jason)

Some did not feel any sense of loss at the conclusion:

- “It was only a short one, wasn’t it, it’s not like you’re being wrenched away from anything” (David)

However others felt some frustration and sadness about the lost opportunity to discuss fathering in this depth.

- “I’m quite sad it’s sort of over. And I’m hoping they’ll do another one soon.” (John)
- “It’s just sort of a shame, coming to the end and not having any idea of whether there’s gonna be another one. It would just be good if it was a permanent thing. ‘Cause you’ve just built up these relationships with people where you can, you know, it’s all about the children, and you have been talking about the children, whereas now you’re just sort of cut off cold.” (Chris)
- “I was a bit sad in a way. .. I’d be quite keen for .. you know, once a month, just go to Monteiths and have a catch-up. But I think if we do do that it’s probably less likely to be parenting-focussed.. Without someone actually facilitating it like [facilitator], guys’ll probably just revert back to sport and that sort of stuff” (Jason)

Results - Young Parents Group

Participation

Six parents consented to take part, all of whom were successfully interviewed throughout the research period. All were female. Attendance ranged between four and seven of the eight interviewed sessions. Two (Amy and Chelsea) were assistants to the facilitators, having helped develop and run the initiative since its inception. The others had attended for durations ranging from two weeks to nine months at the beginning of my study.

Participants were aged between 15-29 years old. Five reported being of New Zealand European ethnicity and one of Cook Island Māori. All were the primary caregivers for their children: none worked full-time, though some worked part-time or studied in addition to their parenting responsibilities. Some lived with partners or spouses, others were solo parents. One (Chelsea) concurrently took part in another parenting intervention also.

Pre-/Post- Reports

All of the pre- questionnaires were returned, and the post- questions were conducted by phone, thus all sets were available to analyse. Chelsea's results were confounded by the other parenting initiative she took part in concurrently with the studied period of this group.

The scoring system for the young parents is the same as that of the men's group above.

Questions were based on:

1. Knowledge of the parenting behaviours children need to be happy and healthy
2. Knowledge of strategies to deal with challenging parenting situations
3. Amount of thought and choice about parenting
4. Knowledge of how to deal with stress and anger
5. Degree of parenting support felt
6. Degree of personal support felt
7. Amount of parenting discussion with others
8. Comfort with talking to others about parenting
9. Confidence as a parent
10. Confidence as a person
11. Awareness of a range of organisations that provide other kinds of support

	Amber	Amy	Chelsea (C)	Kayla	Kristen	Sarah	Total
Q1	-1	0	0	0	0	0	-1
Q2	-1	-1	0	1	0	1	0
Q3	-1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Q4	-1	0	1	-2	0	1	-1
Q5	0	0	1	-2	-	-	-1
Q6	-	0	2	-2	0	0	0
Q7	-3	2	-1	0	-1	0	-3
Q8	0	2	-3	-2	0	-	-3
Q9	-1	0	1	0	-1	0	-1
Q10	-1	1	0	-1	-1	0	-2
Q11	-1	0	1	-1	0	-1	-2
Total	-10	5	2	-9	-3	1	-14

(C): Confounded results

(-): Responses not available for both pre- and post- questions

Average change per young woman: -2.3 points

Average change per young woman, per question: -0.2 points

Verbal Retrospective Reports

Participants were asked about changes they perceived as occurring specifically due to this initiative. Again, scoring is as per the men's group above.

	Amber	Amy	Chelsea	Kayla	Kristen	Sarah	Total
Q1	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	1	1	4.5
Q2	0.5	0.5	1	0	1	0.5	3.5
Q3	1	0	0.5	0	0	0	1.5
Q4	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	0.5
Q5	1	0.5	1	0.5	1	1	5
Q6	-	0.5	1	0.5	0.5	1	3.5
Q7	-1	0	1	0	1	1	2
Q8	1	1	0	0	0	-	2
Q9	1	1	1	0	1	0	4
Q10	0.5	0.5	0	0	0.5	0.5	2
Q11	0.5	0	0.5	0	1	1	3
Total	5	5	6.5	2	7	6	30.5

(-): Reports not available or ambiguous

Average change per young woman: 5 points

Average change per young woman, per question: 0.5 points

Qualitative Responses

Analysis of the interviews with the young mothers gave rise to fewer codes, approximately one hundred, though the number of resulting themes is similar.

The themes were organised and condensed into nine major theme categories: nearly identical to those of the men, however feelings about the group ending were not relevant to this group, and 'The process of discussion' was replaced by 'Process factors'.

Theme categories were:

- Motivations for attending
- Social environment
- Facilitator qualities
- Co-participant's qualities
- Process factors
- Emotional/support experiences
- Cognitive experiences
- Perceptions of change
- Benefits of the group

Two participants in this set of young parents, Amy and Chelsea, differed from the other four in that they helped to set up the group in its initiation, and continued to help plan and run it each week. They met the organisers through another community organisation and were engaged by them to provide input into this group, in order to make it relevant and attractive to them and their peers.

This different role meant that these two had a slightly different perspective to the others: they often talked about the needs of others or the group as a whole rather than their own. Where this occurred I tried to also ask specifically about their personal perspectives, but this was not always the perspective they thought from.

In addition, some of the benefits they got from the group were different from what was experienced by the rest of the participants. For example Chelsea

said she got the benefit of organisational experience from this role. Where there was no clear alignment between the views of the two peer facilitators I chose not to include them, deciding that one person's perspective was not enough to constitute a theme. It is worth noting however that while this assistant role existed in primarily order to create the group rather than as part of it, it was clear that it was itself an intervention for these girls also.

Motivations for attending

Themes were:

- To meet similar peers
 - To share support
- To socialise
 - Oneself
 - Children
- 'To get out of the house'
- (Peer facilitators only:) To create a place for young parents
 - supportive
 - connecting
 - empowering

The primary motivation for all the young women interviewed was to meet other people in the same situation as them: young with children. This was primarily for a source of support: it was felt that other young parents would be the most relevant to share experiences with.

- “Basically just to meet other young mums .. it sorta helps to have other people that are in the same position” (Sarah)
- “Meeting other mothers, and getting to know some other people in similar situations .. and sharing parenting information and ideas” (Kristen)

The young parents also wanted the opportunity to socialise, for themselves and their children:

- “There were other young mums there. So it was people my age, where I could socialise, and my [child] could learn to socialise from an early age” (Amber)
- “To meet a lot of other mums and babies” (Amy)

Finally, the simple activity, having something to do, was attractive:

- “To get the kids out of the house, so they have a bit of .. something more than sitting at home doing nothing. .. I just like getting out of the house mainly” (Kayla)
- “To get [child] out of the house too” (Sarah)

The peer facilitators had the additional motivation to create a supportive environment for young parents, to build their strength and resilience:

- “To help other teen mums, teen parents. Just to show them that.. there are other people like.. in their situation.. Yeah. And that not to feel judged. And to share each other’s experiences” (Amy)

- “We want people to come in.. and make a connection with somebody, make a friendship that’s going to last a long time, you know, we want them to learn some skills so that they can be the best parents they can, you know. We want to support people to be able to achieve their dreams, to be able to provide a loving and supporting environment for their kids, and we want them to feel.. like, at the end of it they can go on to a regular playgroup or something like that, and feel like.. they’ve got a place in society and they’re not being judged just because they’re a young parent.”
(Chelsea)

Social environment

Themes were:

- Safe place
 - Made of
 - No judgement
 - Trust
 - Respect
 - For autonomy
 - For opinions
 - Relaxed environment
 - Peer membership and leadership
 - Leads to
 - Comfort
 - Openness
 - Leads to
 - Confidence
 - Created by facilitators' example
 - Trust builds over time
- Relevant
 - Because facilitators seek input from target group

A feeling of judgement from others based on their situation appeared common within this group of mothers, and was evident in the comments they made about a range of topics. A strong theme from the women was that this group was a

place where they felt safe from judgement, and thus felt free to be themselves, to relax, and to ask questions or talk about their experiences.

- “You feel safe going there, you can talk to the people there.” (Sarah)
- “It’s an open atmosphere, and non-judgemental. And I don’t think anyone’s made to feel like a, a bad parent, so to speak, like they’re not adequate” (Kristen)

The fact that the group was just for young mothers was important, as it provided an automatic safety from the age-related judgement from older parents. It also provided normalisation, which reduced the threat of speaking out or asking questions.

- “A lot of us aren’t comfortable going to a regular playgroup. Because you get judged and stuff.” (Chelsea)
- “I’ve been in groups where I was the youngest person there, .. and I felt really out of place, but here you know everybody’s in the same group. And because [the peer facilitators] are our age, we’re not scared to talk to them” (Amber)

The women stated that an important factor of the social environment was that they felt they were respected as autonomous adults and allowed the freedom to determine their own level of discussion and learning:

- “I didn’t want it to be one of those groups where you have to sit down and they lecture at you the whole time. .. That’s what’s really good about [this group], is they’re there if you want them, they’re not .. they’re not gonna try and tell you what to do.” (Sarah)

- “I didn’t want it to be, like adults telling kids .. everything. You know, I wanted it to be the young parents, everyone that comes, I wanted them to be able to have a voice and say ‘this is what I want to know, and this is what I need help with’” (Chelsea)

This respect and freedom extended to participation in activities as well: the women appreciated that the group was a place they could relax and participate to whatever degree they felt comfortable with.

- “Most weeks I try to get involved in what they’re doing, you know, but sometimes .. for me, or even a lot of mums I find it’s just good enough to .. go and sit there and relax” (Amber)
- “It’s a place I can relax, just walk in, say ‘Who’s catching the baby?’ And you know, hand him over, have a cuppa, and look after somebody else’s kids for a few minutes, you know” (Amber)

Part of this safe and trusting environment was an environment of respect for others’ opinions and decisions. This respect and the interactions based on it were valued for being conducive to learning: the manner of interacting was safe, and a range of opinions and resources was seen as beneficial:

- “Being able to accept that everybody’s different and everybody has their own options. So .. it’s not for me to judge, but I can turn around and talk, and say ‘well this didn’t work for me, or I wouldn’t have done it, what, you know, but this is what I think might have worked in that situation’, like that.” (Amber)

- “With there being more people there’s a wider variety of opinions or knowledge” (Sarah)

This safe and respectful environment made the young women feel comfortable and encouraged them to be open with their views and questions. This encouraged personal and parenting confidence.

- “It’s just good that it’s just one for teens. Because you’d have to have a lot of confidence to speak your mind when you’re in a group with older mums. .. [Here] everyone’s a bit shy to start off with, but once everyone gets talking it’s kinda hard to shut everyone up! Everyone opens up, and they don’t feel shy. .. [So] I guess it’s just built up my confidence a bit more. By picking up the courage to talk to other parents about ways that I’ve parented, or ask questions, .. just speaking out in front of people, and sharing ideas” (Amy)
- “Just, you know, being able to share, when I’m comfortable and what I’m comfortable [has built my personal confidence]” (Amber)

In addition to the safety inherent in peer membership, this safe and respectful environment was seen to be created by the facilitators, through their behaviour towards the young mothers, and the role modelling effect this had on other participants.

- “[The facilitators] provide the relaxed environment, you just get the vibe from them that they are relaxed and are there if you need them, and it just provides for the whole environment to be the same way” (Sarah)

However this did not mean that trust in others happened immediately: rather there was a process of building trust that went on over time, with both the facilitators and the other participants:

- “I didn’t know [the facilitators] from a bar of soap before, and why they were doing what they were doing, and whether they could be trusted. .. You know, so it’s changed in that I have respect for them. I have gratitude towards them as well, you know?” (Chelsea)
- “I suppose as the group progresses and as each person progresses, well, as they’re there longer, the relationship with the facilitators builds, so you have a lot more trust in them, I mean you can say that about all of the members, between each person” (Sarah)
- “Being around them each week, the same people, the same parents, [you build trust]” (Amy)

In addition to the safety the young women felt, the group was valued for its relevance to them.

- “I think it’s important .. that we get a say in how it’s run.. because we are young parents. .. Middle-aged parents aren’t gonna be able to um.. connect on the same level - they don’t know what’s relevant to young parents basically, um because it’s often quite different, in terms of.. how the kids are raised, and the pressures put on us.” (Chelsea)
- “It feels a lot more relevant when it comes from [the peer facilitators], because, you know, they’re doing it now, rather than doing it ten years ago.” (Amber)

Facilitator qualities

Themes were:

- Caring (make the effort to talk to everyone each week, go the extra mile)
- Respectful
 - Of people (don't judge)
 - Of autonomy (don't tell you what to do)
 - Of confidence (trustworthy)
 - Thus parents happy to go to them for advice
- Knowledgeable
- Appreciate importance of relevance
- Willing to allow input and peer facilitation

The facilitators were held in high regard by all the participants in this study. One thing they were appreciated for was the genuine care they showed the young women:

- “It’s amazing too, how [facilitator] has set it up, with like lunch and everything, it’s really neat. Yeah she just kinda goes the extra mile for everyone there because she knows that some people can’t, you know, don’t always have nice stuff like that. She’s lovely, she’s done such a good job” (Kristen)
- “They’re really good with everyone. They try to get round the group and talk to everyone, evenly, as much as they can, before everyone goes” (Kayla)

They were valued particularly for their respectful manner of interacting: their non-judgemental attitudes, their non-intrusive support, and their supportive and trustworthy behaviour:

- “The facilitators are great. They’re respectful, supportive, they’re .. they don’t judge either, which is the main thing .. you actually feel real trust in them. .. They’re really friendly people, they’re easy to approach, and they’re willing to help. You feel confident in being able to talk to them”
(Sarah)
- “They’ve got a wealth of knowledge, .. without being condescending, like I never feel, or none of the other girls that I’m aware of feel .. like anyone’s judging them: they’re very approachable, and understand that nobody’s perfect” (Kristen)

The facilitators’ experience as parents, parenting educators, counsellors and group organisers was felt to be important as well, in providing a knowledge resource and creating and continuing the opportunity for the parents to meet.

- “They’re really good, because they both come from different backgrounds, so they’ve got a range of experience to be able to help us, or talk to us”
(Sarah)
- “Because they’re older and they’ve had kids and they’ve had experience, they can just guide it” (Amber)

A final well-regarded facet was the facilitators’ appreciation that the group needed to be relevant to young people, and the value they placed on the input

given from the peer facilitators. The freedom and responsibility they allowed the peer facilitators to take was also appreciated by these young women.

- “I like the fact that they realise that, it can’t be them .. deciding what needs to be talked about, and organising everything, it has to be.. a young parent, because we know what’s relevant to young parents’ (Chelsea)
- ‘[It’s good that] they kind of.. take our advice.. they’d put in a little bit of theirs and we say yay or nay” (Amy)
- “They sort of just sat there and let us go for it, let me do the introductions and everything and then let her talk. It was actually really good, that they were able to just sit back, um, and not get, sort of overly involved in it” (Chelsea)

Co-participants’ qualities

Themes were:

- Similar in situation
- Not necessary to be similar in personality or background
- Follow social expectations of group (warmth, respect, engagement)

Qualities of co-participants were less specific: the primary attribute of importance was that they were similar in situation.

- “People who.. knew what I was going through” (Amber)
- “It helps to have other people that are in the same position” (Sarah)

It was not, however, necessary to share the same background or belief systems in order to get along:

- “Everyone comes from a wide variety of backgrounds, which always.. makes for an interesting group dynamic as well. But everyone gets along real well. I mean, ‘cause everyone’s there for .. I mean it’s for the parents but it’s for the kids at the same time” (Sarah)
- “Everyone’s from just all walks of life, and it’s quite approachable, you know, people are quite understanding, that everyone’s like, from different spaces and places” (Kristen)

A final quality of co-participants that affected others was their behaviour:

whether they behaved in accordance with the social rules of the group:

- “There was good communication and ideas happening, and everyone was getting involved talking together and stuff” (Kristen)
- “I got a bit annoyed because a couple were talking [during the presentation]. But I mean the majority of them were really good: really interested and engaging, so they were asking good questions, and they were listening to what they were being told, and um, [making an effort].” (Chelsea)

Emotional/support experiences

Themes:

- Similarity of peers important
 - For understanding
 - For relevance of advice
- Support
 - emotional
 - informational
 - practical
- Helper-benefit

The similarity of peers was particularly important for supporting one another: people who had been through similar experiences could provide understanding and relevant support.

- “It was really neat to talk to her, and she’s kind of.. in a similar boat to where I was just before I had my son, so yeah, it’s nice to be able to kind of.. interact, and kind of .. you know, hear people’s stories and support each other” (Kristen)
- “I feel really comfortable with them, because a lot of them are.. in a similar situation to me .. and so.. it’s easy to talk to them.. about.. anything that’s going on, whether it be with myself or with [my child]. They understand it, they don’t judge you, they listen, they could compare it to something they’ve experienced, or.. they might have ideas about what it was” (Sarah)

A range of types of support were described, including emotional, practical and informational.

- “[The facilitators] are very supportive, like they do try to make sure everyone here is ok” (Chelsea)
- “Everybody gets stuck in with all of that, you know. If somebody’s down then everybody’ll be like ‘Oh, what’s going on, can we help?’” (Amber)
- “I had a lot of trouble .. trying to get childcare, and a few of the people in the group actually offered to help, and had [child] a couple of times” (Sarah)
- “I enjoy going there. You know, it’s like, even if one day I’m like, really down, you know, I can just go and hand my baby over and walk out of the room again” (Amber)
- “The facilitators initially said ‘Hey, there’s this thing called respite care, let’s get you hooked up with that.’” (Chelsea)
- “It’s given me more options. I’ve got some information, and I’ve got more ideas of where to start looking as well” (Amber)

The young women felt personal benefit from providing support as well as receiving it:

- “It’s also that feeling you get from helping someone else” (Chelsea)
- “There was one girl who was starting solids, so I gave her a couple of tips, .. [which] made me feel good” (Amber)
- “[I liked] looking after the kids, drawing with the kids. .. Just letting the other mums sit back and relax, and not have to bother” (Amy)

Cognitive experiences

Themes were:

- Parenting personally constructed
 - Active integrators of information
 - Not 'one right way'
- Respectful manner influences engagement
- Development of parenting
 - Expert information
 - New ideas/prompts for reflection
 - From a range of places:
 - Formal presentations and discussions
 - Sharing experiences
 - Observing others' interactions
 - Group dynamics encourage greater learning
 - Opportunity to see parenting behaviours in context
 - Builds confidence and reduces feeling of stigma

Parenting was discussed as being personally constructed, and the parents as active in this process. The young women described taking information from a range of sources and integrating them into their own frameworks of knowledge and choices.

- "I like to get stuff from all sorts of different organisations, um, and then sort of cross reference it and take what I need from it. Um, just 'cause yeah, everyone's got their own opinions, and their own studies and that that they refer to" (Chelsea)

- “I just didn’t really like what she was saying, it’s like they had one approach to parenting and [that] was pretty much it” (Sarah)

For some parents others’ respect for the validity of their parenting views was important before they would engage with theirs. This was demonstrated at one point through a parent not engaging with one speaker, but engaging afterwards with the facilitators on the same topic. In some cases the prior trusting and respectful relationship had an effect on future information attendance.

- “I didn’t really pay much attention. .. I just don’t like being preached to about how to raise kids. .. [But then] after the speaker [left], we just sorta sat down and talked about it, and.. [the facilitators] can see the reasons for and against the sort of parenting approaches that they were [promoting]” (Sarah)
- “Because one of the other facilitators comes from SKIP, sort of knowing that means I’m more sort of .. I look for the information” (Chelsea)

The group was good to provide concrete, expert information, but also to prompt new ideas for the parents to think about and integrate into their parenting their own way.

- “It’s given me that resource to be able to ask people that have that knowledge” (Kristen)
- “That was really helpful, .. just to get confirmation that what I was doing with him was ok was really good” (Chelsea)
- “It was really good to just get some ideas” (Kristen)
- “It gave you a few extra things to think about” (Kayla)

New information came from a range of places: the formal presentations and discussions, but also the informal sharing of experiences and observing others' interactions with children.

- “They helped um, teach.. how to make things, like baby food and that, helpful stuff like that” (Kayla)
- “[It was good that] we sat down together and discussed a topic. So people get to learn from other people’s experiences and that.” (Amy)
- “[Learning comes] partly from the discussions, but also just, just being there, and observing, and [getting] different ideas from the other mums. .. Sharing ideas about how to cope, and move forward” (Kristen)
- “Like just watching how some of the other parents are doing things, like, you just sit back and look at them and think ‘oh, well we’ll try that’. Yeah, and talking to the other parents as well.” (Amy)
- “It’s encouraging you to think about the situation around you and who’s around you, and why your child is behaving the way they are. .. It’s the way [the facilitators] talk, the way they behave, and it’s the way the children respond” (Amber)

The group interactions during discussions and presentations were beneficial, for prompting learning in areas that one person alone might not have thought to talk about:

- “You’re bouncing ideas off of each other. So it’s just like, well hang on a second, I didn’t think of that, but now I’m thinking of this because of that, kind of thing” (Amber)

- “They asked questions that I wouldn’t’ve thought of, right then and there, but, like when they asked it I was like ‘Oh well actually, I’m having that same problem’” (Amy)

One mother stated that the group gave the opportunity to understand recommended parenting behaviours in context: their effects in different situations and with different children.

- “I did one parenting course, and they were just like ‘here are some ideas that you can use’, and then [here] seeing them in action you’re like ‘well this one wouldn’t work in that situation.’ .. You watch different kids and different kids respond differently, so it’s like you learn how to use them, not what to use” (Amber)

This development of parenting, coupled with the development of support networks, gave the young women confidence as parents and people, and also led to a feeling of empowerment and reduced feeling of stigma.

- “Well the thing is that knowledge is power. And so if you know what you’re doing .. if you have the confidence to realise that you’re doing a good job, then you’re gonna become not just more confident as a parent, but more confident as a person. And you saw the people there, everyone’s got someone they can turn to for support. Like there’s already being friendships forged and, you know, relationships started.” (Chelsea)
- “Probably just helped with like, confidence and being able to deal with situations I suppose. .. Just from watching people and talking to people about ways to deal with certain things, and the educators help as well, I

mean if you have a specific problem you ask them, or the group, and it does help, it's just something to fall back on I suppose" (Sarah)

- "It makes it easier [to move on to a general playgroup], it gives you more confidence as well. Because, being at [this group], you're around a lot of people your own age, with children your child's age, and it's a case of.. well, now you've seen children your child's age, you can go into a place and not necessarily feel so young and stupid" (Amber)

Process factors

Themes were:

- Accessible
- Semi-structured environment necessary
- Toddler-free environment crucial for discussion and some activities
- Group size pros and cons
- Inclusion in planning important
 - Relevance and thus engagement
 - Empowerment

A range of process factors affected the degree to which the parents enjoyed or benefitted from the group. The provision of a pickup service was important to some of the young women, who would find it difficult to attend otherwise.

- "They come pick you up if you need a ride, which is so helpful. It means that I can go, 'cause I'm kind of up on a hill, and it'd be such a mission without a car" (Kristen)

Having a structure to the sessions was important: while the relaxed environment was valued for the freedom it gave, too little structure was detrimental to engagement and achieving the group's goals.

- “We’ve got a proper structure, which is helping.. it was really good to actually have that there, like it was written up, on the whiteboard what we were going to do when, and I think that helped people actually stick to what needed to be done.” (Chelsea)
- “The organisation of each group is still.. it’s getting there but.. it’s still a little bit disorganised” (Sarah)

While spending time with parents and children together was beneficial, there were times when the parents felt the toddlers needed to be taken away for other activities, in order to reduce distraction to parents. This did not happen regularly enough for these parents.

- “The way it was set out the older children could go up and get into the stuff on the tables, and so that probably wasn’t so good .. when it comes to things like essential oils!” (Kristen)
- “It was just hard to hear over the kids in the same room being real noisy” (Kayla)
- “The older babies and the younger babies, just trying to keep them.. separated. [Because] when the mums are trying to learn about the younger babies, the older ones are running around, screaming and playing” (Amy)

There were benefits and drawbacks of different group sizes:

- “We didn’t have as many people there yesterday, so it was more focussed on the smaller group .. they weren’t trying to yell over people, so it felt a bit more comfortable” (Kayla)
- “Sometimes people don’t turn up, .. and you can get there and there’s like two people and it can be a bit tedious sometimes. But we always manage to make fun with what we’ve got as well, you know” (Kristen)
- “It was good that there was hardly any people there, because you just got to relax, and kinda.. all talk as a group, rather than.. off in our little cliques or whatever. But not so good because there’s not very many people, and then yeah.. [you’re not reaching as many people]” (Amy)

Inclusion in the planning of the group was greatly appreciated by the parents, as they were able to shape the group to their needs, and they felt more involved and part of it.

- “It is good to be part of it, ‘cause then you know what’s going on, and you can make sure that everything’s relevant to what you.. what you feel the group needs” (Sarah)
- “I felt there was a huge and positive feedback from [the discussion about the group and future plans]. Because it managed to get everyone involved, not just the organisers. ‘Cause they kind of ran the discussion bit, they didn’t just sit down and say ‘here, this is what’s going on’, they said ‘Ok, this is us, what do you think about it?’ And like, we were allowed to input our ideas, which was really good.” (Amber)

Perceptions of change

Themes were:

- Changes occurred to different degrees
- Sometimes hard to distinguish from normal parent development
- Support networks increased
- Parenting knowledge broadened
- Confidence increased
 - in parenting
 - in talking about parenting
 - in self / empowerment
- Encouraged further study

All the women felt that attending this group had changed some aspect of their parenting, though each felt change happened in some areas and not others, and to differing degrees.

- “I wouldn’t say yes but I wouldn’t say no either. Um.. like it has, but not by a great deal” (Sarah)

Some found it difficult to say what effect the initiative had had on them, as they had joined the group around the time that they became mothers.

- “It’s changed how I think about a lot of things. Kind of how I perceive parenting and different parents, probably my outlook on myself, as well .. but I think I naturally would’ve evolved as a parent, as I have, but maybe it.. I dunno.. probably not a lot really.. little things here and there”
(Kristen)

All of the young women stated that attending the group had made them feel more supported as a parent.

- “I’ve met a lot of new people.. And.. yeah, sorta like, it feels like I’ve got support from them as well. And yeah, they’re willing to help with [child] or anything I want help with as well” (Sarah)
- “It’s given me more support. And it’s given me opportunities to support other parents who aren’t as fortunate with support as I am. .. [And] It’s given me a few more options [for other support organisations] that I wasn’t aware of” (Amber)

Similarly all felt that the group had developed their parenting knowledge in some way.

- “Learning just different [parenting] tips, like the SKIP programme and things like that, .. being able to ask [the facilitators] different things” (Kristen)
- “There are parenting skills there, and you know, seeing how other parents cope as well. .. You go ‘Oh, you know, well this is how they got around that situation’ or.. things like that. So you know, you’re learning off each other and feeding off each other” (Amber)

Nearly all reported that their confidence as parents had increased through their attendance at the group, and that this made them feel more confident in talking about parenting.

- “There are definitely some areas where I feel more confident and more able as a parent because of [this group]. But [also] just seeing other

parents, and realising that.. you know, my kids aren't really.. there's not really anything that I'm doing drastically wrong" (Chelsea)

- "It's opened me up to being a bit more expressive, and learning the skills I need, encouraged me and given me an outlet [to talk to others about parenting]" (Kristen)
- "It has definitely made me feel more comfortable talking [about parenting] to people outside of [this group]." (Amber)

Confidence as a person, and empowerment to control one's life were other reported benefits.

- "It has made me slightly more confident as a person. It has made me more confident as a mother and, you know, it's made me more confident to be able to say 'hey, that's not ok'. .. [I've seen that] just because I talk to somebody doesn't mean to say that they're going to agree with me and accept what I'm saying, and that goes both ways, you know?" (Amber)
- "For me, it's about realising that it doesn't matter what nine people say, ten other people will say that I am making a positive difference in the kids' lives. And it's about, for me, just gaining the confidence to stand up, and you know, change things if I'm not happy with them, and to be able to ask for help, is a really big one, like, so if there's something I'm not, I'm not coping with, or I'm not supported in, I can go and ask for help. Realising that hey I am a strong person, I can do it, and I do have skills, I do have something to offer" (Chelsea)

For some of the young women this empowerment provided a motivation to continue with studies, in order to achieve things they had not previously considered possible.

- “It’s made me realise that I need to go into further study, I need to.. I have said that I can make something of myself, and I need to go and do that” (Chelsea)
- “It’s definitely inspired me to continue on with my studies, and to finish my schooling. And to get my degree. .. the people that come in, you know, they’ve only gotten so far because they’ve stuck to their ground and continued on. .. It’s definitely given me that drive and that determination, saying that I’m not gonna be a blob for the rest of my life, I will actually get somewhere” (Amber)

Benefits of the group

Themes were:

- Source of support and information
- Socialising for both parents and children
- Fun activity for both parents and children

The group was seen as having a huge impact on many of the young women’s lives.

- “It is one of the best things I’ve ever done for myself” (Amber)

Three clear themes described the impact. Firstly, the group was valued for providing a source of relevant parenting support and information.

- “Its.. providing a place for young parents to be together ‘cause I mean it’s hard, like for me, all of my mates who I was with when I was at school went off to uni and did their own thing like that. There was only a couple of us that have had kids. So we’ve lost a lot of connections with our old friends. And now.. with being able to go to [this group] I’ve met new people that are in the same situation, so you’ve got renewed support from friends.” (Sarah)
- “Just being able to have somebody to be able to go to and say ‘hey, what do you think of this’ and ‘how should I approach this with my child..’ you know” (Kristen)

Secondly, the parents felt relieved and happy with the opportunity for themselves and their children to socialise.

- “It gets families that have kids about the same age together so they have more people to socialise with, who know what they’re going through, pretty much” (Kayla)
- “It’s .. a great place to meet new people. It’s easy to go, relax, sit down, socialise, and.. it gets .. the kids to meet new people and socialise with new people. [It’s] just a place to relax and enjoy being with other people and [child] at the same time” (Sarah)
- “The support, and socialising, um.. the community sort of feel, you know, that you feel like you’re kinda.. connected to people, and not just feeling totally isolated as a parent as well. .. To talk about things, and just be with other parents, so I don’t feel like ‘I’m the only mum in the world!’” (Kristen)

Finally, the activities in the group provided stimulation and special times for the parents and the children, and this was very much appreciated.

- “I liked that they just, kinda very interacting, and for the kids to have um, special things to celebrate what’s coming up” (Kayla)
- “Just kind of doing something .. that you knew was gonna impact on the kids’ lives. Like I remember Easters for.. as far back as I can remember, um, because of the things we did as a family for them, .. so things like that, [child] will hopefully remember for a while anyway” (Chelsea)
- “Everybody there you know, they’re all pretty much in the same boat, with kids, and they want a break, and they want something to do. So.. yeah, there’s always entertainment and laughs for the parents, and you know, activities and playthings for the kids” (Amber)
- “I think that .. it’s good how it’s a mixture of you know like formal stuff, as well as like crafts, as well as like playgroup” (Amy)

Discussion

The aim of this study was to understand the conditions that contributed to participants learning in these community groups. I specifically wanted to find out information that would increase initial and continued attendance, because these areas have been identified as problematic in some previous initiatives. It was then important to ascertain that the changes aimed for did in fact take place over the course of the intervention. Finally I was interested in the process of change: if any motivational, social and environmental conditions contributed to and/or impeded change, and how this occurred.

Engagement Factors

Participants in each group generally appeared engaged in the groups: nearly all spoke very highly of all aspects of the experiences. Across the thirteen total participants, only one dropped out or attended less than half of the sessions during my study period. This compares very positively to parent training programmes, which are generally accepted to have dropout rates of 25-50% over a similar timeframe.

Both groups were motivated by three main common factors: the opportunity to meet similar others, socialise, and potentially make friends, as well as develop their parenting and take part in an activity. The young women, however, had a primary goal of not just socialising but sharing support with others in their situation, whereas the men did not state this as a motivation. The men talked more about the fun activity of the woodwork project, as well as the material benefit of workshop access with expert guidance.

This may reflect the differing situations of the groups: the men's more stable period of life and generally married, employed status may have meant their need to meet similar others for support was lower than that of the young women, whose naturally transitioning time of life and early parent status appear to have reduced their access to support networks of similar peers. Additionally, the fun, non-parenting activity was more critical to the men's engagement. They stated they would have been much less likely to attend if this had not been present - it was an incentive but also served to provide a 'reason to congregate', creating a socially comfortable situation. This did not appear to be necessary for the young women, rather it appeared that simply a time and place to congregate would have sufficed for parenting talk, albeit at a less expert level, to happen naturally. Both groups, however, described the non-parenting benefits as engaging: the men the woodworking and after-class socialising, the women the interesting and educational talks and activities and the food.

Outside of the motivations for attending, there were factors that contributed to and detracted from the participants' engagement in these groups. Principal potential barriers to engagement mentioned were different for the two groups, though were both related to the social context. The men felt somewhat cautious because of the non-normativeness of men talking about parenting: this was a barrier to engagement that required significant aids to overcome. The male-only, workshop environment and the associated social context were essential to the men's comfort and full engagement, as was the facilitators' manner: mimicking more natural social interaction rather than the hierarchical structure of most facilitator-parent relationships.

The young women did not experience the issue of crossing gender norms, but had different concerns about the social context. Judgement and control from others due to their young parenthood was said to be common for them, so they had a need for safety from this in their social environment. Peer-only attendance was thus important for the young women also, as was the atmosphere of respect that the facilitators cultivated. It was also important to them that the group was relevant to their needs as young parents, which in this situation was ensured by peer input.

While it was not explicitly clear, it appeared that peer representation might also be important as a separate engagement factor: the young women valued being able to go to the peer facilitators if they were scared to go to the older facilitators. This is worth considering for other groups where the facilitator is not a member of the social group: although relevance may be able to be met through target group consultation during development, there may also be a need for peer representation or co-facilitation throughout, in order to reduce the threat of discussing sensitive issues.

A secondary engagement factor for both groups was the genuine care and passion of the facilitators, demonstrated through their doing more than what was required of them, in a personal, caring way. This was noticed by both groups, though is not often discussed in parent education literature. While this genuineness may be unteachable, it can be impeded: it is likely that without time for personal contact, or the flexibility to deviate from the planned structure, this genuine care would not be felt as freely.

The time allowance for informal free-ranging interactions was also important for both groups. Both groups had attended with a specific goal of socialising, and both described building relationships naturally outside of the group-talk time as being important to the comfort and enjoyment of the group. The women also described learning through informal chatting and observing as well as during the formal parts of the sessions. The importance of informal time has been discussed by Powell and Watson Eisenstadt (1988), who wrote that the chance to converse in a relaxed manner about common everyday concerns was important to social bonding, and gave rise to similar levels of insight as the formal discussions. They concluded that 'break time was not wasted time', but was rather an important complement to the formal, staff-directed segments of the groups.

The importance of structure in the sessions was mentioned by both groups also. While flexibility and a casual atmosphere was important to both groups, including the freedom to participate to whatever degree they felt comfortable with, this did not mean unstructured was preferable. Rather, the men talked about the importance of the facilitators managing the time to allow all to participate, while allowing time to be extended when necessary to allow topics to be fully discussed. This may appear contradictory, and it is certainly not straightforward, though perhaps the difference is in the proportion of the group that are engaged with a particular discourse or its importance relevant to others' needs. In general, however, the men felt the level of structure and flexibility in the group was ideal.

The women also discussed structure as being important. They generally felt the current level was too unstructured, though stated it improved across the study period. They described the need for facilitators to explain the planned procedure for the class, and write it on the board, so that everybody knew what was supposed to be happening. They stated that when this was done the atmosphere was less chaotic and more was achieved. The need for this is likely to be heightened in a group where babies and toddlers attract attention from the participants. The need for toddlers to be taken out of the room during formal discussions was also stated by many. Thus all the parents were engaged by the relaxed and autonomy-supporting atmosphere, but some level of structure was required for engagement also.

Finally the young women also spoke of the value of their facilitators' knowledge and experience to their engagement; and individual members mentioned specific organisational factors that affected them, including childcare organisation for one man and the provided transport service for some of the mothers.

Changes Invoked by the Groups

The pre/post data was inconclusive for both groups. The men's data were too incomplete, and the young women's did not indicate any clear pattern of change. The overall change for the women was negative, conflicting with their reports of positive change, both weekly and retrospectively.

The verbal retrospective reports of perceived change were more clear. All the men stated that some degree of change had occurred in at least two of the areas asked about, with an average of half a point per man per question. Changes

were spread relatively evenly across the areas. The young women showed a similar pattern: all reported change in at least four areas, relatively evenly spread, with an average of half a point per woman per question.

The very generalised change demonstrated by these results may show that each of the topics were covered to a similar degree, or that each parent had different needs. In either case, however, the groups appear to have been successful in their attempts to invoke change in these areas.

Another potential reason for these very general results may have been that participants from both groups stated that the changes they underwent were not always large, or easy to quantify. Qualitative analysis of the conversations gave a richer and more specific understanding of the changes that were taking place and the factors that contributed to them.

The young women talked most saliently about the increase in social support they experienced through attending the group. They felt they now had people to go to when they needed advice, emotional support or practical support, and that this made them feel less stressed and more confident as parents. As discussed in the Introduction, social support is known to improve parenting, through improved parental mental health and functioning, and through development of parenting knowledge.

The men described the group having effected a greater consciousness of their parenting. In alignment with research findings, they described this as promoting more child-focussed and fewer self-focussed parenting behaviours.

Both sets of parents described feeling more reassured or confident in their parenting due to their participation in the groups. Parenting confidence is closely related to parenting self-efficacy, and has a positive effect on parents' interactions with children and their resilience to negative parenting experiences. Members from both groups also felt an increase in their level of comfort with and confidence in talking with others about parenting. If this translates into behaviour it increases the opportunity for further support and parenting development experiences, which are likely to further benefit future parenting.

Some women also felt that the group had built their personal confidence, or their sense of control over their circumstances (personal self-efficacy). This empowerment was described as being able to stand up for what was important to them, and knowing they had the capabilities to create successful futures for themselves and their children. The effects are likely to build on themselves: self-efficacy breeds resilience, which can lead to greater goal achievement, which breeds further resilience. These young women are thus likely to have been hugely positively affected, both in their own lives and - assuming they continue to hold the needs of their children forefront - for the lives of their children.

Both sets of parents also stated their parenting knowledge or perceptions had changed, though to differing degrees. The men generally described a subtle broadening and deepening of parenting schemata that were already relatively comprehensive, though some changes described appeared significant. The young women, however, reported significant learning, though were less descriptive about the specifics of this. This may be due to the fact that many had attended the group for much of their parenthood, making discerning specific group-

initiated factors much more difficult. They certainly, however, had a sense of gaining new information from attending the group, and discussed it throughout the weekly interviews as well as retrospectively. Both groups discussed developing both parenting principles and the practical application of these principles.

Development of parenting schemata (in an accurate manner) provides significant benefit to both parenting behaviours and child outcomes. More complex schemata is correlated with more positive, child-centred behaviour, and a greater understanding and repertoire of parenting techniques is likely to increase the relevance of the parent's behaviour to the child's need.

It is clear then that parents perceived that they underwent a number of significant positive changes through attending their respective groups. These changes were reported to, and have been shown in research to, improve parenting attitudes and behaviours, which play a causal role in improved outcomes for children.

Factors that Contributed to the Changes

It is important, then, to be able to replicate these effects in other initiatives. In addition to the aforementioned engagement factors, which are themselves the first, crucial ingredients, a range of other factors contributed to these outcomes.

It is worth repeating the importance of the social environments, as without these there certainly would have been little possibility of change. As has been discussed, these safe, supportive, respectful and encouraging social

environments were crucial to the parents sharing their experiences and questions in an honest and personal manner, which resulted in more benefit being gained.

The reassurance the men felt about their parenting was a product of the opportunity to share experiences with similar peers, the sense of normalisation they felt on hearing others had had the same experiences, and the supportive and validating social discourse that the facilitators created. The men's greater awareness of their own parenting approach also evolved through the sharing of experiences. The simple act of telling their stories was said to prompt the men to re-think their responses, and then receiving input from others on the situation sometimes helped to create new understandings. Reflection and subsequent awareness was also prompted by listening to others' stories and thinking how their own natural response compared.

The men also became more aware of the range of parenting approaches in existence and their effects, through hearing about the experiences of others: the situation, the response and the outcome, both as parents now and as children growing up. Expert advice from the facilitators was not mentioned as useful, rather the reduced salience of their expert status, through the sharing of their own personal experiences, was reported as being valuable by the men.

Interestingly, a comment by one of the facilitators did describe some interest from the men in expert information: he stated the men were 'particularly curious' about his knowledge of an issue that week. This surprised me, as the men had not described this curiosity for expert information at all. It is possible that this inconsistency is a facet of the different sources of data.

These processes of reflection, consciousness, broadening of perspectives and further reflection led to another type of change in the men: a change in parenting schemata. Being exposed to a range of experiences provided a background parenting education for the men, and analysis of the different perspectives sometimes resulted in the men subtly changing their thoughts on responding to certain situations.

The final change, of some men's greater confidence in talking about parenting, appeared to be a result of firstly the role modelling done by the (matched demographic) facilitators, and secondly of the men's successful and beneficial participation in such discussion.

An increase in social support was the most-reported change the young women experienced through attending their group. This was created through the collecting of people in similar situations in one place together, and the provision of a supportive and non-judgemental environment by the facilitators' role modelling. The facilitators themselves were also sources of this support, and this was a function of their own supportive attitudes as well as their parenting knowledge and experience.

The women's increase in parenting knowledge was gained through a number of modes. Crucial to many of them was a respectful environment. The young women stated that knowing they would not be told what to do, or criticised for their opinions or behaviours, meant that they felt free to ask questions and share experiences honestly. Thus their parenting knowledge grew, through formal presentations by experts, interactions with the knowledgeable facilitators, group discussions, and through informal sharing of experiences with

peers, in addition to observing other adults interacting with children. Each of these appeared to be significant and valuable to the young mothers.

A feeling of greater confidence as a parent was in part a result of the two preceding processes. Being supported to successfully overcome troubles, and feeling more knowledgeable about parenting issues provided a sense of confidence. This confidence was also increased through the recognition they received from the facilitators, and again through knowing that they had support available if they needed it.

Some of the young women felt that their personal confidence had been increased through their attendance, and that they felt more empowered to control their lives. This grew in part from feeling confident in their achievements as parents, but also independently: from personal commendations by facilitators, and from being exposed to role models of people who had succeeded through determination. It was also a product of being respected by others: the women developed self-respect and confidence through this seemingly simple, but evidently not entirely common, experience.

Finally, the young women's increased confidence in talking to others outside the group about parenting was due to similar factors: a combination of their increased parenting knowledge and confidence, and their positive experiences of sharing respectful conversation about parenting issues.

Each group, then, underwent different processes, relevant to their different needs and social contexts. Common principles are the importance of a safe, normalising, respectful and supportive social environment, of facilitators

with a genuine passion for the role, care for the participants, and the freedom to display this care through time for personal and informal interaction, peer membership (and potentially peer representation if the facilitators are not of the same demographic), the opportunity to share experiences, the availability of other knowledgeable and relevant people, expert and peer, role modelling of relevant and appropriate parenting talk, and support.

While these principles are likely to be of benefit to future research and practice, each group had very different processes to incorporate these principles, that will not be directly transferable to other groups. This highlights the importance of consultation with members of target populations during development of initiatives, as each population has its own complex social situation that will affect the process of change.

Other Findings

In addition to these specific factors that contributed to change, five other relevant issues became apparent that warrant discussion. Firstly, the theme of parents being active integrators of parenting information was discussed by both groups of parents. This theme aligns with prior knowledge that parenting schemata develop and are influenced by parents' experiences, however the fact that parents view themselves as active constructors was new to me.

Parents in this study perceived themselves as active integrators of parenting knowledge, which was believed to come from a range of places and require careful consideration. Each parent felt they were the expert in their particular situation, and most felt their constructions of parenting were the most

accurate and appropriate for this. This confidence is natural and healthy, but, as seen in the change mechanisms and evidenced in this study, requires respect.

The men generally stated they did not attend the group to learn about parenting, and some remarked that they would not be interested in parenting courses where this was the case. The women described their decision to attend being dependant on facilitators who respected their parenting choices, and one described being affronted by the directive tone of an invited speaker, to the point of not attending to their presentation. Both groups discussed appropriate parenting as being personally determined, implying that it is not subject to the beliefs of any specific person or group. An egalitarian relationship, where values and opinions of each person, 'expert' or not, are respected as equally legitimate, is clearly necessary in order for everyday parents to truly engage and benefit.

This has implications for didactic programmes being extended to populations. Results indicate that many parents appreciate expert knowledge, but on their own terms: direction may be met with resistance or dismissal. It is possible that consultation with target groups may ensure messages are relevant and thus not interpreted negatively, however care must clearly be taken.

The second issue that arose was that of different patterns of data arising from the two groups. The pre-/post- tests were perhaps the greatest indicator of this: while the men's' results eventuated in a relatively expectable manner - a nil to slight increase over the period - the women's' were far more unpredictable. The almost random appearance of the results demonstrated huge instability in the young women's' reports of their perceptions. I interpreted this as being due to their young age, a time where moods and perceptions are all-encompassing

and an objective assessment of average belief is more difficult, though there may be other reasons. This instability, however, is important for the choice of assessment tools with this demographic in future, and warrants further exploration.

Another difference in the reporting of data was that of the discourses used by each group. In general the young women responded directly and with candour, whereas the men in general appeared more guarded with their personal feelings, and their responses were couched in rich conversational detail. This gave more information, but also required significantly more interpretation than the young women's information. Interestingly, while the men's data gave rise to approximately three times the number of codes than the young women's, the number of themes and subthemes for the two is very similar. This indicates that the general meanings may be similar, though the men's data may lose much richness in condensing under thematic analysis.

Additionally, the men appeared reticent throughout the data collection to state they had learned anything new or thought about anything differently. In the final interview, after asserting that changes were very minimal, they described thought changes which I consider significant. While it is possible that these changes were truly minimal, or occurred over such a long time period that they did not appear large to them, it is also possible that the social context of their interview with me was not conducive to them discussing their process of learning. My status as a younger, female, non-parent may have inhibited them from reporting change, for fear of being judged as needing this intervention to improve their parenting, which was not a position they held to be true. Such

judgement may not have been felt had the interview been done by a peer who personally understood the social context of their position as fathers. This applies similarly to the facilitator's comment of their curiosity about certain practices, which were never communicated in the men's dialogue with me.

The young women, however, were much more open about experiencing learning. While they also asserted their current competence in their initial interviews, most quickly became open to discussing learning new information and having new ideas. This may be to do with the nature of their initiative - they had presentations clearly aimed to teach information - but it also may be related to their different social context. As young people they may have felt that learning was an appropriate experience, and their status as female may have again reduced the abnormality of them talking and learning about parenting. Finally my status as a relatively young female may have encouraged them to feel I would understand their situation well.

Another new theme to me was the parents' need for normalisation of their experiences. This aligns with Bowlby's fourth benefit of social support: the provision of social norms. While new information was certainly valued, the emotional benefit they received from knowing others had been in their position, or reacted in the same way, appeared of greater value, or at least of higher urgency.

In a possibly related manner, the final interesting issue that emerged from the results was the high value placed on peers as a source of parenting information. Expert information was certainly valued, but it was not described as any more important than that of peers. The young women described going to

each for different types of advice, whereas the men described the facilitators' input as being no different from that of their peers. In general it appeared that people in the same situation were seen as relevant sources of ways to put principles into practice, and optimal sources of empathy and comradeship. These latter needs of parents are possibly undervalued in today's treatment ethos.

OVERALL DISCUSSION

This research aimed to critically examine a New Zealand-based public initiative to promote positive parenting at a population level: SKIP. Various features of the SKIP initiative are appealing from a community psychology perspective. The positive focus and community-building approach, and the range of inclusive and non-threatening modes of intervention represent a highly parent-centred way of promoting engagement in the initiative and in parenting itself.

In the introduction many aspects of parenting initiatives and their use on a population scale were reviewed. A number of proposals for the future of parenting initiatives were discussed and a number of ingredients of previous successful initiatives. Future proposals included the need for a population approach, and the need to create an intervention that appealed to all parents, not just those actively seeking help for problems.

It was suggested that to do this the initiative should support self-determination with positive, supportive relationships, and respects for the autonomy and competence of each parent. Additionally the initiatives should be culturally and socially relevant, and flexible to meet community and individual needs, and induce parents to think reflect on parenting information rather than direct their behaviour.

The proposed effects of the interventions were to invoke attention to one's parenting behaviours and schemata, and prompt reflection on their suitability. It was proposed they should also encourage natural, self-sustaining

coping and social supports, parent-to-parent and potentially throughout the community as a whole.

It was demonstrated that previous successful initiatives had additionally adhered to a defined model of change, aimed to increase emotional communication, used facilitators with appropriate levels of skill, and paid particular attention to engagement factors. The key question for the present research programme was to determine whether these issues would contribute to success in the SKIP approach.

Study 1 was designed to gain a better understanding of the effects of SKIP information campaigns. The booklet disseminated to shoppers used supports for relatedness and autonomy, provided no threat to competence, was developed by skilled staff and relevant peers, and induced readers to come to their own conclusions about important parenting values. Because the final number of participants was small, only limited conclusions could be drawn, however from the responses received it could be seen that the booklet was well-accepted, enjoyed, and shared by these members of the target audience, who were not actively seeking parenting information at the time they were engaged.

Following this successful engagement was a range of effects on the respondents. These ranged from positive parenting thoughts and feelings, to reflection on parenting values, and intent to reflect more in future. Others felt encouraged, more confident, less stressed and proud about their parenting role. A small minority of parents displayed no evidence of being affected by the booklet, and just one appeared to react negatively. If these results were

representative of all of the recipients of the booklet this would be an overwhelming positive outcome.

Statistical analysis revealed few relationships between variables, though one correlation was clear: that of a feeling of encouragement as a parent and the reporting of now feeling less parenting stress. This relationship, and others, may warrant further investigation with a larger or more responsive sample.

Qualitatively, however, the responses indicated that participants valued the positivity, encouragement and inductive nature of the booklet. This provides some evidence that the principles of change advocated in the Introduction can contribute to success in this social media promotion of positive parenting.

The second study changed direction and focused on gaining a deeper understanding of the processes and effects of a more intensive SKIP initiative: community-based parenting groups. Both parent groups were of somewhat marginalised populations, for whom discussing parenting in depth was not initially easy.

These groups were very successful: they were acceptable to all participants, with just one dropout from the men's group and none from the young women's. This compares well to traditional parent training groups. Participants reported increases in all of the parenting domains asked about, with a fairly even spread across domains, indicating that the groups were perceived as effective by the parents. Qualitative analysis provided more detail about the changes and the factors that contributed to them.

Parents felt that the interventions provided support and reassurance, and increased and broadened their parenting knowledge. Parents often knew theoretically what they should be doing, but felt the application in real life to be more complicated. One of the mothers mentioned choosing to use 'time out' for tantrums at home, but not being sure how to approximate this in a shopping mall. Some of the men discussed the importance of reflection on practice, as in-the-moment parenting is not always done as one intends outside of that moment. These discussions of implementation were just as important as new concepts.

Greater changes were implemented also. The young mothers - and to a degree the fathers - benefitted from increased confidence from the group: the young mothers particularly, knowing that they were 'doing ok' as parents and that they did not have to believe the stigma they felt from society. Two stated that the group had prompted them to want to go back to study, through an increase of confidence in themselves and a focus on greater life goals. These effects are likely to be significant and long-lasting.

Most of the parents also stated they now felt more comfortable talking about parenting. One father had a complete change in attitude to parenting talk, stating that he now saw it could be useful and important. This is again likely to have long-lasting effects on the lives of these men and their children, in addition to the immediate supportive effects they gained. Unfortunately, though many men stated they would like the opportunity to continue talking in this way, they could come up with no way conversations of this depth could be achieved outside of the facilitated group. The social norms of the New Zealand culture, at least for them, did not allow such depth of parenting talk. This indicates the

importance of initiatives such as this, and wider media campaigns, for the future of fathering: providing models of this positive behaviour to legitimise and encourage it, allowing the development of these men's innate care about being good parents to their children.

It is clear from the results that many of the issues identified in the literature as important for parenting were reflected in the findings for this New Zealand, population context. It was crucial firstly that the initiatives were relevant and attractive to the target audiences. This meant attending to parents' needs: for connecting with other, similar parents, discussing parenting and having fun, in a safe, socially acceptable situation, and interests specific to their population. Where the facilitators were not members of the target population, continual input from such members ensured relevance of the group and a voice for the participants.

Positive, supportive and respectful relationships were essential to engagement, and these parents appreciated the peer-only attendance, for its reduction of threat and ensuring of relevance. Respect for parents' competence and their autonomy was essential also: neither group wanted to be instructed on how to parent, rather their understanding was of themselves as active constructors of knowledge, and of appropriate parenting as being personally determined. Both groups of parents discussed the necessity of feeling comfortable, safe and respected in these ways before entering into meaningful discussions of parenting where they bared their thoughts and concerns about themselves and their children. This feeling did not occur instantly, rather relationships were described as developing over time, contributing to deeper

personal discussion. The right to contribute at one's own pace was crucial to the feeling of safety in these groups.

Both cohorts of parents discussed the benefit of hearing others' perspectives and experiences, to stimulate and expand their parenting understandings and options. The inductive rather than didactic nature of the groups was appreciated for its respect for autonomy and competence, and for its alignment with the parents' understanding of parenting as individually constructed. This was highly engaging, and contributed to significant schematic development - these parents had a natural drive to be the best parent they could be and this thrived under these conditions. Where traditional parent training might stifle intrinsic motivation, these groups succeeded in nourishing and even building this ambition. The importance of this finding cannot be underestimated.

The greatest value of the groups noted by the parents was the chance to share experiences and receive emotional support from similar peers. Particularly important was having their experiences normalised: knowing that other parents experienced the same things. The relief and subsequent increase in confidence that this brought were the most important benefits of the groups, for both cohorts. The encouragement of peer support networks is likely to provide benefits for these parents outside of the group setting. Role modelling of positive and relevant parenting communication was important to the parents' increased confidence in this area, and again continues its benefit past the group attendance.

In this instance, the facilitators for the men's group were very knowledgeable about parenting, but less trained in communicating this to

parents. The facilitators of the young parents group, in comparison, were trained in both. Participants, however, rated both sets of facilitators highly. The important qualities of the facilitators, in their eyes, were the relationships and social environment they cultivated, their parenting knowledge, and an appreciation of the need for relevance. These facilitators received glowing references from the parents in this regard. The methods of data collection used are insufficient to determine more than the parents' perceptions, so no objective competency assessment can be made, however there is nothing to indicate that these parents received anything but the best service. For 'everyday' parents, facilitators' specific training above that of positive parenting may be less relevant than their genuine passion and their humble, helpful attitudes.

It is unclear whether these groups were developed according to any theoretical model of change. What is clear, however, is that they worked according to a range of common principles of change described here, and that these principles actively contributed to the changes the parents experienced. However, analysis of the processes of change in this study gives a few more factors that may be particularly useful in this prevention area.

Sharing experiences was the catalyst for an immense range of positive parenting effects: it prompted awareness, reflection, new learning, confidence, as well as a feeling of support. This, along with the social environment that allowed it, was perhaps the most important contributor to change.

Similar peers were highly important for both support but also information. While traditional models view the expert as the sole source of information, this study found that parents value both equally: each relevant for

different issues. The importance of peer information should not be discounted for its strong effects on engagement: this peer knowledge met a need that non-similar facilitators and expert instruction could not provide.

Finally, informal socialising played a range of important roles in these groups. Not only was it an engagement factor, as parents attended with the goal of doing this, but it aided the development of relationships within the group in a way that the formal group interactions could not. Parents felt more comfortable after getting to know the other participants personally, and this comfort led to a greater trust and willingness to discuss more personal information and gain the benefits from that. Finally, these interactions were said to result in learning just as much as the organised presentations or discussions.

This study provides significant evidence for the change principles discussed in the Introduction, and adds three new principles that contributed to success in these groups: the importance of sharing experiences, the relevance of peer information, and the role of informal socialising in engagement and change. Taking account of these principles when developing parenting initiatives for 'everyday' New Zealanders may be indicated if similar outcomes are desired.

While this less-directive approach may communicate less new information per session than a parent training programme, the benefits in parental engagement, satisfaction and support are certainly worthwhile, for parents who either do not require or are unwilling to take part in more intensive, directive approaches. Although many of these findings may seem straightforward from a humanistic perspective, parenting initiatives have previously followed a far less parent-centred approach, and thus the assessment

of whether these natural change processes are important in achieving parenting change was necessary.

LIMITATIONS

There are a number of limitations in the research that must be considered. Discussed earlier was the cultural bias toward Western understandings of parenting. Additionally, while the interventions chosen for the study were representative of SKIP activities, they do not cover the range of them, so this study cannot be said to assess the impact of SKIP as a whole. Assessments were purely parents' perspectives, which, while hugely important in understanding engagement factors, are less reliable in reporting objective change. Finally child outcomes were not assessed, meaning that it is a theoretical assumption only that they would improve with the parenting qualities described.

The response rate in Study 1 was very low, so the results cannot be assumed to generalise to the surveyed population. The respondents are likely to have had greater motivation to return the survey, which may have resulted from generally greater engagement with the booklet.

For Study 2, with only one interviewer it is difficult to know the effect that my personal attributes had on the information shared with me. My difference in age (younger than the men, older than the young women) and female gender, as well as my personality are likely to have implicitly affected the responses given. Furthermore, while the interviews were semi-structured, and I aimed to practice the 'naïve explorer' perspective, it is possible that my previous research may have led me to explore certain paths over others, which may bias the information

participants gave. My previous research may also have biased my identification of themes, though this will be tempered by the reliability checks done.

Finally the participants were not necessarily representative of each of the wider populations. Neither group had full participation: one member of the men's group did not take part, and a number of members of the young parents group. While the male participants appeared representative of the group as a whole (the non-participant also informally stated he enjoyed it, and completed the group), this is not so for the young parents. Attendance at the young parents' group fluctuated greatly, and I was told that participation in my study was skewed towards those who took part regularly, though this was not exclusively the case (at least one regular attender did not take part in this study, and at least one participant did not attend the group regularly). This incomplete representation may have biased the results in a positive manner.

CONCLUSION

International research has identified some promising future directions in the encouragement and support of positive parenting across cultural and socio-economic groups within a broad population. One is the use of inductive rather than didactic strategies to induce consciousness around parenting. My first study demonstrated that a brief handout is able to produce reflection and affirmation of parenting in a range of people.

By qualitative analysis of the experiences of two parenting groups my second study confirmed that many of these proposed variables seem to be important for enhancing parenting in Aotearoa New Zealand. In particular, the importance of an emotively supportive, autonomy-supportive and trusting relationship is crucial to the true sharing of parenting issues and concerns.

While directive parent training may have an important place in improving parenting skills with highly dysfunctional families or very challenging children, the different values and philosophies of the SKIP approach were confirmed as acceptable and efficacious for a broader use, thus supporting other perspectives on parenting in New Zealand, such as those of Herbert (2001) and Couch and Evans (2012).

Thus, while not being able to make any claims about outcomes for children, this research has confirmed the potential of the SKIP initiatives, particularly their appeal and relevance to, and success with segments of the population unlikely to access the formalised and structured programmes previously heralded as panaceas. A movement toward community collaboration

is happening, and this research provides evidence for the benefits of this approach.

REFERENCES

- Aldwin, C. M., & Werner, E. E. (2009). *Stress, coping, and development: An integrative perspective*. New York, NY: Guilford.
- Andrews, D. A., & Bonta, J. (2006). *The psychology of criminal conduct* (4th ed.). Cincinnati, OH: Anderson.
- Applegate, J. L., Burke, J. A., Burleson, B. R., Delia, J. G., & Kline, S. L. (1985). Reflection-enhancing parental communication. In I. E. Sigel (Ed.), *Parental belief systems: The psychological consequences for children* (pp. 107-142). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Applegate, J. L., Burleson, B. R., & Delia, J. G. (1992). Reflection-enhancing parenting as an antecedent to children's social-cognitive and communicative development. In I. E. Sigel, A. V. McGillicuddy-DeLisi & J. J. Goodnow (Eds.), *Parental belief systems: The psychological consequences for children*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Asmussen, K. (2011). *The evidence-based parenting practitioner's handbook* (1st ed.). Abingdon, England: Routledge.
- Auerbach, A. S. B. (1968). *Parents learn through discussion; Principles and practices of parent group education*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Azar, S. T., Nix, R. L., & Makin-Byrd, K. N. (2005). Parenting schemas and the process of change. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 31(1), 45-58.
- Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J., van Ijzendoorn, M. H., & Juffer, F. (2003). Less is more: Meta-analyses of sensitivity and attachment interventions in early childhood. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(2), 195-215. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.129.2.195

- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, *84*(2), 191-215. doi: 10.1037/0033-295x.84.2.191
- Bandura, A. (1989). Regulation of cognitive processes through perceived self-efficacy. *Developmental Psychology*, *25*(5), 729-735. doi: 10.1037/0012-1649.25.5.729
- Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental Psychology*, *4*(1, Pt. 2), 1-103. doi: 10.1037/h0030372
- Belsky, J. (1984). The determinants of parenting: A process model. *Child Development*, *55*(1), 83-96.
- Belsky, J., Melhuish, E., Barnes, J., Leyland, A. H., Romaniuk, H., & the National Evaluation of Sure Start Research Team. (2006). Effects of Sure Start Local Programmes on children and families: Early findings from a quasi-experimental, cross sectional study. *British Medical Journal*, *332*(7556), 1476-1478.
- Berlin, L. J. (2005). Interventions to enhance early attachments: The state of the field today. In L. J. Berlin, Y. Ziv, L. Amaya-Jackson & M. Greenberg (Eds.), *Enhancing early attachments: Theory, research, intervention, and policy*. New York, NY: Guildford.
- Bishop, S. R., Lau, M., Shapiro, S., Carlson, L., Anderson, N. D., Carmody, J., . . . Devins, G. (2004). Mindfulness: A proposed operational definition. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, *11*(3), 230-241. doi: 10.1093/clipsy/bph077
- Bond, L. A., Belenky, M. F., & Weinstock, J. S. (2000). The Listening Partners program: An initiative toward feminist community psychology in action.

- American Journal of Community Psychology*, 28(5), 697-730. doi:
10.1023/a:1005149821279
- Bond, L. A., & Burns, C. E. (2006). Mothers' beliefs about knowledge, child development, and parenting strategies: Expanding the goals of parenting programs. *Journal of Primary Prevention*, 27(6), 555-571. doi:
10.1007/s10935-006-0061-9
- Borkowski, J. G., Smith, L. E., & Akai, C. E. (2007). Designing effective prevention programs: How good science makes good art. *Infants and Young Children*, 20(3), 229-241. doi: 10.1097/01.IYC.0000277754.16185.6b
- Bowlby, J. (1951). *Maternal care and mental health: a report prepared on behalf of the World Health Organization as a contribution to the United Nations programme for the welfare of homeless children*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss*. London, England: Hogarth.
- Bowlby, J. (1988). *A secure base: Clinical applications of attachment theory*. London, England: Routledge.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.
- Bretherton, I. (1992). The origins of attachment theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. *Developmental Psychology*, 28(5), 759-775.
- Briesmeister, J. M., & Schaefer, C. E. (2007). *Handbook of parent training: Helping parents prevent and solve problem behaviors*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Bruhn, J. (2009). *The group effect: Social cohesion and health outcomes*. London, England: Springer.
- Bugental, D. B. (2000). Parental and child cognitions in the context of the family. *Annual Review of Psychology, 51*, 315-344.
- Bunting, L. (2004). Parenting programmes: The best available evidence. *Child Care in Practice, 10*(4), 327-343.
- Callahan, C. L., & Eyberg, S. M. (2010). Relations between parenting behavior and SES in a clinical sample: Validity of SES measures. *Child and Family Behavior Therapy, 32*(2), 125-138. doi: 10.1080/07317101003776456
- Campbell, D., & Palm, G. F. (2004). *Group parent education: Promoting parent learning and support*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Carmody, J., Baer, R. A., Lykins, E. L. B., & Olendzki, N. (2009). An empirical study of the mechanisms of mindfulness in a mindfulness-based stress reduction program. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 65*(6), 613-626.
- Cassidy, J., Woodhouse, S. S., Cooper, G., Hoffman, K., Powell, B., & Rodenberg, M. (2005). Examination of the precursors of infant attachment security: Implications for early intervention and intervention research. In L. J. Berlin, Y. Ziv, L. Amaya-Jackson & M. Greenberg (Eds.), *Enhancing early attachments: Theory, research, intervention, and policy*. New York, NY: Guildford.
- Chamberlain, P., Patterson, G., & Reid, J. (1984). Observation of client resistance. *Behavior Therapy, 15*(2), 144-155.
- Chan, T. W., & Koo, A. (2011). Parenting style and youth outcomes in the UK. *European Sociological Review, 27*(3), 385-399. doi: 10.1093/esr/jcq013

- Cohen, E. (2004). Parental belief systems and difficulties in parenting: Using the Parental Awareness scheme as a therapeutic guide. *Journal of Infant, Child, and Adolescent Psychotherapy*, 3(2), 252-269. doi: 10.1080/15289160309348464
- Cohen, J. A. S., & Semple, R. J. (2010). Mindful parenting: A call for research. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 19(2), 145-151. doi: 10.1007/s10826-009-9285-7
- Coleman, P. K., & Karraker, K. H. (1998). Self-efficacy and parenting quality: Findings and future applications. *Developmental Review*, 18(1), 47-85. doi: 10.1006/drev.1997.0448
- Copas, S., & Action Inquiry Contributors. (2011). *Thriving: Connected - Reflective - Effective*. Auckland, New Zealand: Families Commission & Action Inquiry Partner Organisations.
- Cornille, T. A., Barlow, L. O., & Cleveland, A. D. (2005). DADS family project: An experiential group approach to support fathers in their relationships with their children. *Social Work With Groups*, 28(2), 41-57. doi: 10.1300/J009v28n02_04
- Couch, C. M., & Evans, I. M. (2012). Relationship focused parent training within a dialectical framework: A case study. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 17(3), 400.
- Critchfield, K. L., & Benjamin, L. S. (2008). Internalized representations of early interpersonal experience and adult relationships: A test of copy process theory in clinical and non-clinical settings. *Psychiatry*, 71(1), 71-92. doi: 10.1521/psyc.2008.71.1.71

- Crittenden, P. M. (1985). Social networks, quality of child rearing, and child development. *Child Development, 56*(5), 1299-1313.
- Crowley, J. E., & Curenton, S. (2011). Organizational social support and parenting challenges among mothers of color: The case of Mocha Moms. *Family Relations, 60*(1), 1-14. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3729.2010.00629.x
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York, NY: Plenum.
- Dubanoski, R. A., Evans, I. M., & Higuchi, A. A. (1978). Analysis and treatment of child abuse: A set of behavioural propositions. *International Journal of Child Abuse and Neglect, 2*, 153-172.
- Dumka, L. E., Garza, C. A., Roosa, M. W., & Stoerzinger, H. D. (1997). Recruitment and retention of high-risk families into a preventive parent training intervention. *The Journal of Primary Prevention, 18*(1), 25-39.
- Dunst, C. J., Trivette, C. M., & Jodry, W. (1997). Influences of social support on children with disabilities and their families. In M. J. Guralnick (Ed.), *The Effectiveness of Early Intervention* (pp. 499-522). Baltimore, MA: Paul H. Brookes.
- Dwairy, M. (2010). Introduction to special section on cross-cultural research on parenting and psychological adjustment of children. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 19*(1), 1-7. doi: 10.1007/s10826-009-9336-0
- Ellen, G. (2012, 13 April). Assaults on children increase by 31%, *NewsWire*. Retrieved from <http://www.newswire.co.nz/2012/04/assaults-on-children-increase-by-31-percent/>
- Evans, I. M. (in press). *How and why people change: Foundations of psychological therapy*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

- Fixsen, D. L., Naoom, S. F., Blase, K. A., Friedman, R. F., & Wallace, F. (2005). *Implementation research: A synthesis of the literature*. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, The National Implementation Research Network.
- Fonagy, P. (1998). Prevention, the appropriate target of infant psychotherapy. *Infant Mental Health Journal, 19*(2), 124-150. doi: 10.1002/(sici)1097-0355(199822)19:2<124::aid-imhj4>3.0.co;2-o
- Gameiro, S., Moura-Ramos, M., Canavarro, M. C., & Soares, I. (2011). Network support and parenting in mothers and fathers who conceived spontaneously or through assisted reproduction. *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology, 29*(2), 170-182. doi: 10.1080/02646838.2011.553950
- Gassmann, D., & Grawe, K. (2006). General change mechanisms: The relation between problem activation and resource activation in successful and unsuccessful therapeutic interactions. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy, 13*(1), 1-11. doi: 10.1002/cpp.442
- Gerris, R. M., Deković, M., & Janssens, M. A. M. (1997). The relationship between social class and childrearing behaviors: Parents' perspective taking and value orientations. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 59*(4), 834-847.
- Ghazarian, S. R., & Roche, K. M. (2010). Social support and low-income, urban mothers: Longitudinal associations with adolescent delinquency. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 39*(9), 1097-1108. doi: 10.1007/s10964-010-9544-3

- Glass, N. (1999). Sure Start: The development of an early intervention programme for young children in the United Kingdom. *Children & Society, 13*(4), 257-364.
- Glass, N. (2005, 5 January). Surely some mistake?, *The Guardian*.
- Gravitas. (2005). *Strategies with Kids - Information for Parents (SKIP) research report*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Social Development.
- Grawe, K. (1997). Research-informed psychotherapy. *Psychotherapy Research, 7*(1), 1-19. doi: 10.1080/10503309712331331843
- Grolnick, W. S., & Ryan, R. M. (1989). Parent styles associated with children's self-regulation and competence in school. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 81*(2), 143-154.
- Grusec, J. E. (2011). Socialization processes in the family: Social and emotional development. *Annual Review of Psychology, 62*, 243-269.
- Guerrero, D. A. V. (2009). Hypermasculinity, intimate partner violence, sexual aggression, social support, and child maltreatment risk in urban, heterosexual fathers taking parenting classes. *Child Welfare, 88*(4), 135-155.
- Haefel, G. J., & Howard, G. S. (2010). Self-report: Psychology's four-letter word. *The American Journal of Psychology, 123*(2), 181-188.
- Heaney, C. A., & Israel, B. A. (2008). Social networks and social support. In K. Glanz, B. K. Rimer & K. Viswanath (Eds.), *Health behavior and health education: Theory, research, and practice*. San Francisco, CA: Wiley.
- Heckman, J. J. (2006). Skill formation and the economics of investing in disadvantaged children. *Science, 312*(5782), 1900-1902. doi: 10.1126/science.1128898

- Herbert, A. M. L. (2001). *Whānau whakapakari: A Māori-centred approach to child-rearing and parent-training programmes*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Waikato University, Hamilton, New Zealand.
- Hoffman, M. L. (1975). Moral internalization, parental power, and the nature of parent-child interaction. *Developmental Psychology, 11*(2), 228-239. doi: 10.1037/h0076463
- Hoffman, M. L., & Saltzstein, H. D. (1967). Parent discipline and the child's moral development. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 5*(1), 45-57. doi: 10.1037/h0024189
- Høglend, P. (1999). Psychotherapy research: New findings and implications for training and practice. *Journal of Psychotherapy Practice and Research, 8*(4), 257-263.
- Howard, K. S., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2009). The role of home-visiting programs in preventing child abuse and neglect. *Future of Children, 19*(2), 119-146. doi: 10.1353/foc.0.0032
- Jack, G. (2000). Ecological influences on parenting and child development. *British Journal of Social Work, 30*(6), 703-720.
- Jack, G. (2005). Assessing the impact of community programmes working with children and families in disadvantaged areas. *Child and Family Social Work, 10*, 293-304.
- Johnson, L. R. (2009). Challenging "best practices" in family literacy and parent education programs: The development and enactment of mothering knowledge among Puerto Rican and Latina mothers in Chicago. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 40*(3), 257-276. doi: 10.1111/j.1548-1492.2009.01044.x

- Johnson, Z., Molloy, B., Scallan, E., Fitzpatrick, P., Rooney, B., Keegan, T., & Byrne, P. (2000). Community mothers programme - Seven year follow-up of a randomized controlled trial of non-professional intervention in parenting. *Journal of Public Health Medicine, 22*(3), 337-342.
- Kane, G. A., Wood, V. A., & Barlow, J. (2007). Parenting programmes: A systematic review and synthesis of qualitative research. *Child: Care, Health and Development, 33*(6), 784-793. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2214.2007.00750.x
- Kelman, H. C., & Warwick, D. P. (1973). Bridging micro and macro approaches to social change: A social-psychological perspective. In G. Zaltman (Ed.), *Processes and phenomena of social change*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Kienhuis, M., Rogers, S., Giallo, R., Matthews, J., & Treyvaud, K. (2010). A proposed model for the impact of parental fatigue on parenting adaptability and child development. *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology, 28*(4), 392-402. doi: 10.1080/02646830903487383
- Lekes, N., Gingras, I., Philippe, F. L., Koestner, R., & Fang, J. (2010). Parental autonomy-support, intrinsic life goals, and well-being among adolescents in China and north America. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 39*(8), 858-869. doi: 10.1007/s10964-009-9451-7
- Lucas, P. J. (2011). Some reflections on the rhetoric of parenting programmes: Evidence, theory, and social policy. *Journal of Family Therapy, 33*(2), 181-198. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6427.2011.00540.x
- Lundahl, B. W., Nimer, J., & Parsons, B. (2006). Preventing child abuse: A meta-analysis of parent training programs. *Research on Social Work Practice, 16*(3), 251-262. doi: 10.1177/1049731505284391

- Luyckx, K., Tildesley, E. A., Soenens, B., Andrews, J. A., Hampson, S. E., Peterson, M., & Duriez, B. (2011). Parenting and trajectories of children's maladaptive behaviors: A 12-year prospective community study. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 40*(3), 468-478. doi: 10.1080/15374416.2011.563470
- Maccoby, E. E., & Martin, J. A. (1983). Socialization in the context of the family: Parent-child interaction. In E. M. Hetherington (Ed.), *Socialization, personality, and social development* (4th ed., Vol. 4, pp. 1-101). New York, NY: Wiley.
- MacMillan, H. L., Wathen, C. N., Barlow, J., Fergusson, D. M., Leventhal, J. M., & Taussig, H. N. (2009). Interventions to prevent child maltreatment and associated impairment. *The Lancet, 373*(9659), 250-266. doi: 10.1016/s0140-6736(08)61708-0
- Mahoney, G., & Kaiser, A. (1999). Parent education in early intervention: A call for a renewed focus. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 19*(3), 131-140.
- Maupin, A. N., Brophy-Herb, H. E., Schiffman, R. F., & Bocknek, E. L. (2010). Low-income parental profiles of coping, resource adequacy, and public assistance receipt: Links to parenting. *Family Relations, 59*(2), 180-194. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3729.2010.00594.x
- McConnell, D., Breitzkreuz, R., & Savage, A. (2011). From financial hardship to child difficulties: Main and moderating effects of perceived social support. *Child: Care, Health and Development, 37*(5), 679-691. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2214.2010.01185.x

- McCurdy, K., & Daro, D. (2001). Parent involvement in family support programs: An integrated theory. *Family Relations, 50*(2), 113-121.
- McLoughlin, C. S. (1982). Procedures and problems in behavioural training for parents. *Perceptual and Motor Skills, 55*, 827-838.
- Melhuish, E., Belsky, J., Anning, A., Ball, M., Barnes, J., Romaniuk, H., & Leyland, A. (2007). Variation in community intervention programmes and consequences for children and families: The example of Sure Start Local Programmes. *Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry, 48*(6), 543-551. doi: 10.1111/j.1469-7610.2007.01705.x
- Melhuish, E., Belsky, J., Leyland, A. H., & Barnes, J. (2008). Effects of fully-established Sure Start Local Programmes on 3-year-old children and their families living in England: A quasi-experimental observational study. *The Lancet, 372*(9650), 1641-1647. doi: 10.1016/s0140-6736(08)61687-6
- Mensah, F. K., & Kiernan, K. E. (2011). Maternal general health and children's cognitive development and behaviour in the early years: Findings from the Millennium Cohort Study. *Child: Care, Health and Development, 37*(1), 44-54. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2214.2010.01150.x
- Milner, J. S. (1994). Assessing physical child abuse risk: The child abuse potential inventory. *Clinical Psychology Review, 14*(6), 547-583. doi: 10.1016/0272-7358(94)90017-5
- Ministry of Education. (2012). *Research report into Māori and non-Māori retention in Incredible Years parent program: Central North region*. Wellington, New Zealand: Author.
- Ministry of Justice. (2009). *Citizens initiated referendum 2009 - Final result*. Wellington, New Zealand: Author. Retrieved from

http://www.electionresults.govt.nz/2009_citizens_referendum/2009_referendum_results.html

Ministry of Social Development. (2011). Green Paper for Vulnerable Children - Why do we need the Green Paper? Retrieved 30 April, 2012, from <http://www.childrensactionplan.govt.nz/home>

Ministry of Social Development. (2012). Are You Ok? Retrieved 1 June, 2012, from <http://www.areyouok.org.nz/>

Mondell, S., & Tyler, F. B. (1981). Parental competence and styles of problem solving/play behavior with children. *Developmental Psychology, 17*(1), 73-78. doi: 10.1037/0012-1649.17.1.73

Moran, P., Ghate, D., & Van der Merwe, A. (2004). *What works in parenting support? A review of the international evidence. DfES Research Report 574*. London, England: Department for Education & Skills.

Newberger, C. M. (1977). *Parental conceptions of children and child rearing: A structural-developmental analysis*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

Nowak, C., & Heinrichs, N. (2008). A comprehensive meta-analysis of Triple P-Positive Parenting Program using hierarchical linear modeling: Effectiveness and moderating variables. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review, 11*, 114-144.

Olson, S. L., Tardif, T. Z., Miller, A., Felt, B., Grabell, A. S., Kessler, D., . . .

Hirabayashi, H. (2011). Inhibitory control and harsh discipline as predictors of externalizing problems in young children: A comparative study of U.S., Chinese, and Japanese preschoolers. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 39*(8), 1163-1175. doi: 10.1007/s10802-011-9531-5

- Orlinsky, D. E., Grawe, K., & Parks, B. K. (1994). Process and outcome in psychotherapy: Noch einmal. In A. E. Bergin & S. L. Garfield (Eds.), *Handbook of psychotherapy and behavior change* (4th ed., pp. 270-376). Oxford, England: Wiley.
- Patterson, G. R., & Forgatch, M. S. (1985). Therapist behavior as a determinant for client noncompliance. A paradox for the behavior modifier. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 53*(6), 846-851. doi: 10.1037/0022-006x.53.6.846
- Point Research. (2009). *SKIP report of findings*. Auckland, New Zealand: Author.
- Powell, D. R. (1996). Teaching parenting and basic skills to parents: What we know. In B. L. Ann & J. E. Lord (Eds.), *Family Literacy: Directions in research & Implications for practice* (pp. 65-71). Darby, PA: Diane.
- Powell, D. R., & Watson Eisenstadt, J. (1988). Informal and formal conversations in parent education groups: An observational study. *Family Relations, 37*(2), 166-170.
- Prelow, H. M., Weaver, S. R., Bowman, M. A., & Swenson, R. R. (2010). Predictors of parenting among economically disadvantaged Latina mothers: Mediating and moderating factors. *Journal of Community Psychology, 38*(7), 858-873. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/jcop.20400>
- Prinz, R. J., Sanders, M. R., Shapiro, C. J., Whitaker, D. J., & Lutzker, J. R. (2009). Population-based prevention of child maltreatment: The U.S. Triple P system population trial. *Prevention Science, 10*(1), 1-12. doi: 10.1007/s11121-009-0123-3
- Prinz, P., Stams, G. J. J. M., Deković, M., Reijntjes, A. H. A., & Belsky, J. (2009). The relations between parents' big five personality factors and parenting: A

- meta-analytic review. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 97(2), 351-362. doi: 10.1037/a0015823
- Prochaska, J. O., & DiClemente, C. C. (1983). Stages and processes of self-change of smoking: Toward an integrative model of change. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 51(3), 390-395. doi: 10.1037/0022-006x.51.3.390
- Prochaska, J. O., & Velicer, W. F. (1997). The transtheoretical model of health behavior change. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 12(1), 38-48.
- Rafferty, Y., & Griffin, K. W. (2010). Parenting behaviours among low-income mothers of preschool age children in the USA: Implications for parenting programmes. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 18(2), 143-157. doi: 10.1080/09669760.2010.494428
- Ranson, K. E., & Urichuk, L. J. (2008). The effect of parent-child attachment relationships on child biopsychosocial outcomes: A review. *Early Child Development and Care*, 178(2), 129-152.
- Reid, M. J., Webster-Stratton, C., & Beauchaine, T. P. (2001). Parent training in Head Start: A comparison of program response among African American, Asian American, Caucasian, and Hispanic mothers. *Prevention Science*, 2(4), 209-227.
- Rose, G. (1992). *The Strategy of Preventive Medicine*. Oxford, England: Oxford University.
- Rosenstock, I. M. (1974). The health belief model and preventive health behavior. *Health Education Monographs*, 2(4), 354-386.
- Rutter, M. (2006). Is Sure Start an effective preventive intervention? *Child & Adolescent Mental Health*, 11(3), 135-141. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-3588.2006.00402.x

- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist, 55*(1), 68-78. doi: 10.1037//0003-066x.55.1.68
- Sanders, M. R. (1999). Triple P-Positive Parenting Program: Towards an empirically validated multilevel parenting and family support strategy for the prevention of behavior and emotional problems in children. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review, 2*(2), 71-90. doi: 10.1023/a:1021843613840
- Sanders, M. R., & Kirby, J. N. (2012). Consumer engagement and the development, evaluation, and dissemination of evidence-based parenting programs. *Behavior Therapy, 43*(2), 236-250. doi: 10.1016/j.beth.2011.01.005
- Sanders, M. R., & Montgomery, D. T. (2000). The mass media and the prevention of child behavior problems: The evaluation of a television series to promote positive outcomes for parents and their children. *Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry & Allied Disciplines, 41*(7), 939-948.
- Sanders, M. R., Ralph, A., Sofronoff, K., Gardiner, P., Thompson, R., Dwyer, S., & Bidwell, K. (2008). Every family: A population approach to reducing behavioral and emotional problems in children making the transition to school. *Journal of Primary Prevention, 29*(3), 197-222. doi: 10.1007/s10935-008-0139-7
- Shaffer, A., Kotchick, B. A., Dorsey, S., & Forehand, R. (2001). The past, present, and future of behavioural parent training: Interventions for child and adolescent problem behaviour. *The Behavior Analyst Today, 2*(2), 91-105.
- Shea, S. E., & Coyne, L. W. (2011). Maternal dysphoric mood, stress, and parenting practices in mothers of head start preschoolers: The role of

- experiential avoidance. *Child and Family Behavior Therapy*, 33(3), 231-247. doi: 10.1080/07317107.2011.596004
- Shulruf, B., O'Loughlin, C., & Tolley, H. (2009). Parenting education and support policies and their consequences in selected OECD countries. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 31(5), 526-532. doi: 10.1016/j.chidyouth.2008.10.010
- Singh, N. N., Lancioni, G. E., Winton, A. S. W., Singh, J., Singh, A. N., Adkins, A. D., & Wahler, R. G. (2010). Training in mindful caregiving transfers to parent-child interactions. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 19(2), 167-174. doi: 10.1007/s10826-009-9267-9
- Slade, A. (2005). Parental reflective functioning: An introduction. *Attachment & Human Development*, 7(3), 269-281. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14616730500245906>
- Slade, A., Grienenberger, J., Bernbach, E., Levy, D., & Locker, A. (2005). Maternal reflective functioning, attachment, and the transmission gap: A preliminary study. *Attachment & Human Development*, 7(3), 283-298. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14616730500245880>
- Stewart-Brown, S. L., & Schrader-McMillan, A. (2011). Parenting for mental health: what does the evidence say we need to do? Report of Workpackage 2 of the DataPrev project. *Health Promotion International*, 26(suppl 1), i10-i28. doi: 10.1093/heapro/dar056
- Thoits, P. A. (1986). Social support as coping assistance. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 54(4), 416-423. doi: 10.1037/0022-006x.54.4.416
- Thoits, P. A. (1995). Stress, coping, and social support processes: Where are we? What next? *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 35(Extra issue: Forty

years of medical sociology: The state of the art and directions for the future), 53-79.

Thornton, S., & Calam, R. (2011). Predicting intention to attend and actual attendance at a universal parent-training programme: A comparison of social cognition models. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, *16*(3), 365-383. doi: 10.1177/1359104510366278

Treyvaud, K., Rogers, S., Matthews, J., & Allen, B. (2010). Maternal factors and experiences associated with observed parenting behavior in mothers attending a residential parenting program. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, *31*(1), 58-70. doi: 10.1002/imhj.20242

University of Otago Children's Issues Centre. (2005). *The discipline and guidance of children: Messages from research*. Wellington, New Zealand: Office of the Children's Commissioner.

Vygotskiê, L. S., & Cole, M. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.

Webster-Stratton, C. (1998). Parent training with low-income families: Promoting parental engagement through a collaborative approach. In J. R. Lutzker (Ed.), *Handbook of Child Abuse Research and Treatment*. New York, NY: Plenum.

Whittaker, J. E. V., Harden, B. J., See, H. M., Meisch, A. D., & Westbrook, T. R. (2011). Family risks and protective factors: Pathways to Early Head Start toddlers' social-emotional functioning. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *26*(1), 74-86. doi: 10.1016/j.ecresq.2010.04.007

- Woodworth, S., Belsky, J., & Crnic, K. (1996). The determinants of fathering during the child's second and third years of life: A developmental analysis. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 58*(3), 679-692.
- Woolfson, L. M., Durkin, K., & King, J. (2010). Changing cognitions in parents of two-year-olds attending Scottish Sure Start centres. *International Journal of Early Years Education, 18*(1), 3-26. doi: 10.1080/09669761003661261
- Yates, T. M., Obradović, J., & Egeland, B. (2010). Transactional relations across contextual strain, parenting quality, and early childhood regulation and adaptation in a high-risk sample. *Development and Psychopathology, 22*(3), 539-555. doi: 10.1017/s095457941000026x
- Zakeri, H., Jowkar, B., & Razmjooe, M. (2010). Parenting styles and resilience. *Procedia Social and Behavioural Sciences, 5*(2010), 1067-1070.
- Zepeda, M., & Morales, A. (2001). Supporting parents through parent education. In N. Halfon, E. Shulman & M. Hochstein (Eds.), *Building community systems for young children*. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Integration of Models of Change

I amalgamated common principles of self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), Prochaska's transtheoretical model of change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983; Prochaska & Velicer, 1997), the health belief model (Rosenstock, 1974), Orlinsky and Grawe's psychotherapeutic change factors (Gassmann & Grawe, 2006; Grawe, 1997; Orlinsky et al., 1994), and Kelman and Warwick's model of social change (Kelman & Warwick, 1973), to give three overarching components of human change: intrinsic motivation, attention and reflection, and evidence. Presented here is the rationale for the choice of these principles.

Intrinsic motivation, as we have seen in self-determination theory, can be theorised as being a product of an individual feeling socially secure, autonomous, and competent (Ryan & Deci, 2000). These three ingredients are also mentioned in a number of other change models.

A feeling of relatedness involves the perception of a secure relational bond. This is also evident in Prochaska's *helping relationships*: caring, trust, openness, acceptance, support. A relationship based on active role investment, interactive coordination, communication and positive affective attitude was found to be the most highly supported factor in therapeutic change (Orlinsky et al., 1994). Kelman and Warwick's (1973) model is based around the importance of the influence of feeling socially secure throughout the change, though they

define no necessary relationship between influencer and influencee bar mutual respect.

The motivational factor of autonomy is described in Prochaska and Velicer's (1997) *self-liberation* mechanism of change, where an individual is given a range of three or more options in order to maximise his motivation. Autonomy support is also valued in Kelman and Warwick's model (1973), with the statement that threats to independence are likely to lead to resistance to influence. This prediction has much research support in psychotherapy (Høglend, 1999; Patterson & Forgatch, 1985) and in parent training (Chamberlain, Patterson, & Reid, 1984).

The third of self-determination theory's basic motivational needs is that of perceived competence. This is discussed in Prochaska's theory as self-efficacy: a variable that moderates outcomes (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997), and is repeated in this manner in Rosenstock's health belief model (1974). Competence appears important in Grawe's (1997) change factor of *resource activation*: activating the client's motivational readiness for change by ensuring the client experiences themselves in terms of their abilities. Kelman and Warwick (1973) refer to the importance of ensuring the impression of the competence and status of the influencee is never compromised, as this will lead to defensiveness and the inhibition of change.

My second category of change mechanisms is that of attention and reflection. The integration of these change theories implies that both attention to a current functional system and reflection on the suitability of that system are required for change to occur. A person's attention may be drawn to a situation

and/or reflection prompted by an influencer, though this is not essential.

Reflection assesses whether the current system of efforts to achieve their goals are succeeding in the most efficient and value-adherent way.

Attention to the referent behaviour and related system are important in many of the models. Attention may be attracted and heightened by the provision of evidence that the behaviour change is relevant to their beliefs and of sufficient importance to warrant attention. This is clearly noted in Prochaska's first mechanism of change: consciousness-raising: to raise awareness of the causes, consequences and potential solutions to a (problem) behaviour (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). Grawe also mentions attention, in his change mechanism of problem actuation (1997), as do Kelman and Warwick (1973) in their technique of 'unfreezing' existing patterns by providing information that highlights discrepancies in their current systems.

Reflection is found in Prochaska's change mechanisms (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997) as self- and environmental re-evaluations. These are an influencee's re-evaluations of current behaviours in terms of personal and environmental values and goals. Orlinsky, Grawe and Parks' (1994) finding that therapeutic operations such as experiential confrontation, interpretation and paradoxical intention are highly correlated with client outcomes lead to Grawe's (Grawe, 1997) change mechanism *clarification of meaning*. Kelman and Warwick (1973) do not explicitly mention reflection as a change mechanism, rather implying that reflection will occur naturally once discrepant information is presented, under conducive circumstances.

The third set of change mechanisms is related to evidence: how logical and easy change appears to be. Common factors are evaluating the pros and cons of each behaviour in achieving the influencee's goals, highlighting the disadvantages of the current behaviour and benefits of the new behaviour when necessary, and reducing internal and external barriers to change.

The different models discuss ensuring the prepotency of the new behaviour in different ways. Prochaska and Velicer (1997) discuss providing evidence for the change in their mechanisms, through the influential strategies in consciousness-raising, dramatic relief, self-re-evaluation and environmental re-evaluation, while recognising that the decisional balance will ultimately be the main effecter. The health belief model also discusses the balance of perceived pros and cons, without providing strategies for modifying these. Grawe (1997) does not discuss any specific strategy in this area, likely reflecting the psychotherapeutic domain of exploration rather than persuasion. Kelman and Warwick (1973) discuss enhancing appreciation for the relevance of the new behaviour through clearly defining it to the influencee. The strategies may be the same types used in order to draw attention to the topic, but their purpose is now to convince rather than attract attention. In vivo this may be just one action or they may be separate. While these mechanisms display different levels of intent to persuade, they cover the same underlying factor: whether the new behaviour is perceived by the influencee as more appropriate for meeting their goals.

Methods of reducing barriers to change are suggested by Prochaska and Velicer (1997): counter-conditioning provides a specific technique for reducing personal barriers to change, and social liberation and stimulus control involve

modifying the external world to do so. Rosenstock's (1974) health belief model acknowledges an important variable to be that of perceived disadvantages to the new behaviour. Grawe's (1997) mechanism of mastery/coping reduces barriers by proving success throughout, as do Kelman and Warwick's (1973) change strategies of going slowly and tackling small issues first. They provide other methods of minimising the threat of change, through reducing salience of the source of resistance and assuring the continuance of social support following change. This summary thus demonstrates the logic behind the three elements of human change used in the Introduction.

Appendix B: The 'Mum' Booklet (Study 1)

See pocket at back of book.

Appendix C: Survey (Study 1)

PLEASE TELL US WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT SKIP!

Hi there! My name's Lucia King, and I'm a Masters student at Massey University here in Wellington. SKIP is a group designed to support families, with booklets and other resources. I want to find out what parents and caregivers think about the SKIP resources. I also want to know what people actually DO with them - do you look at them, keep them, or just throw them away?

If you don't want to take part, or you can't for any reason, you don't have to, but if you can it would be really useful to us. Anything you do put down will help us know the value of these resources in the community.

It's all anonymous - I don't need to know who you are! Answering is pretty easy, just circle **all** the answers that are right for you. Where there's a line just write what you think. Then send this away in the **freepost** envelope - no need for a stamp 😊

So that's me, now your turn! Tell me a bit about yourself 😊

1. To the kids I look after I am a: mum, dad, step-mum, step-dad, aunty, uncle, grandma, grandpa, something else (_____)

2. I have/look after ____ kids (that's anyone under 16!)

3. I am ____ years old (or forget it sticky beak, I don't want to say!)

4. We're all New Zealanders, but in our family we also think of ourselves as:

Māori European/ Pākehā Pacific Asian Something else Don't want to say

5. When I went to The Warehouse I was given (remember to circle all that apply)

The Mum booklet



a pamphlet



a balloon



a magnet



a badge



6. When I got the SKIP resources I:

looked at them for a while

looked at them quickly

didn't look at them at all

7. I also (circle all that apply):

talked about them
with someone else

gave them to
someone else

kept them to look
at again

lost them

threw them away

8. I showed them to or talked about them with my: spouse/partner, mum/dad, aunty/uncle, grandma/grandpa, brother/sister, son/daughter, children, friend, workmate, church member, neighbour, parent's group member, Plunket or other organisation person, someone else _____, noone

9. I felt that the resources were appropriate for my culture and beliefs:

yes

mostly

partly

mostly not

no

10. The Mum booklet made me think or feel _____

11. I: loved it liked it didn't mind it disliked it hated it

12. My favourite picture or quote was _____ because _____

13. The other SKIP resources (balloon, fridge magnet, badge, other pamphlet) made me think or feel _____

14. I: loved them liked them didn't mind them disliked them hated them

15. My favourite thing about the resources was _____ because _____

Every day is different, but overall:

16. I feel stressed when I'm looking after/parenting children:

hardly ever occasionally sometimes quite a lot nearly always

17. I talk to other people about my parenting ideas and problems:

all the time quite a lot sometimes occasionally hardly ever

18. I think about the kind of parent I want to be:

all the time quite a lot sometimes occasionally hardly ever

19. I feel confident about parenting:

all the time quite a lot sometimes occasionally hardly ever

Now that I've looked at the SKIP resources..

20. I think parenting/looking after children is:

not as stressful as I did before the same as before more stressful than I thought before

21. I think I'll talk to other people about my parenting ideas and problems:

more than before the same less than before

22. I'm going to think about the kind of parent I want to be:

more than before the same less than before

23. I now feel confident about parenting:

more than before the same less than before

24. Before I got these SKIP resources at The Warehouse I had seen/heard of them:

lots! a few times once or twice I'm not sure never

25. Now that I've seen them I:

want to see more! don't mind if I see more don't want to see more

(you can see or order more at www.skip.org.nz/resources or by calling 04 916 3385)

Thank you very much for doing this survey. I really appreciate you taking the time to do it, and I hope you enjoyed the chocolate: just a token of my appreciation.

Kia ora, best wishes to you and your family

Lucia

Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet (Study 2)

Parents' perceptions of acceptability and efficacy of parenting workshops

INFORMATION SHEET

Hi there

My name is Lucia King, and I'm a Masters student of psychology at Massey University. For my thesis project I am looking at what parents like you get from these workshops: what you think of them and what you get out of them.

I would like to invite you to take part in my research. It will involve filling in a questionnaire before and after the course, and having a ten minute phone conversation with myself in the day or two after each session. I will need to know your name and a contact number for you, in order to do the research, but after I've finished I will ensure these are destroyed. When the research is published I will change your name to ensure privacy. All information you give me will be kept in a locked room for the duration of the project, and destroyed once the project is finalised.

Each phone conversation will be recorded, and the conversation transcribed (written down). At any point during the conversation you may ask for the recording to be turned off. At the end of the course you can choose to have a copy of the transcripts of your conversations, and you may change or delete anything you want. When you are happy with your answers you may return them to me, and this version will be used.

After the project is over you are welcome to have a summary of the findings sent to you. In addition if you would like to discuss it I am very happy to have a chat with you or organise a group session to talk about it with the other parents from your group. The final project report (after names and identifying features have been changed) will be shared with your facilitator, the organisation running the group and anybody else who is interested. It may be published in an academic journal, and it will be available in the Massey University library.

To thank you for the knowledge and time you give me I would like to give you a small token of appreciation: a ten dollar voucher for a supermarket of your choice.

Please be aware: I don't expect you to prepare your answers for the phone conversations. Just saying what you think of at the time is exactly what I need. If you don't know what you think about something you can just say you don't know - that's a good answer! Also if you don't feel comfortable answering a question for any reason then just say you'd rather not answer it - I want you to feel comfortable at all times. However, you need to know that if anything that you say makes me seriously concerned for the safety of yourself or others I will need to share this with your facilitator, who will talk with you about it and do anything else they feel is necessary.

If you have any questions about the project you can contact me or either of my supervisors, on the contacts listed on the next page. You are also welcome to discuss it with your facilitator, or with anybody else.

Your Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you do decide to participate, you have the right to:

- *decline to answer any particular question;*
- *withdraw from the study at any time;*
- *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.*
- *ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.*

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researchers named below are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researchers, please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 350 5249, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz

Contacts for the researcher and supervisors:

*Lucia King
021 895 919
luciaking@gmail.com*

*Professor Ian Evans
04 801 5799 extn 62125
i.m.evans@massey.ac.nz*

*Doctor Ruth Gammon
04 801 5799 extn 62029
r.gammon@massey.ac.nz*

Appendix E: Participant Consent Form (Study 2)

Parents perceptions of acceptability and efficacy of SKIP positive parenting workshops

PARTICIPANT 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 agree / do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

I wish / do not wish to have my transcripts (written copies of the conversations) returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature:

Date:

.....

**Full Name -
printed**

Contact numbers:

**Best days/times
to phone:**

.....

.....

.....

Appendix F: Transcript Release Authority (Study 2)

Parents perceptions of acceptability and efficacy of SKIP positive parenting workshops

AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview(s) conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature:

Date:

.....

**Full Name -
printed**

.....

Appendix G: Interview Schedule (Study 2)

INITIAL INTERVIEW

How long have you been coming? (Young parents only)

How often do you come? Pretty much every week, most weeks, half the time, once a month, or just occasionally? (Young parents only)

Where did you hear about this group?

What were your original reasons for coming - what did you hope to get out of it?

What did you expect when you first decided to come to the group? Was there anything you particularly wanted or didn't want it to be?

How did you feel after the first session you went to? Did you feel any of the things you wanted or didn't want were there?

Since you've been coming to the group what do you think you've got out of it?

What do you think are the good things about the group (in general) and what are the not-so-good?

What do you think of the facilitators of the group, what do you think of them and the way they work with you guys?

What do you think of the other parents in the group: how comfortable do you feel with them and the group as a whole?

WEEKLY QUESTIONS:

Introduction:

How are you going?

Did you go to the group this week?

How was it? What did you like about it and what did you not like so much?

On a scale of 1 - 5, 5 being the best, how would you rate it? On how satisfied with it you were, did you come home and go 'that was awesome, glad I went' or 'meh, wish I'd done something else instead'?

What was the point in the last session where you felt most involved, or that you personally liked the best?

Were there any points that you felt didn't work so well, that you personally didn't enjoy?

How did the facilitators affect your enjoyment of Monday's session? How did what they did in that group affect it?

How about how the other parents were - how did what they did affect your enjoyment of the group?

Is change happening?

Have you found yourself thinking about anything since the group, has anything been running through your mind?

Or: Did any interesting discussions happen? Did anything interesting come up?

Or: What's something you feel like you've come away with?

(If yes:) Why is the change happening?

How did these things come up? What happened and what were your reactions to them?

(E.g.: Then what happened? How did you feel at that point? Did this relate to anything else in your life? Did it remind you of other things/intentions? How do you feel now that you've had a think and processed it a bit?)

Ok, so you've been thinking about <new idea> a bit. Have you thought about maybe doing anything differently now?

How did the facilitators contribute to this thinking?

How did the members of the group, or the group as a whole, contribute to this?

(If logical:) How far does the change progress?

Have you made any changes in the way you behave with your family or friends since the group / you've been thinking differently? How easy or difficult have you found this? What have the results been?

How much do you feel like this new behaviour is 'part of you'? Is it natural or are you still 'trying' at it?

Or if there is no change:

Why do you think that is?

Did you feel like the discussion topics were relevant to you or your family? Why, or why not?

FINAL INTERVIEW:

When you initially signed up for the group you said you expected and said you hoped it would be ... and didn't want it to be How did it track compared to this?

You said the reasons you first signed up were Do you think you got that out of the group? Are there other things you got out of it too?

How does it feel to be ending it? (Fathers only)

How do you feel about the facilitators and how they worked with the group. Did this change at all as the group progressed?

How do you feel about the other parents in the group, or the group as a whole? Did this change over the course of the group?

What do you think were the good things about this group?

What do you think didn't work so well, or could have been done better, or what do you wish had been included but wasn't?

How would you describe the group, to a friend who was interested in taking part?

Do you think this experience coming to the group has changed the way you think about anything? Anything, big or small.

Do you think there are any changes you have or will make since going to the group? Has it inspired you to do more of anything, or less of anything? Anything, big or small.

Ok, now I'm going to go through the questions on the questionnaire with you. I know you've answered them, but I just get more depth when perceptions are better described verbally than on a scale:

(Read through questions from respective pre-/post- questionnaires)

Has your culture and ethnicity changed.. ok I'm joking, that's all!

Did you have any questions or anything you wanted to say?

When I've collated and analysed the data, would you like me to send you a copy? Email/post etc. I'm happy to organise a group or individual meeting if you want to discuss it at that time ☺

Thank you VERY much for taking part in my study, it's been great working with you and your time and thoughts have been very much appreciated. Thank you.

FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE NO LONGER COMING:

- What are the reasons that you stopped coming? Could be to do with the course or yourself
- Do you feel like the group was relevant to you?
- Did you enjoy it?
- Would you recommend it to someone else in your position?

- What did you like about it
- What did you not really like about it?
- What were your reasons for attending? What did you hope to get out of the course before you came?
- Do you feel like this was met? To what degree? What were you hoping for that you did not get?
- Do you feel like you got anything else out of the course? What?
- What would you say to others thinking about taking part in the group? What would you say the group is about?

Appendix H: Pre-/Post Test (Study 2, Fathers)

QUESTIONNAIRE

Hi there ☺ Please fill this in with how you think and feel most of the time. Please be honest - there are no right or wrong answers! Everyone is different. For most of the questions you just need to circle the answer that suits you best.

1. I am aware of different parenting styles / different ways of parenting, and what they mean for children

not at all a little some quite a bit a lot

2. I know a range of strategies / ways to deal with challenging parenting situations

not at all a little some quite a bit a lot

3. I think about and choose the way I parent

not at all a little some quite a bit a lot

4. I know how to deal with stress and anger within myself

not at all a little some quite a bit a lot

5. I know what parenting behaviours children need from adults in order to grow up happy and healthy

not at all a little some quite a bit a lot

6. I talk to other people (not just my partner) about parenting

not at all a little some quite a bit a lot

7. I *feel comfortable* talking to other people (not just my partner) about parenting

not at all a little some quite a bit a lot

8. I feel confident as a parent

not at all a little some quite a bit a lot

10. I am aged:

15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39
40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60+

11. My culture and ethnicity is: _____
(can be more than one, e.g. NZ European and Māori)

12. I am a mother / father to ___ child(ren)

13. My first name is _____

Thank you very much for answering this questionnaire. Have a great day ☺

Lucia

10. I feel confident as a person

not at all a little some quite a bit a lot

11. I am aware of other organisations that can support me in different ways

not at all a little some quite a bit a lot

12. I am aged:

15-16 17-18 19-20 21-22 23-24

25-26 27-28 29-30 31-32 33+

13. My culture and ethnicity is: _____
(can be more than one, e.g. NZ European and Māori)

14. I am a mum/dad to ___ child(ren) aged _____

15. My first name is _____

Thank you very much for answering this questionnaire. Have a great day ☺

Lucia