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TRUANCY

IN

OTARA

SOUTH AUCKLAND

Causes and Interventions

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MASSEY UNIVERSITY

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A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Educational Administration
Policy Studies in Education Department
Massey University
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CANDIDATE'S STATEMENT

I certify that the thesis entitled Truancy in Otara South Auckland and submitted as part of the degree of Master of Educational Administration is the result of my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis (or any part of the same) has not been submitted for any other degree to any other university or institution.

Signed: 

Date: *20th February 1998.*

ABSTRACT

This study was based upon the researchers involvement with a truancy programme operating in Otara South Auckland. It was generally considered by the community of Otara, that the issue of truancy appeared to be getting worse. Unfortunately, there was no solid evidence and data to substantiate the community's perspective.

More than just a statistic gathering exercise, this study sought to gain an understanding of the causes for truancy. There were stories to be told by truanting students and it was through their experiences that themes would emerge for further study and consideration. Beyond the causes were the interventions to such behaviour. The effectiveness of the strategies implemented to intervene this behaviour was particularly important to this study if future truanting behaviour was to be responded to by students, parents, teachers, schools, community and volunteer groups, and government agencies.

The literature from international and local sources provided information of other studies on truancy. Comparisons were able to be made with other interventions of previous research work on truancy and the interventions designed for the ten participants in this study. It is clear from the increasing literature on this subject that truancy is a global issue that all communities and educational institutions need to address.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

If you're not going to school, you're not going anywhere.
(Ministry of Education poster, 1996)

The motivation for this study on truancy in Otara, South Auckland, New Zealand arose from the researcher's position as Director of Te Puke o Tara Community Centre. One of the responsibilities of the Director is to co-ordinate the Otara Truancy Programme.

The researcher, a Maori teacher, wanted to analyse the causes of truancy.

He anticipated that by identifying the causes of truanting in Otara he could assist students, teachers and parents with developing successful intervention strategies. This study could also provide the opportunity to understand the impact that the many social issues in Otara, might have on the causes of truancy.

The researcher considered that by analysing successful interventions through case studies, he would gain an understanding of some of the strategies used.

1.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This research aims to examine the issue of truancy from within a community, by one of its own: the researcher.

My tacit knowledge of this community is based upon personal experience. I came to Otara in 1969 with my family from a rural settlement. I have therefore experienced and observed many of the extensive physical and social changes in the community between then and now.

Court describes the "insider" as placing:

... an emphasis on the importance of including personal experience and of acknowledging the subjectivity ... of myself as the researcher.
(Court 1989:55)

The first aim of this research was to consider the causes of truant behaviour in Otara and then provide an analysis of how these causes could be remedied or mitigated. This was to be achieved through case studies of students who had experienced success with interventions to their behaviour. Key elements such as finances in the home, parenting skills, school resources, school funding, school programmes, peer pressure, community pressures or a blend of any number of these were considered.

The second step for the researcher was to analyse the interventions already implemented by the students, families and their schools. The material from the case studies could be tested by working with new truants, with the object being to identify basic strategies and processes by which interventions could be initiated.

An additional objective of this study was to generate assistance for the Otara Truancy Programme which had been established to provide a service that met the needs of the community and was consistent with government's response to truancy. The programme remains a largely community based operation and the writer believes this to be one of its strengths.

Semi-structured interviews were used to provide an in-depth study of the experiences of ten students who had been part of successful and effective interventions in their truant behaviour.

1.2 RESEARCH ISSUES

The first issue was to find ways of gaining a clear understanding of the causes of truancy for this study. This was particularly difficult, when there was a mistrust of research by people in a much studied community. Otara, because of the focus that has been given to its many social problems, is regarded by its residents as the most over-surveyed, over researched community in this country. In the twelve months prior to this study beginning, the following five studies in Otara were completed by government agencies: the Otara Health Project, the Housing Rent Review Study, Transit New Zealand's traffic safety audit on two major intersections, Manukau City Council's feasibility studies of the recreational and leisure activities of the community and

the A.I.M.H.I. Project by the Ministry of Education, which was reviewing decile one schools in South Auckland. (see chapter three).

This proposed study was initially perceived by some of the parents as a further imposition on the lives of Otara people. It could have been unnerving for a researcher to arrive on the doorstep of Otara people, wanting them to talk about their children and asking for their permission to interview their children as well. Fortunately, the positive community profile of the writer, allayed most Maori parents' anxiety and concerns, but not before a few parents (case studies one, two and four), commented on what to them was another "bloody" research on "bloody" Otara. However, the gathering of research data through interviews was considered by the researcher to be appropriate for this study. Bishop discusses the value of conducting a narrative inquiry in these instances as it addresses Maori concerns about research because:

... storytelling allows the research participants to select, recollect and reflect on stories within their own cultural context and language (Bishop 1996:24).

This empowerment of the participants, parents or students, meant that they were in control of their own contributions. The parents appreciated the opportunity to discuss issues relating to their children, with a person they respected and trusted.

The second issue was the tacit knowledge brought by the researcher to the project, which ensured a greater degree of empathy with the community. As the researcher, I had the benefit of having lived in this community for over thirty years. I had an "insiders" appreciation of educational needs of the community, having attended local schools and returned to teach in Otara.

My involvement with local sports clubs, through coaching and administration meant I had contact with a cross-section in the community. I had also spent my younger adult years forming political ideologies with Whakahou, a youth group whose focus was on Maori development through education and health initiatives.

Through my membership of a local Ratana Church¹ I was regularly in the midst of my elders and church leaders. They had a significant effect on my cultural beliefs and values. It was through their eyes that I saw the issues in the community. I had also been a regular patron of the local tavern, which allowed me to have contact with yet another part of the community. Also through my directorship of the Community

¹ A Christian based faith founded in 1928 by Maori leader, T.W.Ratana. He promoted the view that Maori people must embrace the values of Christianity and pursue the principles contained in the Treaty of Waitangi, in order that they may face the challenges ahead. (The Treaty of Waitangi signed in 1840, assisted in the colonisation of New Zealand. Described as the founding document of this country, it promised protection for Maori, their cultural heritage and land ownership. It also facilitated land acquisition for European settlers.)

Centre, I have had the opportunity to meet and work with people from the wider community.

The third issue was the necessity to 'keep faith' in regard to the participants' narratives. The researcher's ability to relate to Maori and Pacific Island students came about naturally. Since he was a Maori himself, he was conscious that these students would be immediately comfortable with him and he wanted to respond to their faith and trust.

Reid *et al*, develops Habermas' (1971) concept of "*community of ethics*", the solution is:

... to expand rationality to include a practical, culturally determined discourse that negotiates and integrates rational facts, values, cultural traditions, aspirations and the commitments of the individuals. (Reid *et al* 1995:132)

The cultural values of the participants determined, as Reid (op cit) describes, the appropriate methods in which initial contact was made with the students and their families and the acknowledgement that their stories were recollections of the participants' real experiences. The importance of capturing the stories of the participants as accurately as possible became part of the challenge for this study. These people's lives were filled with experiences which Pakeha² and

² Pakeha, a Maori word given for the European settlers who came to New Zealand in the early 18th century.

middle-class Maori/Polynesian New Zealanders, might struggle to accept as existing in this country.

The participants' stories and narratives provided the credibility for this study and it was the researcher's professional responsibility to ensure that their integrity was retained.

1.3 RATIONALE

The starting point for the research emerged from the Otago Truancy Programme, (which is described later in this chapter). This programme is a result of negotiations in 1994, between the Ministry of Education and the New Zealand Maori Wardens³. This partnership was in recognition of the voluntary work that was being done by the Maori Wardens in three areas of New Zealand: Whangarei, Hastings/Napier, Rotorua and Christchurch. The Otago Community developed a greater involvement than others by including more than just the Maori Wardens. In this way the issue of truancy in the community could be better addressed by including with Maori and Pacific Island other students who were also truanting.

³ This is a formally constituted organisation that is guided by legislation to assist in the development and progress of Maori. They have in the past been advocates to the government for issues to do with Maori health, housing and education.

Following a community meeting in August 1994, a committee was established to manage the truancy programme. It consisted of a representative of the Otara Principals' Association, Community Police, Ministry of Social Welfare officers from Youth Justice and Children and Young Persons Service, Safer Community Council Staff and Otara Wardens who were Maori, Samoa, Cook Island, Tonga and Niue.

The name M.O.K.O. is an acronym for Mauri Ora Ki Otara, *the life-force of the Otara community*. Furthermore, "moko" is abbreviated from the word mokopuna which means grandchild and the word "moko" on its own is given to the ornately tattooed faces and chins of the Maori illustrating the wearers' ancestry, genealogy and tribal boundaries. This makes the name M.O.K.O. particularly relevant to the New Zealand setting.

M.O.K.O. began operating in January of 1995. In the first year there were five Truancy Officers representing the five major ethnic groups of the community. The composition of the group was decided by the management committee as they sought to ensure that there was adequate representation of these groupings. Students were referred to this programme either by their schools, or by other agencies. The officers' brief was to immediately make urgent contact with either the student or their parent/guardian. Schools were to be contacted within 24 hours of receiving the referral and a daily progress report was forwarded until the student returned.

James (1995) conducted an independent review of the M.O.K.O. Truancy Programme. It was a requirement of the Central Government funding agency, the Safer Community Council. It was acknowledged as being vital for the success of M.O.K.O. that there was the need for the continued development of community networks where volunteer organisations and leaders of different ethnic groups could be called upon to assist.

Table 1

| M.O.K.O. REFERRALS 1995 | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| Ethnicity | Male | Female | Total |
| Maori | 196 | 66 | 242 |
| Samoa | 75 | 40 | 115 |
| Cook Island | 42 | 22 | 64 |
| Tonga | 13 | 9 | 22 |
| Niue | 9 | 4 | 13 |
| Other | 3 | 3 | 6 |

The number of students referred from each school level was:

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| Primary School | 60 |
| Intermediate School | 167 |
| Secondary School | 289 |

(Source: James (1995:44))

Table one displays the ethnic⁴ and gender groupings and the grouping per school level. These figures include those students referred to M.O.K.O. and do not include those absent/truant students that the schools chose to follow-up themselves.

The official records of the M.O.K.O. Truancy Programme greatly assisted in the identification of the participants for the case studies in this research. It became clear that there was a high number of secondary students in particular who were truanting.

For example, the M.O.K.O. records for the beginning of each school year, 1995 and 1996, show that there were approximately 60 students who had not arrived at one of the secondary schools. There were also lists of students who had not arrived at the other secondary school, the two Intermediate Schools and one Middle School. Therefore the participants for the study were selected on the basis of providing a cross-section of those students who are enrolled at Otara schools. Prior to this study the researcher assumed that the greatest number of students truanting were Maori and this was supported in the M.O.K.O. files.

The rationale for this selection was to assist the understanding of the causes of truancy by involving a mix of age, gender and ethnicity. While it was believed that there were many secondary school truants,

⁴ The listed ethnic names of Samoa, Tonga and Niue are recorded in this way as an acknowledgement of their identity. The anticipated names of Samoan, Tongan and Niuean are viewed as a comprise by many people of those ethnic groups that I work with.

it was felt that there was a need to develop a complete picture of truancy by including students from the primary, intermediate and the secondary sectors.

This view was supported by the principal's representative on the management committee who shared his opinion that there was a need for early identification of truant behaviour. He further stated that patterns of school attendance began from when the students first started school at the age of five years, as was evident in the student attendance records at his school.

This was considered as being significant enough to include the younger aged participants in this study.

1.4 OUTLINE OF THESIS

This report consists of seven chapters.

The second chapter provides the context for the research. This is necessary because of the unique ethnic, socio-economic, political and cultural dynamics of the community studied here.

The literature review in chapter three critiques both the New Zealand and international literature. It analyses the causes of truancy both here and overseas and examines interventions used in different educational systems. This is written from the perspective of a

participant observer: a resident, teacher and city councillor living in the area.

Chapter four outlines the methodology which is a case study approach. It sets out the questions for interviews and describes the rationale used to select participants. This chapter also includes a description of the methods used to analyse the collated data and how the key themes emerged. The samples introduce the case study's participants and the intervention strategy used for each. These are discussed further in the following chapter.

Chapter five examines the interview data, both that from before and after truancy interventions. First the causes are described then the interventions are listed followed by the effect of the interventions in the lives of the students. Key themes and sub-categories are identified for the frequency in which they occur and their impact upon the issue of truancy. These categories are discussed under sub-headings.

Chapter six analyses firstly the key themes that have emerged from chapter five and secondly it evaluates the role of the participants and key agencies identified in the case studies in relation to the development of intervention strategies.

The recommendations on how to respond to truancy are discussed in Chapter seven. Implications for the students, their families, the schools they attend, the volunteer groups in their community and government agencies are considered. Ideas for further study are also included at the end of the formal text.

1.4 CONCLUSION

In 1994 two old school friends Larry Vaetoe and Soni Nemani visited me at Te Puke o Tara Community Centre, where I am the director. We reminisced about our school days at Hillary College. Our conversation took us back to when we were growing up in Otara.

It was a time when Otara was ours and we proudly called it home. There was a community spirit in Otara that we all recalled as being special. For example, there existed a type of shared responsibility of the children. It seemed to us that a parental code of support had been committed to, by those older than 18 years of age. This shared parenting was a strong feature of that time.

Another feature, was that everyone went to school. Everyone. You were either sick or at school. We enjoyed going to school. We couldn't think of reasons not to go to school. Even those students who were struggling with their school work, never missed a day. The idea of being truant was furthest from our minds.

The teachers were great. I can recall that they taught with passion and most were committed professionals who went about their busy days quite focused with a friendly smile on their faces.

This is not to say that today's teachers do not have the same ability and quality of character. Because I believe they do!

There was also the Principal Mr Garfield Johnson. As a teacher, I consider him to have had an important influence upon my professional

career. He was years ahead of his time as far as understanding the emerging culture of urban Maori.

I recall my fourth form year, (year 10), at Hillary College when I was in a class of 32 students, all Maori. The following year I was one of only 11 students that returned to school. Then in the sixth form there were only two of us left. What happened to the others? I knew that most had left school to full employment but I wondered how were they coping now that employment opportunities for unskilled people were very limited.

I shared my concerns with Larry and Soni about the current student population who view school as an option as opposed to doing nothing and a few students I believed, felt that doing nothing was a better option. In my mind I contemplated a connection between these students and those of my era, who left school in the mid 1970's. I wondered if those who left school with little or no qualifications, had unconsciously set in motion a downward spiral for the educational vision of others.

Although there are probably other factors which contributed to the alarming statistics of Maori and Pacific Island students who left school with little or no qualifications.

This year, 1997, many people that I went to school with at Bairds Intermediate and Hillary College celebrated their fortieth birthdays. It wasn't difficult to drag myself along to see many of these long standing friends. I was incredibly curious as to how they had "got on in life", after leaving school. There were comments about how well some had progressed in their various vocations.

A few had become successful business people and many were in mortgage free homes, which to this group of people was an indication of success because most of us at some time in our Otara experience lived in state houses. A few others had recently become grandparents and this reminded me that they had started their families earlier than most. Importantly though, everyone I spoke to at these gatherings, really enjoyed going to school. For a particularly small group though, they only recalled the camaraderie and friendship amongst students; school as an educational institution, was not what they remembered best at all.

I have talked with other former pupils of Hillary College who were there after I had left and we discussed their recollections of attending school. All shared a positive view of attending school and it was further confirmed for me through discussions with the younger members in my own family, that school was important to them too. In this way, I had covered the 1970's and much of the 1980's, as periods of time in this community when school was "the place to be".

One day in my office, I sat listening to two grandparents anxious that their mokopuna (*grandchild*) was not going to school. Their own children all attended the local schools and from what I knew, the family home was an extremely stable environment. So what happened? Finding the grandchild and returning her to school was easy, but how did we plan to keep her interested in going to school?

Unfortunately this was not an isolated case because in this community, in my town, there were many, many just like her.

I can't help thinking that for the last decade a combination of things took place over various periods of time, that changed the view of school for the last few generations of Otara youth and their parents. The quite high truancy levels that are a feature of the community's problems today was therefore relatively new.

This study was an opportunity to try to understand the truanting behaviour in Otara and to develop some options for students, parents and teachers to consider. This research was a journey which provided the researcher with the opportunity to share in the lives of the participants. It was, for the researcher, particularly rewarding.

The complexity of the lives of some students gave the researcher an insight into the world in which they live. Because of this the researcher felt privileged during the study. He was determined to share those experiences through this study. The responses by the students', their families, participating government agencies, the schools which the students attended and the voluntary community groups in each Case Study, provided the extremely valuable core information that was available for analysis.

It was the researcher's view that the numbers of referrals to M.O.K.O. were of great significance to the future of the community. The future of the community was considered to be in serious trouble if the truancy situation was not arrested. His view before this research is that

truancy is both a learned behaviour and a behaviour that is a reaction to a host of negative elements within a student's life.

This study illustrates emergent themes which impact on truants and their families' lives.

2.0 CONTEXT

There is nowhere else in New Zealand like South Auckland, it has a fascinating mixture of races and cultures, which can in turn be exciting or depressing, warm or unforgiving, loving or violent.

Gifford, Phil (August 1997) New Zealand Sunday Star Times - Section C.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will outline the history of the Otara Community. It is important in the New Zealand context to understand this history as it relates to the Maori urban phenomena. In the view of the researcher key factors in issues such as truancy are derived from the social problems of indigenous people dispossessed from their ancestral lands and who reside some distance from the support of a hierarchical leadership provided by elders.

The local Maori chief for this area was OTara Te Irirangi. Otara's tribes were the Ngati Paoa and the Ngai Tai. According to the oral history of the Waikato people, Otara's forefathers came to New Zealand on the Tainui canoe from the Pacific Islands around 450 A.D. The land was rich with volcanic soil and suited agriculture. It was described as the food basket of Auckland. Its highest peak was the village site where Otara and his people lived.

When the early Pakeha settlers acquired some land in the 1850's, stone walls were constructed around the large gardens and a grand

home was built on the north facing side of where the village was once located.

Hampton Park, as it came to be known was important in the settling of this area by the early pioneers. The Treaty of Waitangi⁵ was said to have been brought to this house by the northern chief Kawiti who was gathering signatures from other tribal areas, who were not represented at the original date of signing.

The "urban spread" of the 1960's in Auckland resulted in the emergence of a Maori phenomena, labelled Pan-tribal communities. For many Maori despite having migrated to the cities, their spiritual and cultural connection was in their own tribal homelands in other parts of the country. Today, Otara does not have the same sense of openness with a green fields image of the past. It is closed in by industry and other communities. According to the Manukau City Council Statistical Information on Wards (1997), Otara is home today for 32,337 people.

2.2 OTARA - GEOGRAPHY: PHYSICAL

The physical and geographical location has Otara quite centrally located within the local government territorial authority of Manukau City Council, the largest city in the South Auckland region.

⁵The Treaty of Waitangi 1840 is considered as the "founding document" of New Zealand. It guaranteed protection to Maori of customary practices and resources and provided for the acquisition of land for Pakeha settlers.

There is no coast line to speak of, although a waterway exists which could have provided some relief to the development of the landscape for urban and industrial purposes, but it wasn't promoted by the town planning strategies implemented in the 1960's. It has become over the years quite a polluted creek as it winds its way to join the Tamaki River, through the back of residential areas and industrial zones.

2.3 OTARA - RECENT HISTORY

Otara's urban development goes back to the middle 1950's when Maori Affairs⁶ officers assisted in the relocation of rural Maori to the city perimeters of Auckland. While this was still an active farming community, housing subdivisions mushroomed. The residential area's rapid growth always exceeded the provision of many of the social services that it required. Public transport was very limited and the commercial town centre for the retailing area was not built until 1966. In the early 1960's, a labour intensive industrial zone was becoming the buffer between the commercial inner city of Auckland and the outer suburbs. This was a reflection of the town planning philosophy of the day, which placed a labour force close to where it was needed and therefore preserved the valuable real estate property of the inner city.

⁶ "Maori Affairs" - A Central Government department that was established to assist Maori people with guidance and advice regarding economic development, health, social advancement etc.,

From this practice a social class structure emerged supported by the introduction of government subsidised low cost housing. This offered an incentive for people to move to this community. Many Maori families moved to the city in search of work as their rural homelands were unable to sustain them. Migrants from the Pacific Islands came to this country for the same reasons and soon the social class that was created, began to take on a colour, the colour of the people of South Auckland. This polarisation of ethnic kinship which occurred in Otara has been repeated throughout most of South Auckland and other parts of New Zealand.

The roll of one local secondary school is used as a guide for the ethnic composition of this community and their students:

Table 2

| SECONDARY SCHOOL A : FORM 3 - 7 | |
|--|----------|
| Roll Number: | 417 |
| Ethnic Composition | % |
| Maori | 25 |
| Tonga | 8 |
| Cook Island | 23.5 |
| Samoa | 35 |
| Niue | 8 |
| Pakeha | 0.5 |

(Source: Education Review Office (1996))

Of the 32,337 people living in Otara in 1996, 43.8% were under 19 years. This table displays the ages of people under 29 years in Otara:

Table 3

| POPULATION ANALYSIS OF OTARA BY AGE | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Age | 1976 | 1986 | 1996 |
| 0 - 4 | 3,222 | 3,480 | 4,761 |
| 5 - 14 | 7,440 | 7,059 | 6,903 |
| 15 - 19 | 2,374 | 3,381 | 3,069 |
| 20 - 29 | 3,156 | 7,329 | 5,700 |

(Source: Manukau City Council Statistics on Wards (1996:14))

There is a perception within Otara that a community with high numbers of people under 25 years has the potential for a large number of problems for their families. This is confirmed in the community meetings that the researcher attends as the director of a local community centre.

In Otara there are volunteer community agencies that work specifically with youth at risk and their families. They are active in the community centres and churches in the community. Collectively they provide services and programmes which involve all the various ethnic groups in and have gender specific programmes to meet those needs.

They all work with government agencies such as the police, social welfare services, schools and also with the other volunteer groups.

2.4 OTARA - EDUCATION

One of Otara's earliest known Pakeha schools was built beside Hampton Park, (La Roche 1987). Mr R. M. Houston provided tuition. Early Pakeha settlers' children and also the Maori children from the families working in the market gardens, attended.

In 1908, a boys' school was built which featured plastered walled buildings with a bell tower. It closed briefly during World War One and reopened as an agricultural research centre. In 1978 the research centre closed. The stables and 27 acres of agricultural area were purchased by Kokiri Te Rahuitanga, a Training Centre for unemployed people and a Centre for "youth-at-risk.". The balance of the research centre land makes is the Northern Campus for Manukau Institute of Technology.

The schools in Otara today include: two secondary schools, one middle school, two intermediate schools, twelve primary schools, one private Christian School, one public Catholic School, one Kura Kaupapa⁷, nine Kindergartens, eleven Te Kohanga Reo⁸ and two Pacific Island Pre-schools.

⁷ "Kura Kaupapa" - a school which has Maori as the language of instruction. The curriculum content is very similar to mainstream schools, with the inclusion of Maori traditional beliefs being taught.

Table 4

| QUALIFICATIONS OF PERSONS 15 YEARS AND OVER | |
|--|-------|
| Post Graduate | 75 |
| Degree | 114 |
| Undergraduate | 69 |
| Technicians Certificate | 384 |
| Teaching or Nursing Certificate | 468 |
| Trade Certificate | 1,089 |
| Other Tertiary Qualifications | 1,212 |
| Bursary or Scholarship | 69 |
| Higher School Certificate | 345 |
| University Entrance or | |
| Sixth Form Certificate | 513 |
| School Certificate | 1,620 |
| Other school qualifications | 189 |
| Still at school | 1,161 |
| No qualifications | 8,541 |
| Not Specified | 2,973 |

(Source: Manukau City Council (1991:6))

⁸ "Te Kohanga Reo" - Formal early childhood centres, that teaches in Maori and encourage many of the Maori values and customary practices.

Table 4 above provides information of the qualifications attained by Otara residents. It does not however indicate which secondary school they attended, considering that at 8:30 a.m. on any school day the bus stops in Otara are filled with students attending secondary schools outside of the community.

This information is important to this study because it helps the reader understand the restricted skill base that is present in Otara. It particularly highlights the large number of people without any academic qualifications. While there is no evidence to directly link this data to the high incidence of truancy, the researcher considers a link exists because of the limited number of role models who have succeeded at school. The high number of unqualified people in his view helps to create, for many students, an image of despair and failure.

At an Otara Principals' Association meeting in March of 1996, participants agreed that two thirds of the 3,000 secondary aged students were attending 27 secondary schools outside of Otara. The participants also raised concern about the impact that this was having on the two secondary schools in Otara and considered this as contributing to the increased rate of truancy as the "best students" were not present in schools to be the role models for others.

2.5 OTARA - EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

There are three major influences that working class communities such as Otara are seriously affected by government policies, these are housing education and employment.

The decision to sell State owned assets is an example of such a government policy. In 1994 a Housing Corporation Business Unit, called Housing New Zealand, was formed. Its primary function was to manage state owned rental houses and property. An implementation programme introduced market based rentals for these assets. There were approximately 4,000 State owned homes and flats in Otara. The State now owns just under half. The rest have been either sold off to private investors or to long term tenants who had an option of agreeing to buy or to move out. The harsh reality for many of the families in Otara was that they were unable to afford the new rentals being charged and consequently many were forced to move. Anecdotal evidence seen by the researcher and M.O.K.O. officers is that some people now live in over-crowded situations.

The following information was published in a local South Auckland newspaper which featured an article describing the increasing numbers of vacant state owned rental properties, from January to September of 1997.

Table 5 illustrates the number of Vacant State Houses for 1997 in the following South Auckland communities:

Table 5

| PERCENTAGE OF VACANT HOUSES IN SOUTH AUCKLAND | | | |
|--|------------|-------------|----------|
| Ward | Jan | Sept | % |
| Otara | 6 | 27 | 300 |
| Manurewa | 10 | 30 | 200 |
| Papakura | 11 | 26 | 136 |
| Mangere | 10 | 16 | 60 |
| Papatoetoe | 6 | 19 | 140 |
| TOTAL | 43 | 118 | |

(Source: Manukau Courier Newspaper (4.11.97))

The second government policy that impacted upon the Otara community was the implementation of Tomorrow's Schools⁹ (1989). It encouraged a higher level of parental/caregiver participation in the way schools were being run.

Elections were held to establish membership of School Boards of Trustees. After the first 12 months it became apparent that the schools in Otara had board members who were struggling to keep up with the work-load. 'Self managing schools' required of Boards of

⁹ Tomorrow's Schools were introduced after a government report to improve the operation of schools, with communities participating at management level. This led to parents and communities choosing the type of school that they wanted for their children. Curriculum changes, teacher performance measurements and bulk funding were some of the things introduced.

Trustees to have members with specific skills related to business-type decision making. The limited experience of Otara parents meant that school principals were required to provide much of the leadership and guidance to ensure that their schools' governance was effective.

Unfortunately, the contribution by the community to school governance (which Tomorrow's Schools encouraged), failed to eventuate in Otara as members of Boards of Trustees struggled to meet their new responsibilities.

Board members who were involved in the early days were often reluctant to stand for re-election for another three year term, for the following reasons listed in Hawk and Hill (1996):

- I don't understand the system
 - things move to fast
 - I have too many other commitments
 - my English isn't good enough
 - I felt out of place
 - there's a lot of jargon
 - my understanding of meetings is different, they're more laid back, the agenda isn't so structured and more time is allowed to discuss things
- Hawk and Hill, (1996:200).

2.6 OTARA - EMPLOYMENT

The researcher has always felt that the employment opportunities (or lack thereof) for Otara people have decreased. From the time of the nation's significant industrial and economic change, precipitated by the 1987 Share Market Crash, the people in communities like Otara

were unable to adjust to the diminishing employment opportunities in these industrial zones. The community had grown dependent upon the continued availability of manual labour employment.

Tertiary education had become less of a priority as students in the community had continued to leave school at the legal leaving age of 15 years and enter the work force. It appeared to the researcher that there had developed a huge gap in the skills required for continued employment in this new era of technology. The Otara he knew, reeled from the loss of employment and the decrease in income of many of the families has still not been reversed.

Evidence of this presents itself on the official days where the unemployment benefit and other benefits are received by many people in Otara.

The Otara Commercial Town Centre on these days is filled with people shopping in the middle of the day. The queues of people in front of automatic teller machines on 'benefit days" are another example of an increased reliance upon state funded incomes. (Data supporting this is displayed in Tables 6, 7 and 8.)

Retailers in the Otara Town Centre closed their doors and fled as the spending power of the residents was affected.

Volunteer community groups that the director was involved with struggled to cope with the increased demand for assistance by many families. Advice and guidance on housing, budgeting and

pre-employment training courses were some of what was requested by some members of the community.

The following three tables from the Manukau City Council Wards Profile Update (1993), indicate for Otara residents:

- the employment status (Table six)
- the population status (Table seven)
- the number requiring government assistance (table eight)

Table 6 illustrates those persons in Otara eligible for full-time employment. This is the highest number of people in this category for all of the Manukau City Council Wards: The figure of 9,603 in the "not specified" group represent those persons who have chosen not to declare their employment status.

Table 6

| EMPLOYMENT STATUS | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|
| Wages or Salary | 6,549 |
| Self Employed & not employing others | 327 |
| Employer of others in own business | 150 |
| Unpaid within family business | 51 |
| Unemployed and Actively Seeking Work | 2,289 |
| Not specified | 9,603 |

This table presents the information of Table 6 from a different perspective. There is an alarmingly high number of people, 9,273, who are not in the "work force" as is highlighted in this data.

In table 7 the impact from the evidence presents the same image of high unemployment:

Table 7

| POPULATION WORK STATUS | |
|--|-------|
| Gainfully employed full-time 30+ hours | 6,402 |
| Gainfully employed part-time -30 hours | 327 |
| Work Force Total | 7,248 |
| Persons unemployed and Actively seeking full-time or part-time work | 2,307 |
| Not in Work Force | 9,273 |

Table 8 highlights the number of dependants on "government provided income" in Otara.

This data also reveals the various combinations of benefits that are available, creating what the researcher describes as a dependency by those beneficiaries upon the state for continued support. Accordingly the researcher considers that these people are not being encouraged to develop new skills which could provide opportunities for them to become employed.

Table 8

| GOVERNMENT PROVIDED INCOME | |
|---|-------|
| National Superannuation | 945 |
| Family Benefit (F.B.) | 1,971 |
| Unemployment Benefit | 2,844 |
| Youth or Student Allowance | 285 |
| Sickness or Invalids Benefit | 642 |
| Domestic Purposes Benefit (D.P.B.) | 513 |
| Other single payments | 414 |
| Total, one payment only | 7,593 |
| F. B. and Family Support (F.S.) | 672 |
| F. B., F.S. and D.P.B. | 591 |
| Other combination of 2 or more payments | 1,377 |
| Total 2 or more payments | 2,658 |
| No payments received | 6,321 |
| Not Specified | 2,271 |

For many Maori families, a way out of this dilemma beckoned from their home rural tribal boundaries. They returned to the village life that their grandparents and parents had left in search of employment in the city. It was their response to the changing economic fortunes that beset them. Yet the same economic hardships, were awaiting them in their ancestral lands.

Population Statistics (Table 9) of the Maori population compared to other ethnic groups, indicate the movement of Maori out of Otara:

Table 9

| POPULATION STATISTICS FOR OTARA | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Ethnicity | 1986 | 1991 | 1996 |
| Pakeha | 7,919 | 5,029 | 4,216 |
| Maori | 9,720 | 8,097 | 7,127 |
| Pacific Island | 12,213 | 15,621 | 16,941 |
| Other | 237 | 714 | 1,183 |
| Not Specified | | 689 | 1,546 |

(Source: Manukau City Council Economic Development Activity (1986, 1991,1996))

Table 9 above does not include the destination of those Maori who have moved from Otara. It is the researcher's experience of community work that has provided the insight into the social dynamics within urban Maori and the confidence to therefore state that Maori have indeed returned to their tribal boundaries.

For the Pacific Island Communities, the collective strength of numbers that was offered by the meetings and gatherings at churches, provided them with the support needed. Religion is an important aspect of the lives of many of the Pacific Island people in Otara as it is throughout

South Auckland. Very few returned to their Island homes because the economic situation there would have been even more difficult.

2.7 OTARA - RELIGION

This information is provided to give an insight into the importance that is placed upon churches and religion in the broadest sense. A prominent feature of Otara is the fifty-five church groups in Otara. There are thirty-three designated church buildings and the estimated value of all those church buildings would exceed \$30 million. All funds for those facilities are raised within the community through direct donations from the parishioners or from fund raising ventures. The remainder of the church groups operate from private homes or by hiring either one of the six school halls or the one community hall.

Religion in this community is a social dynamic which impacts extensively upon the way the community functions. Church ministers and church leaders have considerable influence upon many Otara people, particularly in the areas of parenting issues, communication with the young members of their church and the finances of the homes of parishioners.

2.8 OTARA - COMMERCIAL

The Otara Town Centre, which is located on one side of the community. A smaller Town Centre (Dawson Road) is at the opposite end of the community. There are at least eight small neighbourhood

shops sprinkled liberally around Otara. The most outstanding feature of the Otara Town Centre is the canopy structure overhead of the Ika (Fish). It is in three parts and provides a good blend of contemporary materials and Maori Polynesian traditional art forms. There is also an absence of the variety of shops found elsewhere in the Auckland region.

Noticeably the larger store chains are absent. Rendells and Farmers, two of the larger companies in this country, moved out after their stores were badly damaged by teenage arsonists in 1984. Woolworths left soon after and so did the men's clothing store, Hugh Wrights. When these major stores pulled out of the Otara Town Centre, the Otara Branch of the Bank of New Zealand (B.N.Z.) shut its doors also.

When unemployment increased and the spending power of the community was decreased some of the smaller retailers were also one of the first groups to react by closing their shops.

Throughout the community there are a total of eleven off-license alcohol outlets and two taverns.

There are over twenty Housie (Bingo) sessions a week. The researcher considers this to be an irony in this working-class community, that the things people can least afford, gambling and alcohol, are so readily available.

What has developed as the commercial heart of the Otara community is the Saturday morning Flea Market. The Market's popularity is evident from its regular visitors of over 3,000 people. Agricultural produce features prominently in the market, with label clothing, fast food caravans, arts and crafts and second-hand goods. With the high unemployment, the Otara people rely on the market as a source of revenue for their products and especially as a venue to purchase good quality vegetables, fruit and clothing. This economic need was exactly what the organisers of the market were aiming at addressing. It was part of a solution towards supporting families who were struggling economically. More importantly however, the market provides a special meeting place for many south Auckland people. It is a gathering place for the whole community. This function in itself is important as it serves to regularly unite the community.

2.9 CONCLUSION

The researcher has painted a picture of the Otara community. This chapter has attempted to assist the reader with an appreciation of the social, economic and physical environment of Otara. It was the researcher's wish to develop for the reader an empathy with the people and the difficulties they face.

It is difficult however, to conclude this chapter without referring to those characteristics of this community that are its strengths.

The researcher's own experiences remind him that his parents had chosen many years ago to not live anywhere else in Auckland. They frequently discuss the friendly nature of the people in Otara. This is supported by staff at the local community centre who have lived in Otara for many years and they describe how they appreciate the familiarity that exists between people of different ethnic groups.

Church ministers speak of their congregations with pride as their parishioners regularly gather on their Sabbath day to worship. The two largest sports groups, the Otara Rugby League Club and the East Tamaki Rugby Union Club enjoy full playing membership throughout all their teams with what they describe as being healthy support from parents and especially sponsors.

It is within this social context that the issue of truancy is discussed.

It is appropriate to state that truancy is not confined to just Otara. While it is present throughout South Auckland, it is also a national and universal problem as will be seen in the following chapter.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

For playing truant he was caned. He tried to kick me, in fact he did kick me and his mother then came to school and abused me in a most frightful manner. (School Log of 1884, quoted in Porter, 1990) McManus, M. (1989).

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature that is referred to for this study has been organised into two categories:

- i. the causes of truancy and
- ii discussions of interventions to truancy.

Within each of these categories there is specific material focusing on:

- a. the students
- b. their families
- c. schools
- d. communities
- e. agencies

and the effect of each of those on truancy.

Much of the literature referred to in this chapter comes from America, the United Kingdom and Australia. In New Zealand, Fergusson *et al* (1995:25), suggest "*it is possible that a number of previous studies of truancy could be out of date*".

However, the opinion of the writer is that there are key theories from those countries that are transferable to the Otara situation.

Literature which describes similarities between the New Zealand experiences and those in other studies overseas, are discussed to obtain a wider or more universal view of the interventions practised. Where there are no direct similarities to the Otara South Auckland situation, those examples have been used as a contrast to discuss different causes and interventions to truancy.

The A.I.M.H.I Report is frequently referred to in this chapter as it is the most recent study on South Auckland schools. There is a significant body of evidence in this report which has assisted this study. This report was a study of eight schools in South Auckland. It reviewed the problems of schools listed as decile 1. Hawk and Hill (1996), the writers of the report, explain that the decile ranking of all New Zealand schools is on a scale of one to ten. This is based upon the socio-economic level and ethnicity of each school community. In order to achieve some equality in the delivery of educational resources, extra school funding is allocated depending upon the decile rating of the school.

Hawk and Hill (op cit), provided data indicating the significant number of Maori students who leave school before year 12 as in school 1, where 35.10% left this school, as referred to later in Table 10.

Year 12 or Form 7 is the highest grade in New Zealand schools. Of those Maori students from school 1 that continued on to the seventh form, none achieved a seventh form qualification. Only 4.50% Maori students achieved a seventh form qualification.

Because Maori students are highlighted as the highest number of students referred to M.O.K.O., the writer is presenting evidence of the high numbers of Maori students who are not succeeding at school.

Table 10

| PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS LEAVING SCHOOL BEFORE YEAR 12 WITH LITTLE OR NO QUALIFICATIONS | | | | |
|--|---------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| School | F7QUAL | F7QUALM | PRIOR12 | PRIOR12M |
| 1. | 4.50 | .00 | 22.90 | 35.10 |
| 2. | 14.70 | 10.00 | 51.60 | 78.00 |
| 3. | 16.50 | | 13.90 | |
| 4. | 8.30 | 12.90 | 26.40 | 25.80 |
| 5. | 17.70 | 6.00 | 8.30 | 10.30 |
| 6. | 9.60 | 2.30 | 15.20 | 25.00 |
| 7. | 8.50 | | 31.00 | 38.20 |

(Source: Hawk and Hill (1996 : 31))

F7QUAL shows the proportion of all students.

F7QUALM indicates the proportion of Maori students leaving school with a Form 7 qualification.

PRIOR12 refers to the proportion of all students leaving prior to year 12.

Likewise PRIOR12M is the proportion of Maori Students. (Hawk and Hill 1996:31).

3.2 CAUSES OF TRUANCY

3.2.1 Causes - Students

The reasons for students truanting are numerous and complex. Truants are usually considered to be adolescents attending secondary school. Because they truant it is assumed that they place little value on education. They are also sometimes labelled delinquent. The delinquent adolescent is often associated with anti-school and/or anti-institutional behaviour. This has been viewed as deviant behaviour.

McManus, describes deviant behaviour as:

... the behaviour/act not the person ... a label; deviant behaviour is therefore a label given to a person who has illustrated such behaviour... (McManus, 1989 : 4).

Hawk and Hill, in their research found the most common answer to why students wag¹⁰ was that the student *"didn't like the teacher, or the subject or both."*

Other responses from students included:

¹⁰ "wag" - to miss school or to cut classes.

girls wag P.E. if they know they have to go swimming or have to do cross-country; we do it because we can get away with it; we choose the teachers carefully the ones we know we'll get away with it - like a reliever or a new teacher; some kids are stressed out by some of the teachers; if there is a test coming up or some major work due then we'll wag (Hawk and Hill, 1996 : 231).

Boredom, bullying, difficulty with some of the school work are also offered as reasons for students wagging. These are all very school orientated reasons as to why students do not attend school regularly. They are honest responses from people with problems at school. A significant point here is that these responses are indications of the student's change of attitude towards school. Chapter 5 refers to this in the data from the interviews.

Often in these situations there is little doubt as to the aspirations of parents for their children's positive educational experiences. Regardless of their own school experiences parents want their children to "do well" at school.

This is made clear in Hawkins *et al*:

Across the socio-economic spectrum parents universally view a good education as key to their children's success. However, academic success is something not all families have experienced or know how to promote. The support offered at home for a child's work at school can be an important factor in the child's academic success (Hawkins *et al*, 1992 : 90).

A parent's lack of knowledge as to how best provide for their child may in fact signal to the child a rather distorted the value that parent's might have of education. These students, often feel that they are not being supported and can be disruptive in class or opt not to attend at all. Some parents who find themselves unable to provide for their children have experienced similar situations throughout their own childhood.

Schorr (1988) describes the significance of a cycle of disadvantage as one in which those students who experience domestic instability, usually exhibit behaviour that is unacceptable not only to the school, but to society in general. Students' reluctance to do school activities which can lead on to attending school irregularly, is often an outcome. The ability of the student to break-out from the limitations of his/her socio-economic status must prove difficult, for many remain where they are and appear to fit into a lifestyle that does not demand educational advancement.

Baker (1977) also supports the theory that truants often come from disadvantaged homes. Students from other backgrounds also truant but Baker (*ibid*) suggests that, compared with those in disadvantaged homes, the more affluent students tend to value education, attend school regularly and succeed.

The research on truancy of Fergusson *et al* based in Christchurch provided further evidence of the problems confronting the truanting student from disadvantaged homes.

Their findings revealed that:

... the rates of truancy in adolescence were elevated amongst children from families in which there was evidence of family dysfunction, family conflict or compromised parenting (1995:31).

Do those students that are more fortunate have a better attitude towards school and towards education? Or is it that they are more comfortable within themselves as people, comfortable with their identity, their ability and the foundation in which they live.

Perhaps the nature of truancy has to do with what students experience at school, just as much as the priority that is given towards education at home. Consistent support from parents helps children determine their own values, including the value of a good education.

Benson *et al* (1989), describe the level of support that an adolescent receives from his or her home and how this effects the behaviour of this person. They claim there is a correlation between the types of behaviour that are demonstrated by the adolescent and his/her home environment.

The number of male to female ratio of reported truants to the M.O.K.O. Programme indicates that there are more male students referred. Interestingly however, James (1995), refers to the number of female

students who, officers describe, are a lot more difficult to deal with. The officers also explained how there is often more follow-up work to be done with them. The reasons given for female students proving more of a challenge for M.O.K.O. officers and their families to return to regular school attendance relate to the complexities of the student's world. They are, according to M.O.K.O. staff much more organised than their male counterparts. An obvious result of the M.O.K.O. figures is the high proportion of Maori students referred to the programme. As a Maori teacher these figures in Chapter 1:8, are of particular interest to the researcher.

Jenkins (1994) considered the: "*statistical data over the past century from state school records*". These records include: "*class rolls, progress and achievement registers, school certificate results, university entrance, and bursary marks ...*".

She refers to:

the disparity between Maori and non-Maori in entry to school, duration of stay and academic achievement in school (Jenkins 1994:150).

For those students who have not had positive school experiences it must prove difficult to want to continue to be part of that experience, even at the risk of the wrath of their parents and further unpleasant attention from the school. The negative experiences for the senior secondary school student include the lack of academic success. ✓

Thorley-Smith (1990), describes a feature of youth-at-risk of educational failure. This is particularly obvious when compared to other students. He says they typically underachieve. He refers to the correlation between managing behaviour problems and school attendance, with these students lack of success This further supports the importance of regular school attendance for all adolescents, especially those student most at risk.

Drennon-Gala stated that:

... adolescents who disengage from the education process have a greater likelihood to involve themselves in delinquent behaviour... (Drennon-Gala, 1995 : 1).

There is also the impact that home has on the student and the lack of support that is given to these students. This is supported by Burdekin who suggests that:

These children and adolescents are youth at risk. Many of the children who are experiencing difficulties at home and at school will ultimately enter the welfare and judicial processes. They increasingly feel alienated from mainstream society (Burdekin, 1989 : 121).

Truancy is an outcome for many of these students. It is a "learned behaviour" that is fed by negative experiences, from home and at school. This behaviour is often not self-correcting and when left unattended, results in the student feeling "*alienated from mainstream society.*"

3.2.2 Causes - Family / Community

The researcher will discuss the role of students' families and their community to develop an understanding for how these two elements contribute as causes of truancy. This was in support of a view held by the researcher, that the effect of a student's home and community influences his/her attitude to school.

This is confirmed in the data by Hawk and Hill (1996 : 133), where they discuss how "some families are unwilling or unable to help and support their children."

In community meetings or social events that the researcher attends, parents are often criticised for not fulfilling their responsibilities to ensure that their children are well-fed, well-housed, well-disciplined and well-educated.

This suggests that poor parenting is to blame for the increasing numbers of underachievers at our schools. What then, if a parent is unable to address this because of limited resources?

Other questions raised are: when a family resides in a community of a low socio-economic status and where a parent is unable to provide for their children, how are the needs of the student able to be met? Is there a correlation between the location of a family and the educational outcomes of the student? There is evidence in the literature that supports such a relationship.

An example of literature on this issue is from Fergusson *et al*, who discovered in their research that:

family socio-demographic background including socio-economic status, correlated with truancy in adolescence (1995: 31).

Anthony and Jacobson (1992), refer to the drop-out rates of a school being strongly related to the socio-economic status of the family. They also indicate that students who are potential drop-outs due to their socio-economic background and school experiences are often believed to be at-risk of educational failure. Therefore in some instances, the limited opportunities for achievement by many students from low income families is confirmed by their theory.

Galloway describes an American study on the relationship between low income families and the attendance of those students to school. Free meals, (lunches), were provided at the school for all students at the schools involved in this programme. After a six week period he was able to conclude that there was a correlation between regular school attendance and the poverty that existed in their community.

He describes how:

... poor attendance ... seems to be 80% attributed to poverty, in the schools catchment as measured by the free meals (Galloway, 1985 : 36).

Prior to the offer of free meals (lunches), between 12 and 15% of the student population in the three schools under study , were absent from

school. The average number of students who were absent of at school, was between 120 and 150 students. He described the impact of the free meals as being extremely positive.

Galloway (Ibid) observes that:

This revealed the correlation of data between poor attendance and the proportion of pupils qualifying for free meals. (Galloway, 1985 : 36).

While the free meals were offered to all students, careful study of those children who took the offer, revealed that many were from financially struggling families. These schools were quite similar in the communities that they served where most families lived close to the poverty line. The improvement in attendance in this situation was attributed to the availability of the free meals.

Through his work in the community the researcher has provided support for the free lunches that are also offered in schools in South Auckland. Teachers were concerned that where some of their students may not be getting enough to eat, they might not participate fully in all classroom activities.

Lunches are currently being provided in five South Auckland schools. A total of 700 meals are provided. A correlation with the attendance rates at these schools showed that attendance had improved.

The need for family support is accepted as being an absolute necessity in all areas of a student's development. Furlong reveals evidence of other studies in this area:

Many studies over a long period of time have found correlation between disruptive or delinquent behaviour and domestic deprivation, family disorder, erratic parental discipline, poor attainment, or ability as well as being male, teenage and working class (Furlong, 1985 : 34).

He claims that the notion of "*disruptive or delinquent behaviour*" is largely determined by the quality and quantity of the support received by the student from their parents. He also suggests that "*domestic deprivation, family disorder*" and "*erratic parental discipline*" infer a lifestyle that is not conducive to the support of a student's needs. It portrays also an image of uncaring parents, with little appreciation of their roles as parents or parents that are choosing to ignore their responsibilities as parents.

Furlong (Ibid) identifies areas of parental skills and tasks that are not being effectively carried out. The reference to the "*working class*" infers that these problems are with the disadvantaged alone yet there is no evidence to support this: the "*disruptive or delinquent behaviour*" can cross all areas of the socio-economic spectrum. But the connection of the "*working class*" to the issues of "*poor attainment or ability*" is not a new assertion. Certainly the academic success experienced by those not of the working class must surely be ample evidence of the opportunities that exist for them.

Graham (1988) supports this by writing of the relationship between the type of community a student comes from relative to his/her opportunities for educational success. It is his view that the community where the student lives will explain a student's academic attainment. He also suggest that where a student lives does not however determine his/her likely behaviour at school.

The effect that students from low socio-economic communities have on their schools is described by McManus:

... it is difficult to resist the argument that some schools are seriously disadvantaged in their drive to improve their average standards because of the disproportionate weight of social problems that their pupils bring with them (McManus, 1989 : 22).

This confirms the obvious association between the social problems in a community and the ability of a school to raise its standards. The inference here is that those social problems "walk into school" with the students. It is further suggested by the researcher that there is a detrimental effect upon students who live in communities where there is a significant proportion of the working population unemployed and where health and housing problems exist.

Fergusson *et al* confirmed that:

Measures of family socio-demographic background, including socio-economic status, maternal age, maternal education and ethnicity were significantly correlated with truancy (Fergusson *et al*, 1995 : 31).

It is also accepted by the researcher that schools in these communities struggle to provide for the social developmental needs of the students as well as their educational needs.

3.2.3 Causes - Schools

The elements within schools which cause truancy will now be discussed. It has been assumed by the researcher that schools may need to consider some of what they do in their daily operations, which can adversely affect the attendance of some of their students. This process is encouraged by the Ministry of Education. This could prove difficult as schools are inclined to be focused on the way they conduct themselves in responding to the pressures of day to day operations. Schools become focused more on what "is", rather than including in their work a vision of what "could be".

Hess offers a rather cynical view of schools and their abilities to provide a service that meets the needs of all their clients:

.... schools are little factories, everything neat, ordered and on schedule, or at least hoping to be so. Children are the products, moving passively along the assembly line being filled up with bits of subject matter and curriculum until they are inspected and certified to graduate to the next level (Hess, 1992 : 19).

How many teachers would agree that schools are rarely if ever "*neat, ordered and on schedule*". They are a source of human growth and

development and the rate that this occurs can be somewhat predictable but never accurate, not for everyone.

Despite this though, students are labelled and categorised into groups by their age, their ability or a perceived belief by teachers that this is the appropriate level for this student, giving credence to the statement that "*they are inspected and certified to graduate to the next level.*"

The metaphor used here is readily recognisable and particularly relevant to the working class community of Otara. There are certainly elements of school life that students could describe as resembling a factory "*assembly line*".

This reflects some students' attitude to school and the often timeless comment on school as being boring.

Hawk and Hill (op cit), suggests that a teacher's personality and character as much as the subject area being taught has a lot to do with the attendance of students to class or school.

Hess's (op cit) reference to children being "*filled up with bits of subject matter and curriculum*" is supported by some of the comments from truant students in the A.I.M.H.I. Report:

Some (teachers) say, "Copy it". They expect us to understand it ourselves. They need to explain the work ...

He writes on the board and tells us to read it. Then we have to copy out sheets and work it out ourselves ... (Hawk and Hill, 1996 : 211).

These examples are of responses describing students' perspective on their experiences in some classes. These are expressions of "classroom reality" that students have experienced and these quotes support the ideas stated by Hess.

Hess (op cit) continues:

Teachers don't think much, don't question, don't wonder, don't care - they are the assembly line workers. Never mind that a quarter and a half of the kids fall off the line altogether, or that for those who keep moving along the end of the line rarely presents an opening of possibilities (Hess, 1992 : 19).

The vision of "*teachers that don't care*" is difficult to imagine. Many may become frustrated because they cannot rely on getting the support of parents and the community to help with the problems of the school. Many too may feel anxious with the irregular attendance of some students to school and therefore teaching and learning opportunities are lost.

The following narratives of some students in the A.I.M.H.I. Report suggest that the teachers are often seen as the cause of their problems:

Our Maths teacher is the reason some of us didn't pass last year. (School Certificate). He just gave us the answers, he didn't explain. He just wanted his pay slip, he said that to us. (Hawk and Hill, 1996 : 218).

Schools and teachers have little control of the type of student that may be on that "*assembly line*". Nor are they necessarily responsible for the resources required to meet the student's needs. The truant is an example of those students who "*fall off the line altogether*".

Infrequent attendance to school of some students, particularly at the secondary is a possible cause of frustration for many teachers.

This is supported by Szaday who describes:

The phenomenon of children and adolescents whose actions at school create feelings of frustration, anger, unhappiness, fear and guilt in their teachers, their peers and themselves is familiar to many educators (Szaday, 1989 : 84).

The researcher identifies with Szaday and notes that as a Maori teacher the feelings described above are a constant reminder of the social problems faced by some Maori families, that arrive at school with some Maori students.

Arcaro discusses his theory on the issue of teacher frustration and anxiety and also the effects that external influences have on the "beliefs and values" of teachers when they:

... enter education as professionals because they want to contribute to the growth and development of children. Unfortunately, their beliefs and values have become overshadowed by the current economic climate and drive by many communities to have their school systems copy business practices to increase efficiency and reduce costs (Arcaro, 1995 : 28).

Reference to "*economic climate*" can be related to the direction of the New Zealand economy. It has been observed that aspects of the business genre has emerged in the practises of some schools. The author claims that the "*increase to efficiency and the reduction of costs*" in the way that schools operate "*overshadow*" the philosophical reasons for teachers entering the profession in the first place.

This is referred to by Waddock (1995), who describes a programme that is operating in Boston that targets poverty. When discussing education within the context of this programme, she encourages a shift away from "market-driven" assumptions versus a "helpless" orientation. She describes families involved with this programme as being viewed by the business sector as "victims", rather than people that need assistance and support from all sections of society. The type of support needed is in the form of education and job training for parents and importantly for school aged students, encouragement and support to attend school.

Bacharach and Mundell point to the:

... nature of instruction in schools and the debate between the different theorists, policy makers and practitioners perceiving the work of schools as having a variety of dimensions (Bacharach and Mundell, 1995 : 14).

The "*nature of instruction*" that students have to endure is referred to by students in the study by Hawk and Hill (1996). Increased parental participation in governance, means that communities have a greater

involvement in monitoring the standard of teaching in their schools. Students need to feel that they are benefiting from their school experiences.

Some students, although sometimes simplistic in their perspective as to what is of educational value, consider the formal processes of teaching and learning as being a measure of what is of benefit to them.

Hawk and Hill (op cit) present evidence of this:

I wag Science because ... I don't get anything out of it. You can tell from our books. We've got no notes and we don't get any explanations. I don't enjoy it ... so I wag (Hawk and Hill, 1996: 232).

The explanation offered by these students for their truancy from this particular class is an indication of what they consider to be an unsatisfactory class. They have an expectation of what they should be experiencing and they note that a lack of written work indicates to them that this class is of little value to them. It could be interpreted that they don't enjoy the lack of work. What they perceive as a worthwhile class, is one in which they receive a lot of work in their books.

The inability of schools to communicate with their communities is a major hindrance to the solutions of student achievement and student attendance.

Hawk and Hill (op cit) also state that:

There were some who believe that parents do want to support the school and their children but they are unsure as to how to go about it because they don't have the information or the skills to do so (Hawk and Hill, 1996 : 112).

In this situation reference is made to the language difficulties experienced by some parents. Reference is also made of the limited understanding that these same parents have about how schools are managed.

The opposite is described in Irwin of the development of Te Kohanga Reo (Maori language pre-school centres), where a whanau (family) approach was one of the key principles so that parents:

... undertook to operate in such a way which was derived from traditional Maori culture, making decisions and taking responsibilities as a group (Irwin 1990: 112)

3.3 INTERVENTIONS

There are three key elements of interventions which will be discussed in this part of the chapter.

3.3.1 Interventions - Student

Anthony *et al* see as important that:

... students from all backgrounds be actively engaged in school if they are to receive the education and training that will help them to succeed and make a contribution to society through their productive efforts (Anthony *et al*, 1992 : 27).

This statement promotes education to students from all communities. Students " ... *need to be actively engaged in school*". The truanting student is clearly not fulfilling the suggestions above. The "*education and training*" that is available to the student will allow the student to "*make a contribution to society*", to his family and to his community as well. It is an empowering process that has the student making informed choices, as a future parent and citizen of this country.

Central to this being achieved is the value that a student places on him or herself. Hawkins *et al* (op cit) supports the view of a student's value of him/herself, when they discuss:

... the low commitment to school as a risk factor that is often associated with academic failure. In this case, the child ceases to see the role of a student as viable (Hawkins *et al*, 1992 : 12).

There are features raised here that interconnect with others. For example the connection between the issues of a students' "*low commitment*" to school attendance and the lack of desire by students to participate in all or some of the school's activities. Some of the causes which contribute the creation of that "*risk factor*" are identified as originating from home and the school.

The "*association with academic failure*" for these students becomes obvious in these situations.

When an adolescent "*ceases to see the role of a student as viable*", he or she has experiences a culmination of many factors previously

discussed. The home and the school need to reflect upon how they function to ensure that the possibility of "*academic failure*" is removed.

There are recommendations for the management and implementation of truancy programmes contained in the Report of the Education and Science Committee to the New Zealand Government (1995). It describes a process which should assist in the response to truancy.

The report states the need for interventions to be:

... comprehensive and co-ordinated, controlled, relevant to the situation, fast, effective and efficient if they are to succeed (Report of the Education and Science Committee, 1995 : 3).

Zuba (1986), discusses an intervention strategy implemented in an Illinois school as another model of an intervention process. The strategy encouraged students to identify and address the problems that prevented them from attending school. They were encouraged to put together some goals both short term and long term that they believed they were able to achieve.

It was an opportunity for students to evaluate their skill base and to discover the area of skills that they might need to develop. This process meant that a programme that met the students at a level they best felt comfortable would be an effective intervention strategy. The programme recaptured the interest of truanting students.

3.3.2 Interventions - Family

The role of the parent is significant, as an identified key player in an intervention programme. Parental responsibility in this area would appear to be crucial to the observer. The focus on parents and their meeting their obligations and responsibilities as providers is discussed by Anthony *et al*:

The active involvement of parents in the education of disadvantaged children has been considered by many observers to be important for programme success (Anthony *et al*, 1992 : 27).

Barth (1990) supports this by suggesting ways in which parents and the wider community can support the local schools. He discusses a variety of options to encourage parent/community contact with the school. He states that parents and schools should maintain regular contact and that parents should be supporting their children at home. His reference to the active involvement of parents and the community in decision making at the school is similar to the manner in which New Zealand schools have parent representatives on a School Board of Trustees who act as governors to the school.

These views are supported by Harker who considers the role of the family and the community as being very important and claims that:

The family equips the child with expectations about its future with criteria by which to judge success and failure, and (through its culture and language) with a particular disposition toward the values which dominate schools (Harker, 1990 : 36).

3.3.3 Interventions - School

Schools have a role to play in the implementation of successful intervention programmes. This part of the chapter sets out to discuss opportunities for schools to consider the way in which they are able to support the truanting student.

One of these is the effective professional relationships between the teaching staff, as reported by Barth:

... no characteristic of a good school is more pervasive than a healthy teacher - principal relationship experience suggests that as to what goes between teacher and principal so shall it go in the other relationship. If the teacher - principal relationships can be characterised as helpful, supportive, trusting, revealing of craft, so to, will others (Barth, 1990 : 19).

The focus on teaching staff to uphold a level of professional ethics is being suggested here as being a key element of a school. The very foundation required of a teacher is to facilitate the act of learning, to teach and to be a leader and role model in the community. The quality of the leadership to achieve that, is especially important as well.

The interaction between teacher and principal is referred to in Sergiovanni:

... leadership breeds followership. Less obvious is the idea that the practice of followership provides the basis for leadership (Sergiovanni, 1992 : xiii).

A healthy school is one where a feeling of collegial and professional support amongst teachers and towards the students emerges from the staff room. It is this school culture that would set itself for the challenges of the bored and the difficult student and especially the truant.

Chapter four of The Report of the Education and Science Committee (1995), referred to earlier, includes recommendations for schools to consider. A positive school atmosphere and clearly stated policies on truancy are stated as basic functions of any school. This confirms the opinion of previous authors who describe the responsibilities of schools. Other recommendations include the practice of good communication between the school staff and the community.

The opportunity to consider alternative programmes is promoted in this part of the chapter as well. Some of these programmes require that the teacher step-outside of the 'norm' as to what is the traditional classroom environment.

This is acknowledged in Anthony *et al*:

... proponents of alternative methods for educating the disadvantaged children believe that there should be greater variety in classroom management techniques ... including such unconventional methods as co-operative learning techniques that might involve substantial movement and noise (Anthony *et al*, 1992 : 32).

The suggestion of "*co-operative learning techniques*" is well suited to the New Zealand setting, particularly where there are large numbers of Maori and Pacific Island students. The group needs are part of the culture and traditions of these groups.

Jenkins (1994:172) comments confirms this in her description of Kura Kaupapa Schools¹¹ when she stated that "*co-operative and shared learning are prominent in the programme.*"

Discussions between the researcher and a principal of an Otago school revealed that they operated the "buddy-system", or known to them as the tuakana-teina system, which Jenkins (op cit), identifies is linked to peer teaching and learning. In these models there is arranged a two person group with either, one person being older than the other or in some cases a person who is well able to complete their work assisting a student who might have learning difficulties. Reference of how some alternative programmes might "*involve substantial movement and noise*" suggests a high level of tolerance for the introduction of such a programme.

¹¹ Kura Kaupapa School - operates similarly to state schools e.g. structure and curriculum, however the language of instruction is Maori. Customary protocols and Maori value systems are practised as part of the culture of the school.

Anthony (op cit) promotes the view that acknowledging the student's culture within the school context, is a way of advancing the heritage of disadvantaged students. His advice is that:

... schools should emphasise the knowledge, the abilities and cultural heritage's that disadvantaged pupils bring to school and build upon those rather than focusing on the deficits of the children or their families there should be more respect for the children's background and cultures as reflected in such things as curricular materials and teacher attitudes (Anthony *et al*, 1992 : 32).

They suggest that the schools' focus be shifted from the deficiencies of the student and their families. The schools' appreciation of the students' cultural heritage enhances the relationship between the school and the students' homes. This further suggests that for the student most likely to truant, the notion of being culturally isolated is removed.

Barth (1990) presents a model which encourages the development of the relationship between the school and its community:

The concepts of school as a community of learners, where students, teachers, parents and administrators share the opportunities and responsibilities for making decisions that affect all the occupants of the schoolhouse (Barth 1990 : 9).

He suggests that parents take more responsibility in "*making decisions*" in the school. He includes students and teachers as

sharing in that responsibility as well. There are obvious benefits in this situation for the students, because their school programme would be designed to particularly meet their needs.

3.3.4 Interventions - Agencies

The role of agencies, either professional government agencies or those of the volunteer community groups, in intervention practices for truancy is not without significance.

The Reports of the Select Committee (1995/1996) promote a selection of community and government initiatives to focus upon truancy.

These agencies would be:

- the Ministry of Education
- the Children and Young Persons Service (C.Y.P.S.) and Youth Justice of the Ministry of Social Welfare
- the Youth Aid Division of the Ministry of Police
- the Safer Community Council of the Prime Ministers' Committee on Crime Prevention

As an example the Ministry of Education has in the past concentrated on the child who arrives at school to be taught, without the ability to respond to those negative factors outside the school which influence the student.

The Ministry of Social Welfare has focused on the need to provide support systems for the child and his/her family.

The initiation for a far more co-operative approach of the different agencies from within their different portfolios was hinted at by The Reports of the Select Committee (1995/96) which recommends that the priority of the Ministry of Education be to assist students at risk of educational failure. This report also acknowledges that truancy in this country is dealt with in a variety of ways and that these responses to truancy are a recognition of the need for a co-ordinated approach.

Another example of agency interventions is at the Manukau Institute of Technology (M.I.T.) in Otara. Council members, administrators and management have been involved in the provision of incentives for South Auckland students to gain access to the institute. Furthermore the approval in May 1997 of \$5million for the construction of a marae complex as part of the institute's facilities, is an acknowledgement of the indigenous culture of this country. This development demonstrates a desire for the formal instruction of the Maori language in a Maori context and setting. Maori students and those living in Otara that know of the value of a marae, could feel welcomed and could gain encouragement by knowing that a part of them exists at M.I.T. Cultural isolation should not be a reason for their non-participation in tertiary education.

3.4 CONCLUSIONS

One of the most noticeable features of this study is that the literature discusses truancy as a negative reaction to a matrix of factors present in the lives of at-risk-youth.

The literature suggests that truancy is a symptom of many other things in the life of the student that are not being attended to. Young people who truant need to be considered individually, so that their needs as individuals can be better assessed and responded to. This will prove challenging for most schools to manage and resource effectively. According to the literature, the family of a truanting student has a role to play in addressing the causes of this behaviour.

As an example the cultural values that exist in largely Maori and Pacific Island communities, encourage the provision of considerable support from within the community.

The final theme emerging from the literature also is that truancy is symptomatic of many other problems that exist in a young person's life. In addressing those symptoms, intervention strategies are developed.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

... for Habermas, (critical theory) is a social process that combines collaboration in the process of critique with the political determination to act to overcome contradictions in the rationality and justice of social action and social institutions. (Carr and Kemmis 1983: 127)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aims of this research were to:

1. identify some causes of truant behaviour.
2. understand the behaviour of some truanting students.
3. consider the interventions currently used to address their truanting
4. design intervention strategies for students, families and schools.

4.2 JUSTIFICATION OF METHODOLOGY

4.2.1 Case Studies

A qualitative research process, involving case studies was undertaken. It was an emancipatory process which allowed for the accurate collation of data from participants identified for their experiences in this subject area. Case Studies have been described by Anderson (1995) as having the

ability to evaluate programmes or techniques. This was very relevant for this study.

Anderson refers to the technical definition of case studies as described by Yin (1981), who states that case studies:

- a) Investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context when
 - b) the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident and in which
 - c) multiple sources of evidence are used
- Anderson (op cit:158).

It was this description of case studies that the researcher used as a format for data collection in this study.

The case studies method requires interviews which include aspects of a "Narrative Inquiry" to be conducted as referred to by Bishop:

Narrative inquiry is aimed at uncovering the many experiences and 'voice' of the participants, emphasising complexities rather than commonalities (Bishop 1996:23).

His view that participants in a "*narrative inquiry*" are more likely to discuss their experiences which they believe is unique to them only, or that they have a "*story*" to tell supports the use of this method of inquiry. He also describes the "*strong cultural preferences*", amongst Maori people for narrative. This confirmed the researcher's position on the method implemented for this study.

4.2.2 The Focus

The problem of truancy was not new to Otara and to the researcher's knowledge there had not been a study on this issue from a person of such intimate knowledge of the community as himself.

Truancy in Otara was identified by the researcher as being one of the greatest "barriers to learning" for school aged youth. Initially it appeared on the surface to be a very direct problem that would require an understanding of the issue through identifying the causes of truancy.

The case study methodology provided the method to achieve that understanding.

4.3 DATA GATHERING APPROACH

The approach chosen was one in which the researcher worked with the participants to collect information through interviews. It involved, as a final outcome, critical consideration of the intervention strategies used in the case studies undertaken. This process according to Anderson (1994: 12) provides for: "*... programme evaluation.*"

In October 1996 a letter was tabled at the M.O.K.O. management committee meeting regarding the request by the researcher to work

with the officers on truancy cases referred to the programme (Appendix A). Then in February 1997 a letter was delivered to principals during introductory meetings with the researcher, advising them of this study and requesting from them their support for the process of establishing contact with participants (Appendix B).

First contact was established with each of the participants at their schools in the presence of a senior teacher, and a letter was sent home with the participants (Appendix C). This letter introduced the researcher to the parent/guardian and briefly outlined the study. The participants were required to return to school with the responses from home indicating the level of interest by the parents/guardians. All parents/guardians who indicated an interest were visited within the next week and times were set for a further meeting with them to discuss matters such as the aims of the study, the value of the participants' contribution and the confidentiality of data gathered from the participants and their whanau (family). Permission forms (Appendix D) were completed and returned to the researcher.

The researcher established communication with all participants. To ensure the accuracy of any evidence collected, a process was used to empower them to own their information and to fully participate in the process.

Carr and Kemmis (1983: p134), describe this as an "*emancipatory process*".

This included the participants understanding fully the research process and their right to veto the inclusion of any of the evidence they gave. Their expectation was that they would be properly represented, in the recording of their stories.

The interaction that was to occur naturally within the different case studies was varied yet equally rewarding for the researcher.

4.4 DATA COLLECTION

For this study the researcher ensured that each participant had his or her own special arrangements as to where and when the interviews were to take place.

These arrangements were mutually agreed upon and the participants' homes provided a settled and relaxed environment for all participants. After school when one of the parents would be home seemed to be the best time and the offers of biscuits and cups of tea were viewed by the researcher as being part of how visitors in this community are received by their hosts.

4.4.1 Access to Records

At its October meeting in 1996 the management committee for the M.O.K.O. Programme agreed to my request. This was given in the form of formal speeches by the Maori and Pacific Island representatives on the management committee. The researcher felt

that this was a culturally significant and deeply spiritual ceremony to initiate this study.

Working protocols with officers were quickly established which included the involvement of the researcher in referred cases of truancy to M.O.K.O., the negotiation with parents, schools and outside agencies when required, for intervention strategies. This was important as the role of Truancy Co-ordinator needed to be separated from that of the researcher, myself, who was studying this issue.

4.4.2 Processing Data

The interviews were to be transcribed by an independent person. Unfortunately this person was unable to fulfil this task. Contemporary colloquialisms and localised slang meant that the responses given were difficult to both hear and understand simultaneously.

A professional colleague of the researcher who was based at the Community Centre as a community worker, was then co-opted to complete this task.

A further meeting with each participant was organised later so that the cassette tapes and the transcripts could be provided to the participants for a review of their contribution. It was also an opportunity for them to edit their "stories" or to possibly withdraw from the process.

One whanau did withdraw, not from the process, but because they were leaving the community and the consultation process with them had not adequately concluded.

FIRST PHASE:

A coding process for each case study was used to identify key themes that were emerging from the data. These themes were grouped and coded using different coloured highlighters. The subcategories are listed below.

The key themes were:

- student related (positive or negative attitude to school, physical health condition)
- family related (housing, economics, parenting issues, positive or negative attitudes to school)
- school related (systems in response to absenteeism and truancy; teacher understanding and empathy of the student, school policy and/or philosophy to this)
- other (positive or negative influences by the community and government agencies, the presence of substance abuse, drugs or alcohol, peer pressure and gangs)

The frequency with which these identified influences occurred for each of the case studies were recorded, along with the totals for that frequency and are included in chapter six.

SECOND PHASE:

The next stage of the process identified the contributions that key agencies made to the successful interventions of the truants. For the government agencies their contributions were considered within the context of their statutory obligations. The contributions made by volunteer community groups were considered in relation to whom they represent and what their aims are.

The key agencies were:

- M.O.K.O. Truancy Officers
- Schools (Boards of Trustees, Principals and teachers responsible for truancy/absenteeism)
- Government Agencies (Special Education Services, District Health Nurses, Field Workers from the Ministry of Social Welfare)
- Community Volunteer groups (O tara Maori Wardens Sub-Association, Samoa Council of Chiefs, Cook Island Wardens, Samoa Wardens, Tonga Wardens, Niue Wardens, Pacific Island Church Groups, South Auckland Youth Resource Services.)

Their individual and collective contributions were recorded. Those agencies involved, were provided with the opportunity to comment in the summary of each case study.

In Chapter Six there is an analysis provided by them of their own involvement in the case studies.

4.5 QUESTIONS AND INTERVIEWS

4.5.1 Questions

The interview questions were designed to elicit from the rich data recorded the reasons for students' truant behaviour. The intention was to encourage the participants to tell their story, their way. In their own words they would help to create an understanding of their behaviour. It would provide the researcher with access into their world.

Connelly and Clandenin (1990) cited in Bishop (op cit) describe this process as being extremely important for the participants to:

... have the time and space to tell their story (Bishop 1996: 26).

The understanding of their experiences during the interventions was illuminating. Their stories were emotionally stressful for them and the researcher hoped that this was offset by the sense of release they felt at being part of the research.

The main themes of the interview questions were:

1. the causes of the truanting behaviour
2. those causes that were being generated from the student, the family and/or the school
3. descriptions of intervention strategies used to address those causes.

Questions for each of the case studies are provided in Appendix E.

4.5.2. Interviews

It was important that the interview took the form of discussion in order to be effective. This proved successful. The semi-structured interviews allowed for the participants to reflect upon the questions relative to their experiences. The telling of their stories their way in their words was more than an acceptable outcome for the interviews. Specifically designed questions to promote a format for each interview were prepared, (Appendix E). Not all of these questions were asked with the specific words that were prepared.

For all interviews the exact wording of questions needed to remain flexible to provide opportunities to encourage further explanation or clarification of any statements.

4.6 THE SAMPLE

4.6.1 The Students

The students were selected from the referrals to M.O.K.O. from the schools only, during 1996 and 1997. The students referred to M.O.K.O. from government agencies such as the police and C.Y.P.S. were not considered as participants as neither of them have the capacity to closely monitor the student's attendance patterns to school. It was not their professional responsibility of these agencies to do so anyway.

In his capacity as the co-ordinator for this programme, the researcher worked closely in the intervention strategies used for each of the case studies.

Fifteen students who had experienced a diverse range of causes for their truanting behaviour were identified. They had also experienced interventions which were quite successful. Eventually, only ten students (in seven case studies) were selected as they represented what the researcher believed was a cross-section of ethnic groups for those students truanting referred to M.O.K.O.

Table 11, displays the ethnicity of students referred to M.O.K.O. for 1995 and 1996.

Table 11

| STUDENTS REFERRED TO M.O.K.O. (1995 AND 1996) | |
|--|----------|
| ETHNICITY | % |
| Maori | 47 |
| Samoa | 34 |
| Cook Islands | 12 |
| Niue | 4 |
| Tonga | 2 |
| Other | 1 |

(Source: M.O.K.O. Office Records, 1995)

The high percentage of Maori students referred to M.O.K.O. supported the researchers decision to include more Maori participants in this study.

The information in Table 12 gives the ethnicity, gender and ages of each participant in the case studies.

A comparison between this table and the previous highlighted to the researcher that a reasonable balance of ethnicity, gender and age was achieved:

Table 12

| STUDENTS IN CASE STUDIES | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Ethnicity | Gender | Age (years) |
| Maori | Female | 9 |
| Maori | Male | 10 |
| Maori | Male | 10 |
| Maori | Male | 15 |
| Maori/Samoa | Females | 14 & 15 |
| Niue | Male | 14 & 15 |
| Maori/Rarotonga | Male | 11 |
| Maori/Rarotonga | Female | 14 |

The sample has been organised into four categories:

- students
- family
- school
- agencies

Information on each respondent is provided in the next part of this chapter.

A summary of each student is provided below:

Case Study 1:

Code: CHRIS - Male - Maori -15years.

Chris had a long history of absence, from primary through to secondary school. His parents were prosecuted for his truanting during his intermediate school years. He was the third child in his family and his non-attendance of school mirrors that of the two older children.

They too had a long history of truant behaviour and both had been admitted to a Social Welfare Institution¹². The brothers had some influence on Chris' behaviour by the attitude they displayed at home and in the community. They were considered a negative influence upon their younger brother.

¹² Social Welfare Institutions - are provided by the state and are classified as Residential Homes. Their principle aims are to provide care and to monitor youth offenders and youth-at-risk.

As a result of his continued absence from school this student had not experienced the same success at school as his peers. Chris had difficulty associating with his peers and he lacked the confidence to discuss things with teachers. He had also displayed aggressive behaviour at school.

His being referred to the M.O.K.O. Programme came as little surprise to one officer as it was well-known in the community that other siblings were involved in illegal activities.

Chris' father is well-respected in the community and is constantly involved in local Maori activities.

All the interviews were conducted at the student's home. His mother was always present during this time, although she was not actively involved in the interviews until she was offered an opportunity to comment on her son's progress at school.

Case Study 2:

Code: AREPA - Male - Maori - 10 years.

Arepa found with a group of other students who were not attending school. They were regular truants who spent much of their day at a reserve/park near their homes.

He first came to the attention of the local agencies for his absence from school beginning from when he first started school as a five year old. A visiting teacher's¹³ report described the difficulties his mother

¹³ Visiting teachers are provided by the Special Education Service, who provide support services to schools on behalf of the Ministry of Education.

had been having with getting him to school regularly and on time. There were issues to do with finances and organisation of the family. Arepa had attended four primary schools the previous year as his family had moved to different homes in South Auckland.

The efforts by the M.O.K.O. officers were centred around relocating this student in an alternative home environment within the extended whanau. He is living with his grandparents. His mother a beneficiary with two other children, accepted the decision and had regular contact with her son.

The interview was conducted over two days, with the first part being conducted in the principal's office of the new primary school and the latter being at the grandmother's home. These interviews were sometimes quite animated, with the Arepa excitedly sharing some of his experiences.

The grandmother spoke Maori and English as she was encouraged to express herself in ways that she was comfortable with.

Case Study 3:

Code: WIREMU - Male - Maori - 10 years and Hariata - Female - Maori - 9 years.

Wiremu and Hariata were referred to M.O.K.O. at the beginning of 1997. There were no previous attendance problems. During the Christmas holidays (1996/1997) this family had been involved in an automobile accident which resulted in all members of the family being

admitted to hospital with the eldest child being the most seriously injured. The school was informed and it was expected that Wiremu and Hariata would return to school when they were well enough to do so. However their return to school was quite irregular with the eldest child being frequently absent with illnesses related to the accident. Although the mother maintains that she reported to the school as often as possible, the school asserts that this was insufficient notification. The interviews took some time to arrange as the family was shifting to another home. Once they were located and the necessary familiarisation processes were established both the mother and Wiremu were very willing participants.

Case Study 4:

Code: CAL & TINA - Female - Samoa/Maori - 14 &15 years.

Cal and Tina had a history of truant and behaviour problems at their schools. They had missed a lot of school days during their attendance at intermediate and secondary school. They were always absent from school at the same time and were involved in fighting in school. Cal the younger student because of her absences had limited literacy skills. She communicates quite well verbally though her written work is unclear. Tina the older sibling has a better grounding in literacy. Her attitude can be indifferent and she has reacted violently to situations when she is pressured. They both have a past history of

involvement in an all-girl gang and it was believed that they were quite well-organised and resourceful.

Cal and Tina were referred to the M.O.K.O. programme once in 1995 and on three separate occasions during 1996. When these two students were referred once again, their file was taken out of the bottom drawer and reactivated as a major challenge to the officers of the M.O.K.O. programme and other community organisations.

Their interviews were conducted over a week with three sessions needing to be arranged to allow for some reflection by them on their experiences. They requested for their mother to be present at one session and their Uncle Hone to be present at the last interview.

Case Study 5:

Code: TAU - Male - Maori/Rarotonga - 11 years.

Tau was referred to the programme in the middle of 1996. This school was his third for the year with each change of school being brought about by his behaviour. Whilst not outwardly displaying any violent or aggressive behaviour to the students at his school, he still drew attention to himself for his involvement in vandalism and graffiti within the school and the community.

Tau was, for the first 9 to 10 years of his life, brought up by his maternal grandparents. When the student's birth parents believed that the grandparents were too elderly, they took him back to live with them.

The family that he lived with in this community had children of his age group and they attended the same school. His family's response to his previous negative behaviour at the other school had been to shift him from there and ultimately from that community. He moved to Otara community to live with another family member. Tau's absence from the school that referred him to M.O.K.O. began immediately after his enrolment.

The interviews were conducted at school as well as at the home of the whanau where he was living. At school, they were held in the office of the Senior Teacher during the afternoon craft sessions that Tau refused to attend until he was able to resolve the differences between himself and the craft teacher. He was very quiet at first until he felt more relaxed and was able to feel as that he could talk freely.

Certainly at his aunt's home he was very willing to discuss his experiences in her presence.

Case Study 6:

Code: HARRY & TANU - Male - Niue -14 & 15 years.

Harry and Tanu are brothers. Previously they were living separately at either of their parents homes, as the parents had been separated for the past 12 months. Tanu the older sibling had been staying with his mother whilst the other was with their father. Both these students were regularly attending school until just before the termination of their parents relationship.

The choice of who was to stay with whom is unclear, but the outcome relative to the non-attendance of these students is similar. Neither Harry and Tanu went to school regularly. They would meet out of school and truant together. They were referred to the programme by the school and the local C.Y.P.S. Office. They were involved in a group of local youth that are known for being involved in the use of marihuana and other crimes. It was suspected that they had recently taken their activities into the school. After appearing in front of the Board of Trustees Discipline Committee, they were reinstated. Their parents were later requested to go to the school to discuss the teachers' concerns for these truanting students. When this meeting never eventuated, the M.O.K.O. office was contacted.

These interviews were all conducted at Harry and Tanu's school. The location was the Dean's Office and they took place during the lunch time breaks on Wednesdays and Fridays. Harry and Tanu were known to the researcher before the project began; through a mutual contact in the community who had previously raised the issues of their behaviour. They were entirely relaxed throughout the process and contributed willingly.

Case Study 7:

Code: EVE - Female - Maori/Rarotonga - 14 years.

Eve had been away from school for the first three weeks of the 1997 school year. She was described by her previous teachers as a pleasant student who seemed to socialise well with her peers.

Eve's family had moved to different parts of the North Island as her parents searched for steady employment, this was considered a factor hindering her progress at school. She was referred to the M.O.K.O. Programme after four days of absence. Once located, her extended family informed the officer that her parents had separated over the holidays and that there were issues to do with Child Custody to be resolved and that there were financial issues also.

The entire interview was conducted at the home of the Eve's aunt. Her extended family were extremely co-operative and very friendly. The student was quite willing to participate in the interview and discussed issues of her family in their presence.

4.6.2 The Parents/Guardians

The following information is provided to give some detail of the relationship of the parent/guardian/caregivers.

There were: one grandmother,
 six mothers,
 one father,
 two aunts,
 and one uncle.

The following is data noted concerning these parents/guardians. It is not the intention that they should be considered as being representative of parents in this community:

- The total number of female parent/guardians for the whole study were nine compared with two male parent/guardians
- There were only two case studies, 3 and 7, that had no male adult as a father figure present in the home
- In Case Study 1 the father supported the participation of his son in the research, but he would not be interviewed.

The researcher believed that his attitude reflected the other families with a father figure present, but where the men chose not to be a direct participant of the process in the collection of data.

They were however, present during formal welcomes and introductions at the first visit. The researcher considers that this in itself was still part of the important community process that was undertaken to ensure that protocols were observed. This non-participation in the interviews was interpreted by the researcher to be a statement in itself, that so many of these men would not take a full part. Their action illustrated a practice by them, that the management of the family, i.e. children and household matters, was the responsibility of their wives. This was a theory long held by the researcher which had been confirmed in this study with these parents. In spite of an explanation to these fathers of the coding system used to guarantee protection of their identity, these men absolutely refused to participate.

- It was confirmed for the researcher that where two parents are present in the family, it does not necessarily indicate that a shared parenting role exists.

The parent and guardian interviewed, within the semi-structured interview sessions with the students, were considered by the researcher to be important as a way of supporting the youngest students involved with the case studies.

4.6.3 The Schools

There were fourteen schools in Otara that were participating in the M.O.K.O. Truancy programme for 1996 and 1997.

Four of these schools were directly involved with each of the case studies and the principal of each school was invited to be interviewed at the conclusion of each case study. All but one accepted the offer to comment on the student's progress. All schools were also invited to reflect upon any new initiatives that were introduced into their school to cater for the needs of their truant students.

The schools the students came from were :

- two secondary schools
- two intermediate schools
- two primary schools.

Both the secondary and intermediate schools had decile ratings of 1 and the two primary schools each had a decile rating of 2.

The rolls of participating schools were:

- secondary school 523
- the intermediate school 218
- the primary schools 265 and 274

All principals were active members of the Otara Principals' Association and all schools involved with this study had their full complement of teaching staff. All schools had active members of Boards of Trustees and all board meetings were well attended.

All schools were, in the opinion of the researcher, very warm welcoming places, with considerable support for the students from very caring and committed teaching staff. The office staff of the schools, so often described as the "front window" of the school were very helpful and friendly.

4.6.4 Agencies and Volunteer Groups

The organisations involved, willingly participated in each intervention. Their input into the interventions in which they were included cannot be understated.

The organisations involved were:

- Ministry of Social Welfare, Children and Young Persons Service (C.Y.P.S.)
- Niue Elders Group
- Otara Youth for Christ Club
- Te Ropu Manaaki Whanau
- Te Kupenga Te Kohanga Reo
- South Auckland Youth Resource Services
- Safer Community Council, Manukau

4.7 THE RESEARCHER

To ensure the willingness of the participants the researcher was required to develop an already positive profile in the community, in the area of education and community development.

This came through the values taught to him by his parents, who are Maori, and the parents of friends, many of whom were Polynesian. He was viewed by some as a leader and therefore carries the responsibility of using appropriate behaviour. He willingly accepted the role as guarantor of the rights for those involved with this study. His knowledge of the community dynamics in Otara, as to what is or isn't appropriate in this community proved invaluable in many ways.

For example:

- (i) The researcher knew that to guarantee the support of various leaders of organisations such as the Kaumatua Runanga (Maori Elders), Niue Fono (Niue Group of Elders) and the Samoa Matai (Samoa Council of Chiefs), he had to observe cultural protocols and present himself before them informing them of the outline of the study. The outcome was that their guidance and support was granted for him to undertake the study.
- (ii) It was important for the researcher to understanding protocols in the homes of people of different ethnic groups and behaving in such a way to avoid imposing himself on them at special family times of the day, early evening for night prayers.

It was also important for the researcher to know his status as a visitor and a person in the presence of an elder. In case study four a Samoan chief (the grandfather), was staying at the home of one of the students and the researcher sat on the floor at his feet to acknowledge his title in his family. This gesture of respect was acknowledged by the matai (chief) and his family and the researcher was quickly offered a seat beside him.

For me as a researcher my knowledge of how the local leadership of the different ethnic groups function, of the various protocols practised in different homes and the subtle but important community perceptions of who I am as a local politician (a Councillor in Manukau City Council), was of some significance to the process of the study.

This knowledge was gained during the thirty years, that I have lived in Otara. I attended the local schools, walked the streets and played in the parks of this community. As a primary trained school teacher who had taught in primary and secondary schools in Otara, I brought to this research an understanding of some of the issues confronting these students and families as part of a professional perspective gained during this time. If anything it meant that I was better accepted by a wider section of Otara people. I was one of them, I was less likely to be judgmental of their lives. I was in fact like them. I am a product of this community. As was stated to me by one of the parents in Case Study one, *"you were one of the shits that burnt down by brother's*

shed where he made his home brew." This was an accusation that was neither confirmed nor denied, but was responded to with a sorrowful look of regret, that any connection I might have had with this incident, should resurface after all these years.

In my current position as the director of a local community centre, I have had the opportunities for developing administration and management skills. I have analysed policies and data during this time and I brought this background to the study. Most importantly I have been the co-ordinator for the M.O.K.O. Truancy Programme since it's inception.

Also In the role of the director I have seen some people living in poverty, who managed to still send their children to school. A few others could not hold their heads up and were struggling to survive. But as a Maori living in this community it was important to me that these unfortunate few people in this community do more than just survive.

I believed that the outcomes of this study could contribute to improving the lives of current and future truanting students.

I have also been fortunate to also share in times of celebration in Otara, which is equally memorable. I continue to draw strength from those people and those experiences.

4.8 VALIDITY

The matter of accountability as to the Research Process and the value of the outcomes was conducted by the M.O.K.O. Truancy Programme Management Committee and its officers. Chapter two refers to this programme and the relationship between the two.

The collection of this data was examined against the literature from here and overseas to help to identify successful and effective interventions into truancy. Theories of these interventions were described by Kemmis and McTaggart (1987), as being able to be validated through practice.

The relevance of Action Research to this project was confirmed by the researcher actively participating in three truancy cases and designing interventions to their behaviour. To effect a change upon their behaviour was considered a major outcome for this study. In this way, the issues confronting the student are viewed in a social context which provides indicators as to what those issues are, the level by which they influence the students behaviour and the opportunities for effective intervention of that behaviour.

The involvement of the researchers and participants as equal partners was an intrinsic aspect of Action Research. The ownership of the information given by the participants during interviews remains with them. An important feature of the process was to ensure credibility with the students and their families, the schools, the community,

government agencies and volunteer groups through the collaborative nature in which this information was given. Certainly the need for academic credibility within the guidelines of the research process being ethically appropriate was also considered important.

All the information given through interviews was transcribed and the first draft and a copy of the tapes was provided for the participants to listen to and edit their contributions only. Elliot (1982) discusses how the accuracy of the material produced prevents the dichotomy of outside influences impacting upon any and all outcomes and that it confirms the authenticity and reliability of research findings.

4.9 CONCLUSION

The most valued information to be received was that from the student. Their responses to the questions reflected their world and explained their experiences. The researcher frequently acknowledged the value of their contribution to this study. A non-judgmental approach by the researcher of their actions was vital to achieve the trust that they placed in me. Their way of expressing themselves, their exact words they used, are included in the following chapter. It is their language, it is a language that they have learnt and chosen to use during the interviews; it is a language that they are comfortable with.

Their communication skills or lack thereof are not under study here. Gresham (1986) stated that, social validation has been defined as social skills that are deemed socially significant and socially important by persons in the children's environment. Gresham (ibid) indicates here the importance of recognising, conceptual issues in the assessment of social competence in children.

Of special interest throughout the interview processes was the role of the researcher in the interventions of each of the students in the case studies. The interviews provided an opportunity to evaluate for the student and their families the progress that both had made. This became evident during the reviewing of all the information from the interviews with each of the case study participants.

The audio tapes were retained by the participants as a preference to the written transcripts. The reasons for this was well stated by the aunt of the student in Case Study 5 when she said, *"It's the sound of his voice, the emotion of what he is saying is captured on tape as he matures and his voice changes, he can listen to this tape again."*

5.0 FINDINGS

... research participants tell others of their experiences, and relive their experiences and their stories of their experiences, their stories of their stories and so on (Bishop 1996:27)

5.1 Introduction

The data obtained from the interviews have been organised under the two main areas of this study, the causes of truancy and the interventions implemented to reduce truancy. The following findings on the causes of truancy have emerged from the case studies:

- students' negative attitude to school or regular school attendance (students' habit of non-attendance to school)
- external distractions to regular school attendance
- involvement in anti-social activity (gangs, drugs)
- parental apathy
- poor home management skills
- parent condoned truanting
- parents' separating/divorce
- parental stress
- violence in the home
- absence of role models
- economics (unemployment and housing issues).

The key findings related to truancy interventions include the influence of student, parent and agency involvement.

They were:

- improved student attitude
- supportive actions and attitude by the parents
- the involvement of: schools (with new programmes)

M.O.K.O.

government agencies

volunteer groups.

A third area also discussed in this section are examples of the effects that students' have experienced.

5.2 Causes of Truancy

5.2.1 Student Attitude

The students' attitude towards regular school attendance and education overall is recognised by the researcher as the key component to addressing truancy. For all these students, their truancy was a manifestation of many problems in their personal lives.

The following are examples of students' negative attitude to school:

- i. The Norman Kirk Memorial swimming pool is a popular venue for many youth in Otara. Pool attendants and staff work with the schools to deter students from using this venue during school hours, but the geographical location of the pool in relation to the Town Centre provides opportunity for the students to take flight from the swimming pools and avoid being returned to school by staff or

M.O.K.O. officers. The students in case study four chose the local swimming pools in the summer as an alternative to being at school.

Cal and Tina explain their visits to the pools as an alternative to attending school:

... we started missing school at intermediate, I was a form one and she was a form two ... we started going to the pools ... we started to wag classes even when we got to college ... soon it was hard to go back to school.

Cal and Tina began truanting at the ages of 11 and 12 years. It initially appeared to the M.O.K.O. officers that there was no obvious reason at home or at school for why their truanting began. The researcher noted that these truanting students openly describe the creation of a truanting habit. Furthermore they acknowledge that once their truanting behaviour was established it became difficult to stop.

ii. For Arepa, (case study two), a nearby reserve with a small stream was the venue he regularly chose to go to instead of attending school. His non-attendance at school started much earlier than the students in case study four. The cause of his truanting at an earlier age had much to do with the meagre support he received from his parents and his family's continually moving from one community to another. He has a casual attitude to school attendance, his preference is to play near a stream with his friends.

He recalls that:

... we used to go down there all the time ... first after school then in the mornings, then all the time ...
We used to play all the time there. We would play war or fish for some eels , or anything.

This venue was popular amongst the younger truanting student because it provided them with a venue that is out of the public eye. Although frequently visited by M.O.K.O. officers the "glade" as the students have called it, continues to attract truanting students who are generally of intermediate school age. For this student also, a habit of non-attendance at school had developed.

iii. In case study five, Tau was starting his third school in six months. The transition to different homes in different communities created problems for this student. He did not react positively to the changes that occurred. A new family and a new school with few friends was given as a reason for why he started truanting from this school.

These changes in his life contributed to the following:

...started to wag 'cause everyone was sort-of-pickin' on me. My aunty, when I first went to live with them was getting in my face 'bout everything. It was a new school to me and .. I didn't know anyone, only my cousins.

iv. The nonchalant statements from students were difficult to respond to in the interviews because there were no concrete reasons

for why their attitude towards school had changed. Examples of such statements are as follows:

from Chris

I just didn't want to go to school ... wasn't sick or nothing ... just didn't want to go

and from Harry and Tanu

I don't know how it started really, it just got out of hand .. things got very loose for us .. and we sort of drifted out of school .. dropped out sort of.

Chris, (case study one), considered his truanting to be an action that he made without any influence from others around him. His view was that ill-health must be the main reason for himself and others to be absent from school. As he was not ill, from his perspective, he was truanting. It is the researcher's view that this student's truanting behaviour had been established without his being consciously aware that it had.

Similarly, Harry and Tanu (case study six), describe how their truanting behaviour started. The development of the truancy habit occurred without their being aware of what was happening. Before this behaviour could be arrested, regular school attendance was no longer a priority for them. There is certainly no a clear description of the events leading up to their truanting and the suggestion that they "drifted out of school" left the researcher quite perplexed as their truanting was not picked up earlier.

Comments such as this occurred only twice in this study but it reflected the negative attitude of the students to school. The researcher had difficulty in eliciting answers to questions for an analysis of this attitude.

5.2.2 Parent Condoned Absence

Without doubt the most difficult cause of truancy to address was the condoning of truancy by parents.

i. Evidence from the interviews suggests that this occurred frequently. In case study two, Arepa an 11 year old student, described how he stayed home to help his mother by looking after younger siblings, while she went out shopping for groceries. This mother considered this a legitimate and appropriate method to manage her home. The consequence was regular and continued truanting.

Arepa reported that:

Sometimes I had to help mum and look after the kids ... she had to go out shopping ... I used to stay home like that all the time.

ii. Even more disconcerting was the situation of Eve an older student (case study seven) who was kept at home to wait for the children to return from school as her mother had gone to an afternoon housie (bingo) session. This situation was completely different from that previously described as the mother was not necessarily producing

an outcome to benefit her family. This could be seen as a complete neglect of parental responsibility.

Eve confirmed that:

Mum would sometimes go out or go to housie in the afternoon and I would wait for the kids to come home from school.

iii. Tau, (case study five), had been raised by his grandparents in a rural settlement. He was effectively the eyes and ears for his elders in their latter years. The notion of "giving" a child to your elders for them to raise is common practice in Maori families. It is not considered a neglect of responsibilities by those parents. Instead it is seen that a young child being raised by his/her elders will capture their stories and learn of traditional cultural practices. This child will also benefit his/her grandparents by giving them someone to nurture to care for, to live for. This child may be the last of his family to experience their elders' *aroha* (love).

On the issue of condoned absence from school, the situation that is created in case study five is partly that of economics as Tau did not have the proper clothing and footwear for inclement weather. Not only were there economic difficulties, the activities that he attended at the marae¹⁴ were evidence of his condoned absence from school by his grandparents. The marae visits may have provided opportunities for

¹⁴ marae - Maori ceremonial complex modelled on the traditional village of pre-European Maori. It is the main venue for the observation of Maori cultural protocols. It is described as the cultural and spiritual centre for Maori.

him to learn these traditional cultural practices, but unfortunately it was at the expense of his school tuition. By the time he went to live with his parents, patterns of truanting had been established.

Tau recalls how:

When I was with my Nan up north, aye ... if I didn't want to go to school she would say I could stay home then, choice aye? ... 'specially if it was raining or there was a *tangi* (funeral) at the marae.

5.2.3 Violence at home:

i. Examples of physical discipline emerged in the evidence. In case study five, the researcher believed that Tau was significantly traumatised by his experience as a victim of physical discipline. He describes this as being the worst "hiding" he had received. His grandparents had not treated him this way and their approach to discipline had been one which required discussion and remonstrations with him concerning his behaviour.

Tau was critical of the incident:

When my uncle found out, he gave me a hiding ... the first big hiding I ever got ... worse than the one my father gave me for wagging when I stayed with them.

Not only had Tau been taken from the place that he knew as home and away from the people who had raised him, but he went to a new

home environment with his parents and then with an uncle, who practised a different method of discipline. It is the researcher's suggestion that all these factors contributed to his truanting. When he came to live with his aunt in Otara, Tau had been truanting.

ii. Arepa, (case study two), spoke of the threat of a "hiding", by a parent should their child be found at the "glade". He acknowledged that the threat of physical discipline existed in his home situation. Despite this however, he and other students continued to truant. What he also describes is the friendship and camaraderie that he experienced while in the company of other truants. His casual mention of the fact that physical discipline exists in his home is a reflection of his acceptance that this form of discipline is normal as it is in the homes of his friends as well.

He revealed that:

If parents and that came down the glade we never used to say anything. We all knew that our mates would get a hiding. Even me ... our father would give us the bash, hard as.

5.2.4 Separation of parents

i. The separation of parents after a relationship had concluded produced negative reactions and comments from students. Harry and Tanu (case study six) could not comprehend that their father would leave their home and especially their mother, to live with another woman. They believed he was too old and therefore unattractive.

The trauma caused by their parents' failed relationship meant that their behaviour could not be monitored as closely by just their mother. This resulted in their "drifting out of school" and a pattern of truanting occurred.

Their description of their feelings was:

... it wasn't a good look ... the whole damn street knew that he (Dad) wasn't coming home. I don't think that shit that went down with our folks helped us .. we heard the talk in the street, the old man (Dad) was with another woman.

ii. In Eve's home (case study seven) a similar experience took place. Her parents had separated which brought more pressure upon their difficult financial situation. She was aware that her parents' relationship had problems and she was anxious that they remain together as a family. For her, the separation of her parents was significant as it occurred during the school holidays and as a consequence she did not have all her uniform and stationery to start the new year.

Her recollection of these events are as follows:

My family was going through some hard times ... I was hoping my parents would stay together ... but when the holidays were over and I had to return to school, I just couldn't do it.

Eve's mother's decision to move from the family home with the children caused the family to be distracted in such a way that the children all had difficulties settling into routines. This time they were shifting to another home without their father. His absence unsettled the children.

Many of their possessions were left behind where their father was staying and this added to the difficulties of adjusting to a new home. Despite the fact that this family had moved to other homes as their father followed employment opportunities in different parts of the country, this time they moved because of a different agenda. Eve could not return to school, "she just couldn't do it."

She also explains that her mother had some money for her school needs but none for her two brothers who were starting intermediate school. It was Eve's decision to ensure that her brothers had all they needed to start school, she believed it was important for them to get a good start at intermediate school. Her view was that her brothers needed to be as ready as their friends would be, because they would have been too young to have coped with the disappointment of looking different at school.

5.2.5 Displacement of a Student

The situation of Tau (case study five) who was being moved from his grandparents has been introduced earlier in this chapter. His trauma was added to when he returned to visit his grandparents during the school holidays at the end of term two. He was upset that his grandparents had aged during his absence and that the home he lived in was in need of repair. During this interview the researcher witnessed Tau's grief and his anger, when he realised that his father had not been completely honest with him. Tau now believes that he was taken from his grandparents' home, his home. The researcher

believed that this interview provided opportunity for this student to grieve for his loss.

When I get up there for a holiday, they both look really old. Papa hardly went outside, 'cept to go to church. Nan, was walkin' slow 'round the house .. and the house was falling down, ... they got old fast. I just cried, hard out too, no shame on me man. Aunty Kaa said that they were upset for a long time 'cause I went away .. I thought they wanted me to go with my parents .. but they did mind my father taking me, he said they wanted me to go, NOT even, it was my father .. I know him .. hate him!

5.2.6 Causes - School

Although not as significant as the other causes listed in this chapter, it appears that school has an influence on truanting. In this section, students' experiences with their teachers and schools will be discussed. They have not usually been regarded as large contributors to causing truancy but because teachers and schools are referred to by the participants as being part of their negative experiences, the researcher has included them. The findings relate, of course, solely to what the participants knew of their schools.

Teacher performance

i. In case study six, 15 year old Tanu described how his dislike of some teachers, their lack of ability to teach and the large amount of work they gave him, were reasons for him not to attend school. It was this student's perception that if the teacher was boring, so too was the school work given to him.

He explained that:

... there were a couple of teachers I didn't like because they were boring, the work was boring and school was boring. Its hard to concentrate sometimes because they had a lot of trouble controlling the class, no one respected them

The notion of respecting teachers is a key issue. Tanu suggests that teachers who have control of a class are good teachers. It is an expectation by a truanting student of a teacher that the researcher interprets as a cause of truancy. The methods by which this "control" of the class is achieved would differ between each teacher and each school. The researcher believes it would differ between communities as well.

ii. Despite his irregular attendance to school Tau (case study five), has a perception of what a good class is. He is surprised that his fellow students do not "listen" to the teachers. This is an indication that he respects teachers. He was however critical of one teacher who removed teaching material from being accessible to the students. It was an act that demonstrated to Tau that he and his classmates could not be trusted. It was unfortunate that this teacher was new to the school and his actions were viewed negatively by the students. The researcher understands from his experience that teachers must manage their classroom in a way that "works for them". This was another example of a school situation creating a negative response by students who may already not be enjoying school in the first instance.

Tau explains his view:

.. our class is noisy .. noisy as! There's too many kids there .. I never seen a school like that before, aye .. the kids don't listen to the teachers ... anyway our woodwork teacher didn't trust us. He put all the tools from our benches in his office, I reckon he thought we might rip the place off.

***Ma* (embarrassment) or the "shame factor"**

In case study four, Tina was largely positive towards school except for two occasions which she has not come to terms with.

The first was an occasion that she describes as being serious for her.

Serious enough that is, to not attend school. She explained that:

One time I was reading a book instead of doing the work we were supposed to be doing and the teacher flipped. I couldn't believe it. There were others in the class that weren't doing any work at all. He said I had a chance to do something with my life, or something like that. Everyone just stared at me. I was really embarrassed. I was pissed off!

Tina introduces a concept of *ma* (shame or embarrassed). This is an odd situation that is not new but it has been the researcher's experience that it exists in some schools where there a large number of Maori and Pacific Island students. For her, being singled out in class for something positive is as difficult to accept as it is if the focus on her is because of misbehaviour. The feeling of being uncomfortable when being considered by teachers as being different from your friends can be emotionally difficult

for some students. The attention of the teacher in class was certainly difficult for Tina to accept.

I used to be a good runner and just because all my mates were smokers and were in to tats (tattoos), the P.E. teacher thought I was too. He was like that other teacher who talked all that shit about trying to save me from myself. What an egg!

As with her previous experience, Tina avoids the obvious support that is being offered by another teacher. It is the view of the researcher that the intentions of these teachers were a sincere efforts to support a student they believed had potential to do well at school. The teacher's attempts to support Tina are not viewed by the researcher as being a direct cause for her truanting. However the researcher's teaching experience provided an understanding of the cultural complexities that students can bring to school.

Problems with communication between Home and School

Only case study revealed the unfortunate situation of a parent and a school not effectively communicating. It was an obvious feature in this whole study that schools were not commented upon by the students or any of the other parents/guardians/care givers as specifically contributing to a student truanting, The one situation where it did occur is outlined in the comments of the mother in case study three:

... some of the teachers started to ask my younger ones where their older brother was and why he wasn't coming to school. I thought what a bloody cheek. I rang the school office, well most of the time, surely they could have told the teachers that.

This case study was originally included with this research as it involved young students. The description of the students and their truanting pattern led the researcher to believe that the parent involved was having difficulties getting her children to school. However the parent in case study three was able to articulate quite clearly to M.O.K.O. officers and the researcher the background to her children's absence from school. She mentions in particular that she thought the school was non-supportive. The researcher included this case study with the school based causes as it was the strong view of the parent that the school was quite incorrect in referring her children to M.O.K.O.

Her concluding comment was:

... I thought the school might be a bit more sympathetic to us and the effect the (car), accident had on my kids. There was only one time when the school rang me up at home about the kid's absence. Maybe I'm out of line here, but I guess I was expecting a bit more support.

5.2.6 Causes - Students involvement in anti-social activity

Drugs

The involvement of students with drugs occurred in just three case studies. These cases differed in that contact and use of drugs differed for each student. The researcher has included the use of drugs by these students as a significant factor to their truanting.

- i. Harry and Tanu became involved in drugs when they associated with a local street gang. They acknowledged that they

knew of gang members using drugs and they admitted that this behaviour was what attracted them. These students became regular users of marihuana as their truanting became more established. It was when they attended school under the influence of drugs that the school sought assistance for these students from outside agencies.

They describe their drug use:

Yeah we just went in (to school) a bit out-of-it, nothing special. But the teachers sprung us and said we brought dak to school and so everyone was on-to-us for that.

ii. For Cal and Tina (case study four), their involvement in drugs was a small part of their activities when they were truanting. They referred to their drug taking on only two occasions in their interviews. Each time drugs were referred to it was done so within a description of an event. Drugs could not be considered a significant reason for their truanting. It was part of their truanting and is considered by the researcher as important in the context of these students' behaviour:

I shake my head when I think of the money we wasted on dak (marihuana) or booze.

iii. Tau (case study five), describes his involvement with drugs on another level. He was aware that members of his extended family were cultivating and selling marihuana. He also knew that these family members were living off the proceeds of this activity. Despite his age and his sheltered upbringing he was aware that this activity was illegal and his uncle confirmed his view that this activity was quite

inappropriate. He respected his uncle for making a strong statement against drugs.

It was during Tau's truanting that he came in contact with drugs. He "dared" a cousin to bring some to school. Fortunately for both of them this did not occur. He recalls his experience in the following way:

When I met up with my new whanau (family), we used to wag. His whole family was growing and selling .. and he reckoned he could score us some hooch (marihuana).

Gangs

i. Since the late 1960's there has always been the opportunity for young Maori men to be involved in gangs in urban communities. This was part of the urban Maori phenomena that has been a feature of communities such as Otara. Many of these gangs today have mixed ethnic membership. They are anti-social and participate in illegal activities.

Harry and Tanu (case study six) were involved in such a group. There was no pressure by other gang members for these students to truant. This has been acknowledged by Harry and Tanu that the decision to join was theirs. The attraction for these students was the very casual attitude other gang members had about school attendance or authority in general. They joined this gang soon after their father moved out of home. The researcher considers that the rebellious activities of this gang were a distraction for these students.

They describe their activities:

Being with the B----- don't mean you don't go to school. They don't care if we do or don't. Most of the time we just hang-out and shoot some hoops (play basketball) and get off our faces on dak (marihuana).

iii. In this community an all girl gang is more a reaction by young women to what is taking place in their lives, rather than being "politically correct". The Crew is one such group. The researcher understands that members were well organised and were protective of each other. They were prone to violence and participated in burglaries.

Cal and Tina (case study four), were the leaders of this gang. They thrived on the excitement that being rebellious brought them. These students found that their activities in this group were a distraction away from school. As leaders of this gang they discouraged other students from attending school regularly. The involvement of these students in this gang meant that they were frequently truanting and were absent from home. They describe themselves and their actions in the following way:

.... us girls, we called ourselves the Crew, we used to fire-up (motivate) on talk about our parents, the boys at school, that Hindu prick up the dairy he looks at those Penthouse Magazines while we're in his shop and stares at us .. dirty bastard, we wanted to smash him big time.

Burglaries

i. This again involved Cal and Tina (case study four) who organised their group's activities. The profits brought about by these actions allowed the members of this group to stay away from home for longer periods of time. Cal and Tina admit their involvement in burglaries:

... when the guys would do a burg' (burglary) at all these flash homes, they just brought out some clothes and a feed. They didn't even score a video camera or anything.

ii. Chris (case study one), followed his older brothers to places where burglaries were committed. Although he describes his participation as being quite small, he was a willing participant regardless. This activity unfortunately was experienced as part of his day truanting. The actions of the older brothers could be seen as being close to condoning the truanting behaviour of Chris

He told of occasions when:

My bro' would pull off some burgs, just for fun .. I went sometimes, but I never went into the houses though, don't know why .. we get home they show me the stuff and we would laugh it was fun .. I didn't want to go to school anymore.

Graffiti

Only one student spoke of his involvement in this activity. His revelations provided an insight in to this activity, with his description sounding as though it was addictive. This data was quite new to the

researcher in understanding the depth of this problem if Tau's descriptions of his involvement in tagging is common for all other taggers.

He describes how:

I would sneak out at night from my aunty's place and I would go out and tag (graffiti). ... it's hard to stop .. true .. if I used to see a wall and there's heaps of action like buses and that going past and everyone can see your tag .. it's hard to explain .. I just got to tag .. I couldn't help it then.

As a result of his tagging at night, Tau went to school tired. He often became irritable and his behaviour worsened.

5.2.7 Economics

There were four case studies where economic factors had a significant effect on the truanting behaviour of the students. In all these case studies parents were unemployed. An inability by these parents to provide the proper clothing and equipment for these students contributed to their truanting. The researcher believes that in two of the case studies, parents had demonstrated that they were irresponsible because of their reluctance to find employment.

i. In case study two, Arena's father was not fully employed and was not always home. The researcher understands that the father in this case study had not experienced much success at school

himself and as a consequence appeared to place little value on school.

Arepa recalled:

... it was always cold to me when I was little, I couldn't find my shoes all the time and I .. I mostly had no shoes to go to school I think we were a little bit poor.

The researcher's view of the father's actions were confirmed by Arena's grandmother:

My son is not a good person. *Kei te whakama maua* (We are embarrassed.) He hasn't worked for I don't know how long. He won't go to work. *Na te mangere pea* (Perhaps it is because he is lazy).

ii. Eve (case study seven), was fully aware of her family's financial situation. She accepted that her uniform and school stationary could not be bought by her mother at the beginning of the year. She desperately wanted to start school at the same time as her friends. Unfortunately she was not strong enough to do so and she stayed home for a long period of time.

She shared the following:

I used to have a uniform from last year .. us moving to aunty's place I couldn't find it. Anyway it couldn't fit anymore. It used to be my cousins. We didn't have any *pingas* (money) for all our uniforms and books and stuff.

iii. The mother in case study three, explained her difficulties with her vehicle and her being unable to continue with her part-time job.

She gives a moving description of how the financial difficulties she was experiencing was placing pressure upon her and her children.

Without my car I couldn't go to my part-time job cleaning. Consequently I had to quit and that affected the income to our home and I knew we would struggle ... the car, the burglary and having to rely on just the benefit, I could feel us sinking into a bloody big hole.

5.2.8 Parent Apathy

There was only one case study where a parent demonstrated a negative attitude towards helping her children. In case study seven, M.O.K.O. officers had arranged for Eve's mother to attend a meeting with an Income Support Officer at the Otara Social Welfare office. This meeting was to discuss how Eve's family might be able to apply for financial assistance to purchase her uniform and school equipment. Her mother chose not to attend. Eve was very disappointed.

Her view was that her mother didn't care about her. It is difficult to understand the apathy of a parent towards providing for her children.

Eve stated that:

Mum hacked me off when she didn't go to Social Welfare to see that woman ... I don't know if she was *ma* (shy) or if she wanted me to stay home and look after the kids. Sux man!

Eve was not being disrespectful to her mother, rather she was stating the facts and perhaps was a little annoyed that her mother did not seek assistance.

The example of parental apathy and neglect that Eve experienced did not specifically cause her to truant. However, the non-action by her mother did not assist to facilitate Eve's return to school.

5.3 INTERVENTIONS

5.3.1 Introduction

The following interventions were explained in the interviews. The participants shared their experiences and spoke proudly of the progress they had made.

5.3.2. Intervention Strategies

Case Study One

There were four parts to the intervention strategies for this student: Firstly, the initial visit by the M.O.K.O. officers to Chris's home laid the foundation for developing his parent's support for him to return to school. It was significant for the intervention strategies developed for Chris that the officers were able to establish a rapport with his father.

Chris describes the first meeting:

... M.O.K.O. come over (visited home), one of them knew my Dad from the pub ... Dad said this fullah was all right. He come over to my Dad, *mihi* (a speech in Maori) to him. Then Dad replied .. they *hongi* (Maori greeting) and then they talked.

The second part was to establish support for Chris as a young Maori male. He had only a few friends and the Ropu Manaaki Youth Club, a

voluntary community organisation, provided a network of students and adults who could support Chris and his family.

The focus of this club is to encourage student's to regularly attend school and to assist each other as young Maori in an urban environment. This is achieved by getting young Maori involved in positive activities.

Chris describes his first encounter with this group:

... he (the M.O.K.O. officer), took me to this Youth Club. I thought it was just for kids, then I was them get-it-together, man it was awesome .. major wicked. They were doing things like murals to show the music they liked, *kapa haka* (Maori cultural action songs), they did games the did rap songs.

Thirdly the school was very willing to have Chris rejoin his friends at school. An "after school programme" was developed to help Chris with his reading. His interest in Maori language and cultural practices was supported by his father.

Chris explains:

I only like the Maori class. My Dad would help me with my homework. My bro's came over one time .. they freaked when they saw Dad was teaching me all this stuff ... they said that Dad should have done that to them too.

M.O.K.O.'s constant monitoring of Chris' attendance at school ensured that officers could respond quickly should he be late or miss any days of school. Maintaining contact with Chris' family ensured that they too felt supported. Chris responded positively to the support he was receiving from different sources.

He says:

I want to go straight. I've got to many people on my side: the Youth Club, M.O.K.O. , my Dad, the school sort of.

Case Study Two

The major influence to Arepa's truanting was that his grandparents were able to provide a home environment for him. Much needed support for Arepa to attend school was provided. The establishment of daily routines in his life also supported his regular attendance to school.

Arepa says:

... I got a new school bag and I can't lose my books aye Nan? I take lunch to school ... when it rains .. I got a raincoat.

He maintained regular contact with his parents and he enjoyed living with his grandparents. His grandmother helped him with his homework which the school provides.

Arepa talks about his new home:

I'm staying with my Nans and Paps now. I like it there aye; mum and the kids come and see me ... they only down the road.

M.O.K.O. officers monitored Arepa's attendance at school and continued to work with his mother and the other school aged sibling to ensure that Arepa's experience was not repeated by another family member.

Arepa's mother describes the involvement of M.O.K.O. :

They were involved from the start. They got my in-laws involved ... and they encouraged me to let them help ... they (M.O.K.O. officers), were worried about me and the other children too. They got me involved in the *Kohanga*, (*Te Kohanga Reo* is a pre-school where Maori is the language of instruction), up the road.

Case Study Three

The most significant intervention strategy for these students was the relocation of their family with their aunt. As the result of on-going health problems from injuries sustained in a car accident, Wiremu and Hariata's family were experiencing economic difficulties. The opportunity for two sisters to combine their resources and live together as a large family provided the impetus for Wiremu and Hariata's family to re-start their lives in a supportive home environment and consequently a new school.

Their mother explains:

A person in the M.O.K.O. team knew that I had a sister that lived near a school that had a bi-lingual unit. I knew that if they were in an environment that was a bit more supportive they might feel better about going to school. When I mentioned this to my sister she was all for it. She said that she could mind the kids after school and I could arrange to have the younger ones dropped off after Kohanga, which meant I could go back to work.

Case Study Four

The most positive effect Cal and Tina's lives was the involvement of a member of their extended family because it enable them to:

return home and speak with their parents; leave the gang they started and stop their anti-social activities, and to have a meeting at school to discuss with teachers any programme options for them to consider. 'Uncle Hone' was able to provide Cal, Tina and their parents with much needed support. His special relationship with this family enabled many barriers between these students, their parents and the school to be removed.

Cal describes their first family meeting co-ordinated by Uncle Hone:

We went home with Uncle Hone .. he talked for hours with our parents .. it was the first time we saw Dad cry. It was a shock! To see him like that was just too much. We all cried.

Tina speaks of some of the things that Uncle Hone has shared with them to help them develop a more positive attitude:

Uncle Hone talked to us about having the Lord in our lives gave us options. Providing we knew in our hearts about true love that the Lord gives, we would make all the right options.

Cal explains the effect that Uncle Hone had on her improved attitude:

We're not talkin' miracles .. we were .. I was still looking to hook-up with the Crew .. 'cause I didn't want to change overnight .. but I was feeling really happy .. Uncle Hone said it was a blessing!

The next important part of the strategy in the intervention of Cal and Tina's truancing was the support from their parents and other members of their extended family.

Cal remembers how:

Mum's whanau were really cool ... they cared and they don't say anything to put us down. They don't judge us.

Tina spoke of her surprise at some of the revelations by their father when he described how he coped with their truanting and absconding:

I thought he (Dad) had given up on us ... it turns out he didn't know what to do, he was almost wishing we would get arrested so that he knew we would be safe.

The final part of the intervention strategy for Cal and Tina was the support they received from teachers and other students. They were encouraged to participate in cultural groups. Cal was placed in a special programme to allow her time to develop skills and strengthen her attitude about school and Tina was being encouraged to sit the end of year examinations.

Tina explains:

I'm doing four School C subjects. I'll probably only sit three though .. Maori, English and Science.

Case Study Five

The involvement of M.O.K.O. in this intervention helped Tau's aunt understand his trauma, before she was able to appreciate the difficulties he was having at his new school. Tau's aunt, a very stern woman, learnt of his grief when he was forced to leave his

grandparents' home. She also discovered Tau's knowledge of traditional Maori practices and her acknowledgement of this helped his confidence.

Tau's aunt explains:

This boy is the last mokopuna brought up by the Old People. He will be the last link we have when they are gone. Damn it .. it wasn't his fault was it! He was uplifted from the home that he had since he was a baby .. we never knew how much it would effect him.

One time when my daughter had the flu, that was during that very wet winter .. I went to check in on her and he was there having *karakia* (prayers), just like the Old People do.

Feeling better towards the people in his new home, Tau was able to settle better at school. Living in a home environment which he trusted, he began to respond better at school.

Tau recalls:

Aunty said to try and be better at school .. she said she was glad I didn't take anything from the woodwork room. She said that the teacher's got a hard job. Most kids don't want to listen and some don't to learn. I believe her!

The opportunity to attend a special learning unit was also a key intervention to his truanting. His aunt helped with the homework he was set and his cousins were equally supportive by completing their homework as well.

These were the key intervention actions and strategies which helped Tau.

Case Study Six

The intervention strategies for Harry and Tanu were assisted by their own early acknowledgement that their continued involvement with a local gang was unsustainable in the long term. They both knew that they would have to eventually return to school. However, the evidence showed that the involvement of the Niue Elders' group, was extremely important in addressing their truanting. The manner in which this group was able to gain an immediate response from their parents, who had separated, was crucial to the long term intervention of their truanting. One male elder was able to directly approach Harry and Tanu's father and demand that he contribute to their regular attendance at school.

Harry explains:

When we turned up our old man (Dad) was shocked and 'shamed at the same time, because we snapped him with this other woman, she looked a bit freaked by it all, aye ... the old dude (Niue elder), starts talking in Niue and our old man was sitting there listening. The old dude wanted us to get together with our old lady and have a session with them.

Very direct action meant that both parents, with the support of this community group, could participate in the intervention of Harry and Tanu's truanting. This positive strategy meant that their parents, their ethnic leaders and the community were working together to assist these students.

The next supportive action was for Harry and Tanu to be involved in the implementation of their own diversion programme. The support of

the elders, the school and M.O.K.O. ensured that Harry and Tanu's activities could be carefully monitored. They were encouraged to demonstrate to all the groups involved in their intervention strategy that they were no longer likely to truant.

Tanu expresses his opinion about the diversion programme this way:

We had to help out after school too. Nobody from school saw us and it didn't look like it was hard or nothing, but we had to be there, you know what I'm saying. We couldn't do what we wanted to do anymore. We always had to be somewhere with someone.

The school's involvement was equally significant in that they accepted that Harry and Tanu had several people outside of the school supporting them. It was important for the school to feel that they could also contact these people should Harry and Tanu begin truanting once more.

Case Study Seven

The most influential person in Eve's life was her cousin. Her immediate and positive contribution to address Eve's truanting was to be a role model.

Eve explains:

She had a baby when she was only 15. Now that she is 19 and her baby goes to day-care so she can go to Tech., I want to go to Tech., too.

The most influential action to address Eve's truanting was the organising by M.O.K.O. officers of a special meeting with the principal

of her school. The extra tuition that Eve was offered was encouraging as it was presented to her in a positive manner.

Eve recalls:

I asked if this was for dumb kids and the principal said no! It was to help students like me that needed extra work and that I would need to have extra homework to catch up.

These two features of the intervention strategies for Eve were the foundation for an effective long term solution to her truanting. Once financial support was organised by the Income Support Office for her family she was able to return to school.

5.4 THE EFFECT OF THE INTERVENTIONS

5.4.1 Introduction

The following data are examples of the effectiveness of the intervention strategies highlighted in the case studies. These examples provide opportunity for the reader to hear the participants responses to their experiences as a result of the interventions to their truanting. (Readers should note that the case study numbers of each student are not provided in this section.)

5.4.2 Developing a Positive Attitude

An improved attitude towards school in general by the student is very important to any intervention strategy being successful. The students

in these case studies changed their negative attitudes towards regular school attendance through the intervention strategies designed to prevent their truanting.

i. Cal and Tina accept that the most important changes in their lives had to be made by themselves. By addressing the other problems that they were faced with they could rejoin other students at school. For example, self motivated improvements in this behaviour and a simultaneous attitude change were also an intervention tactic and meant that they were ready to return to school. Tina describes the transition that they experienced:

I know at one time I used to blame everyone else for the crap I was in ... but it was me ... it was us.
We decided to stay quiet, go to school, chill, do the business and stay tight.
It wasn't just a change about our wagging .. it was a major change about how we were .. our behaviour .. our attitude
Deep down we wanted out of the Crew.

The researcher was moved by this admission of fault and acceptance by Cal and Tina of their actions. The reader should acknowledge that this was a significant improvement in their attitude. These students demonstrated a level of maturity that was not present at the beginning of this study.

ii. For Harry and Tanu a more committed approach to their school work was necessary. They had previously been keen students and

they needed to recapture that same interest and enthusiasm for their school work. They conceded during the interviews that the loss of time from school would be difficult to make-up, but they were determined to work hard and remain at school for as long as possible.

Harry explained that:

The major difference is that I'm much more focused on my school work ... and on going to school.

iii. Tau had made the adjustment to his new home with an aunt in Otara and he has experienced some success at the Activity Centre. He felt better prepared for his school work and his social skills had improved. His self-confidence improved also and his attitude to school was much more positive as well.

He stated that:

School's O.K.. ... it's actually better now ... now that I'm back at school aye, I'm IN to the work big time.

iv. Harry and Tanu sensed an inevitable change to their lives after "drifting out of school". They knew that their truanting would be challenged.

During part of their four week absence from school they had an opportunity to reflect upon their immediate future. They were conscious that they needed to change their attitude and with a lot of support their return to school was going to be successful.

Harry discusses the reality of their situation:

We just knew we were going to have to change ... we had missed school for a month and we were going nowhere fast .

5.4.3 The Family

The contribution of the family in interventions to truancy requires a change of attitude for their children's education by most parents and certainly positive supportive actions would offer encouragement to their children. Evidence in the case study data confirms the efforts made by these parents. As the students described their improved attitude to school, so did their relationships improve with their parents.

i. This was evident for Cal and Tina who had been "on-the-run" from home for short periods of time over a six week period which included part of the school summer holidays and the improved communication with their parents assisted in addressing their truanting.

Cal stated that:

Things are good at home now ... our parents said for us to take just one day at time ... we're doing things as a family now.

ii. The contributions by Arepa's grandparents was significant in the intervention of their grandchild's truanting. The provision of a

stable home environment was needed by this child and his grandparents were able to provide this.

In a Maori context it is not uncommon for other family members to share in the responsibility of children of other family members. This student's grandmother describes their efforts:

We try to make sure there is routine in his life now that he is with us. He comes home and I'm always here. In the morning he's off to school in clean clothes.

iii. Consistent family support for students that have been struggling with their attendance to school is a feature that was noted by the researcher during this study. Although the researcher suspected that parental guidance and support was pivotal to any successful intervention strategy, case study five confirmed it to be so.

One of the most single important actions taken by Tau's aunt was to control the leisure time of the children. This level of home management and organisation was able to benefit this student and encouraged him to develop an interest in his school work.

Tau explained:

... my aunty would turn the T.V. off man ... we had homework so everyone was IN to it.

iv. Another family set formal times to support their youngest child Chris. This involved the father regularly helping him with his homework. This father also considered that his own knowledge of

Maori culture, traditional practices and language was at a level where he could teach his youngest son of their value.

Chris expressed his delight with his father's interest in him and his homework:

My Dad helps me with my homework ... my bro's freaked out when they saw him teach me all this stuff.

v. Cal and Tina related their change of attitude towards their family in context with their new desire to attend school. Cal and Tina's opinion of their father was that he was a harsh disciplinarian who was excessively conservative in his demands of their behaviour and attitude. The actions of some of their teachers reflected their father's attitude and Tina in particular had difficulties responding positively to that. It was their perspective that his demands for their dress standards to be high and a strict routine of having no friends were too difficult to accept and they ran away from home.

As part of the intervention strategy for their truanting a relative was to co-ordinate discussions between these students and their parents. He was only required to be present on the first occasion as the family had organised themselves to sit and share as a family at regular times.

The researcher noted the emotional feelings of these students as they described their father's reaction when talking with them for the first time. This was a special moment for these students as the bond with their parents was re-established.

Cal identified their father's reaction and described it this way:

... when we talked to our parents for the first time ... we saw our father cry ... he still follows the old ways and it was a shock to us.

vi. Tau explained how his aunt offered to reward him with a holiday should he continue with the good progress he was making at school. This reward was extremely appropriate as he was emotionally connected to his grandparents' home and any opportunity to maintain contact with them would help his progress at school.

The M.O.K.O. officers recommended that he be allowed to visit his elders as part of the interventions to his truanting. This offer by his aunt was her initiative and it is in recognition of the skills Tau has learnt living with his grandparents. She would like her children to learn from her parents also. As the last mokopuna to be raised by the whanau's elders, Tau is the custodian of their stories.

He shared his excitement during the interview by stating:

... my aunty said that if I be straight she would send me up north for the next holidays .. said I could take my cousins too. My cousins and I can't wait.

Contributions by the extended family:

Other support from extended family members who contributed to the successful interventions of truanting were commented on by participants. The researcher considers the involvement of others to be a reflection of Maori and Pacific Island cultural values and practices,

which include the continuous support of others from the *whanau* (family).

i. Eve was fortunate in having a family member as a role model who was also a student. It was arranged by an aunt that this cousin move-in with them to support Eve. This cousin could support Eve with her school work.

Eve explains the situation as follows:

I've got a cousin going to Manukau Tech., and she's moved in with us ... we do our homework together ... we talk about school and boys and stuff.

ii. For Cal and Tina the involvement of an uncle was important to the successful intervention strategy to their truanting. It is an involvement that was outlined in the previous section of this chapter. He had empathy for their predicament and he had previous experience in supporting students and their parents. The attention he gave to these students and their family was extremely helpful. This attention was in the form of the twice weekly visits to their home to socialise with their parents and to follow-up with Cal and Tina. He also operates an "open door policy" at his home and his invitations to Cal and Tina to join his family for Christian fellowship meetings helped these two students remain focused on improving their lives out of school.

The changes that were required of these students needed to be quite significant and his wise counsel assisted the intervention process at the early stages. He continues to be part of their lives to this day.

Tina shared with the researcher their special relationship with Uncle Hone:

We have fellowship at our uncle's home .. and we learnt about walking away from that other stuff we used to do with the Crew and to walk with the Lord in our lives.

iii. Chris had always been influenced by his older brothers. They had not encouraged him to attend school and they accepted his truanting behaviour. Their involvement in a gang which has a nationwide membership had distracted Chris from his commitments to his school work. With the support of his family and a youth group Chris was able to re-establish his attendance to school.

His brothers support of his involvement in a Maori cultural group affirmed for Chris that his brothers still cared for him. It was important for this student to feel that he still had their support. He described his appreciation of their support:

My bro's know that I'm IN to *kapa haka* (Maori action songs) and my school work. They don't put me down or anything. They came to watch my *kapa haka* group one time, everyone looked scared of them ... they said we were awesome on stage, I reckon too.

iv. The support that Tau received from his aunt and his cousins was important to the intervention of his truanting. His cousins were

the same age and it was important for him that they were supporting his efforts at his homework.

This was encouraged in the intervention process for Tau because it was helping him feel like he was part of this family who were clearly signalling their desire for him to stay with them. A permanent home was important for this student's progress.

He commented on their support for him:

I had some homework and my aunty would help me. My cousins never dissed me (disrespected / put me down) for being at the Centre.

v. Wiremu and Hariata's mother received support from her sister so that she would be able to provide properly for their children. It was at the suggestion of a M.O.K.O. officer that they initially discussed the possibility of their sharing a house and also the care of their children. The researcher understands that this arrangement is continuing and the sisters have bought the house they were staying in.

Wiremu and Hariata have settled in well at their new school. The improvement in the living arrangements has also assisted the financial situation of both families.

Their mother explained:

... my sister is a solo parent too ... we get on real well ... we could pool our resources and make a good shot of things for our kids.

5.4.4 School

New Programmes

The initiation of new programmes by all the schools in this study was quite obvious in the evidence from the interviews. In all the case studies, the schools contribution to the intervention strategies was a key element in the successful return to school by these students.

i. Eve went with her mother with the principal who had made arrangements for specialist teachers to be available also. The meeting went very well and Eve felt encouraged to return to school.

The special arrangements made to accommodate Eve were an important part of the intervention strategy for her truanting.

The meeting was warmly described by Eve :

... the principal brought in the guidance lady ... she said she could hook-me-up with another teacher that could help me with my reading and stuff so that I could keep up with the others in the class.

ii. As discussed in the earlier part of this chapter, the opportunity for Tau to be placed in a special centre to assist with his learning needs was important in the intervention to this student's truanting. He was able to receive the individual attention required for him to develop some of the skills he was deficient in. The most significant development was Tau's attitude toward school.

This extremely positive change meant that he was able to join the mainstream classes at his school.

He recalls his experiences:

... got back from the Activity Centre a while ago ... only went there 'cause I couldn't do the work properly ...
... yeah, I miss them over there ... I promised to try really hard and I can go back and visit them. They're right .. I got to go to school aye?

The special programme in which Eve was able to participate, allowed her to develop new literacy skills at her own pace. She looked forward to the opportunity to share her ideas and thoughts with others. This activity gave her the confidence to express herself in written form. Her relationship with her teacher certainly assisted her as well.

Her explanation of one element of this programme was:

I get to cruise in, in the mornings an' choose from three things that I have to do before interval .. I usually get my journal out .. I'm in to the journal writing buzz in the mornings .. no one reads your stuff only Miss .. you don't have to worry about spelling, 'cause I suck at that ... you can write 'bout anything and anyone ... Miss reads them and writes her comments in them everyday.. she's cool ...

Supportive Teachers

A teacher's relationship with his/her students is extremely important if both are to achieve their goals. For Tau the support he received was extremely encouraging. This was an addition to his positive school experiences.

He explained:

We got this choice art teacher, she teaches us all this choice stuff and I DO my work .. she says I got talent .. yeah man .. I got skills man .. skills man.

Diversion Programme

The most challenging intervention strategy that involved a school and a volunteer group was in case study six. A diversion programme was designed and agreed to by Harry and Tanu at a special meeting. This programme was as punishment for these students truanting and for their involvement with a gang. It was also an opportunity for them to work with their elders.

Much of the labour intensive work was completed at the school. It was initially difficult for them to cope with but with a lot of support they were able to fulfil their obligations.

Input from a teacher contributed to these students being even more focused on their school work.

Harry explains:

Part of our diversion programme was for us to clean up over other people's tags. It was shit man. It was after school and no one was around. Then this teacher took us to the computer room and he dumped this work on to us to learn. It was da bomb! We really got in to our school work with that goin' down .

Special events

One way of involving the students in school activities was to allow them to express themselves within group, performing arts of their

culture's. For Cal and Tina this was an example of the goodwill by the teachers and the school towards these truanting students. The Auckland Secondary Schools Maori and Polynesian Festival is an activity that provides the opportunities for these students to represent their ethnic culture and their school:

The festival was SO special. The tutors let us join in even though we weren't going to school all the time. The other students were choice about it too. ... the practices and performing is great, I love it.

I feel special when we're in our costumes with the moko and that ... I get this awesome feeling inside ... the *waiata* (songs) are beautiful and when the tutor explains to us what they mean I feel like crying.

A New School

The prospect of going to a new school is not always a pleasant experience for students. Wiremu and Hariata felt a combination of apprehension and nervousness which was relieved by the warmth of the welcome received at their new school.

Their mother explains:

When my kids first went to the school they're at now, I sense a genuine feeling of being welcomed. I was straight up and honest with the principal about my kids absence at their last school and about the accident ... he said he felt *aroha* for us.

5.4.5 The Agencies

M.O.K.O.

The contribution that this agency made to the students in these case studies was very important. They were competent in meeting their

professional obligations and their work required of them to use skills and knowledge of this community.

The following quotes from the interviews are explanations of the tacit knowledge that M.O.K.O. officers brought to their tasks. Knowledge of cultural practices and the utilisation of community networks aided their effectiveness in their work.

Examples are taken from each of the case studies to highlight the value of their work.

M.O.K.O. come over home and one of them knew my dad form the pub, he knew some of my uncles too. First fullah I seen not scared of my dad. (Chris case study one).

They were involved from the start. They got my in-laws involved in the case and encouraged me to let them help. Their help went beyond just getting him to school, they were worried about me and the other children too (Arepa case study two).

Once I got used to them I saw them as the only source of support I had. They always seemed to be here. I supposed they thought if they helped me they were helping my children (Wiremu and Hariata case study three).

The M.O.K.O. people knew where to look for us .. they have all these contacts all over South Auckland (Cal and Tina case study four).

The M.O.K.O. people that brought him home the first time from up the road were just so understanding of him .. and us. I don't know if I would have got that feeling if they weren't Maori (Tau case study five - aunt).

When we missed school one day because there was somethin' going' down with the B----, M.O.K.O. came 'round home that night. This M.O.KO. dude walked in and we could tell he was

pissed at us ... that was serious shit (Harry and Tanu case study six).

I remember when they came to my aunty's home ... they looked like ordinary people .. not like cops or teachers (Eve case study seven)

Volunteer Group

i. Harry and Tanu were fortunate to have the support of their elders. As discussed previously in this chapter this group of committed people gave a lot of time and energy to ensure that they fulfilled their commitments to their diversion programme.

The elders accepted responsibility for these students so that their parents who had separated may also feel supported.

The elders told us a group of people from the church were going over to Niue for a visit because of a special celebration. They asked us if we wanted to go ... we said yes! We got to pay for our own fares and one of them said he could get us a part-time job.

ii. Tau was supported by a community youth group. Their organised programmes provided opportunities for this student to experience fellowship and camaraderie with other youth in this community. This group is supporting the families of the youth they work with and this occurred in this case study also.

Charlie come 'round to my aunty's and he asked me to go on a camp .. aunty said my cousins could go and so we all went away. It was choice!

iii. The large Maori membership in this club focused on providing Maori cultural activities for those youth willing to commit themselves.

The opportunity to participate in activities that he enjoyed and also to experience the friendship and support of other youth was a feature of this student's intervention strategy. This group's philosophy promoted responsibility of the youth for their own actions.

I joined this club for young people and we learn heaps of things. All the teaching stuff is in Maori. They do music and sport, they go away on trips. The leaders talk to us about going to school and staying away from drugs, alcohol, sniffing and burgs and that. We all look after each other.

Government Agencies

i. At a Family Group Conference organised by the Youth Justice Team of the Social Welfare department, a special deterrent programme was designed to address these students truanting. The impact of the decisions made was swift and the response from Harry and Tanu was understandably one of surprise. The outcome for these students was positive:

... we had a full-time meeting with the cops, social welfare, our folks M.O.K.O. and these old folk from the church. We were rocked! That put us on a diversion programme.

ii. There is evidence in the data which strongly suggest that government officers are fulfilling more than their statutory obligations to this community. In Otago government officers go beyond their service brief and the community is the obvious benefactor. This was noted in case study three. An officer recognising the mother's reluctance to receive an income from the state and was extremely

supportive of this family. Wiremu and Hariata were able to return to school because their home was more economically stable.

Their mother states:

Social Welfare people understood what had happened to me and my kids and they knew that I hated having to ask for help ... I had employable skills, I just needed a break.

iii. The advice given to youth by agency workers is always important, particularly if that worker clearly understands the issues that are involved. Cal experienced that sort of advice and was able to reflect upon her previous actions outside of school, "move on" and settle-in to her school work.

My social worker says that writing about things helps me sort it out in my head what we done. We put-on some wicked shit on people.

5.5 Conclusion

All the data gathered from the interviews are stories that the researcher felt privileged to hear. The students were honest in their responses and when they felt more relaxed with the process, most of them shared much more information than the researcher anticipated. The comments from students of their lived experiences that changed behaviour was important in the context of this study and themes that were effective in responding to truancy emerged.

The variety of causes of truancy indicate the complexities involved in responding to the needs of these students for them to be successfully returned to school. The numerous influences upon a student which causes them to truant is a feature of this chapter. Fergusson *et al* described the following features of their study which confirms the presence of numerous and complex experiences of truanting students:

... truancy was more common amongst children reared in disadvantaged or dysfunctional homes and children who showed early onset conduct problems,
... there were clear associations between the extent of truancy in adolescence and other aspects of adolescent adjustment including conduct problems, juvenile offending, police contact, substance use behaviours, low self-esteem and mood disorders (1995: 25).

Furthermore, it is significant that no one intervention on it's own would be successful. Evidence from the case studies support the notion that there are many parts to a successful intervention strategy to the behaviour of truanting students.

As an example Testerman (1995) suggests that the success of any intervention strategy is affected by the methods which schools develop. She strongly advocates for the proper assessment of the problems experienced by the truanting student and that educational resources must be made available for specific cases where a students needs cannot be met within a group setting. She recommended,

"a one-on-one approach", is necessary for each student who requires that level of support. This has been achieved at Lely High School in Naples Florida, through the implementation of "teacher advisors" who spent 15 minutes per day with their allocated student. The school reported a significant decrease in the absence of students at school.

Three key themes identified as being significant findings from the evidence presented here, will be further discussed in the next chapter.

6.0 DISCUSSION OF MAIN THEMES

A definition of truancy is "*absenteeism without justifiable cause*" (Educational Review Office March 1994).

6.1 Introduction

Causes for truancy not emphasised in the literature as well as confirmation in previous research findings, emerged from the data in this study. The practice of parent/guardian condoned truancy was the most significant finding.

Secondly, was the role of the school and the effect that teachers and resources have on truancy. The researcher's teaching experience revealed that teachers' effectiveness in their professional role is determined by the student that they have to teach, their own teaching ability, the school environment and the resources they have available to perform their role. These issues are discussed further in the second part of this chapter.

The third key issue was the role of the different agencies in implementing intervention strategies. The complex lives of the truant s and the numerous causes for their behaviour requires a co-ordinated approach from multi-contributors. This approach to providing effective interventions to truancy is discussed further in the third part of this chapter.

6.2 Parent Condoned Truancy

6.2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided evidence from the case studies of parent/condoned truancy. While this confirmed the researcher's own observations, the reasons some parents/guardians condoned absence of their children from school are invaluable to the understanding of absenteeism in South Auckland.

6.2.2 "Going to Work with Dad"

Chris, in case study one, described how whenever he wanted to be truant from school he would spend some of his days with his father. Chris' father was a truck driver and he sometimes took Chris to work with him.

Chris was not encouraged to attend school regularly by his older brothers. Their involvement in gang activities was an association that Chris' father desperately wanted him to avoid. Chris' mother believes that her older sons involvement in gangs is definitely a result of the harsh discipline they received from their father. She explains:

My husband is a good man, but a hard man. He used to belt-in to the boys when they were younger for wagging school or nicking stuff at the shops, now all that violence has come back to haunt him and us.

His reaction was to allow Chris to spend as much time with him as possible to avoid participation with anti-social activities. Yet evidence

in chapter five revealed Chris had participated in burglaries with his brothers.

Chris' truanting is partly due to the "mixed message" that Chris received from his family about the importance of regular school attendance. Although his parents want him to go to school they don't monitor his attendance and his father takes him to work sometimes.

Another contributing factor is the lack of proper supervision for Chris by his parents. With both his parents working and his father involved in local Maori events, the contact time that Chris had with them was limited. Chris' mother provides a description of his father:

He's a good provider and he thinks that's the end of his role; it may have been so during his parents' time, but the kids today need a lot of adult company, a lot of contact with their parents.

There was also the issue of Chris' parents not equally sharing the responsibility for his welfare. This is supported by the fact that just his mother went to court for his earlier truanting. Chris' mother explains further her husband's frequent absence from home:

... it was that he was at work and always busy with this and that, so I had to attend to a lot of things at home here ... he was never around. He didn't even take time off work to go to court. He sent me!

The method that his father employs to dissuade Chris to not follow his brothers is well-intentioned and is likely to find favour with other

parents in Otara. But in the view of the researcher it lacks consistency and as is obvious from the data, the desired outcome is not achieved. Both Chris' parents have recently made a stronger commitment to support him so that he may attend school regularly. The researcher is concerned about whether Chris' father understands the implications of permitting Chris to go to work with him. It is important that Chris' father makes long term commitment to the interventions, because his positive contribution is viewed as being very important for the success of the strategies.

6.2.3 "Shopping on *bene* day"

In case study two, Arepa's condoned truanting was a result of his mother's need to go shopping for her family on the day when her Domestic Purposes Benefit was paid. Arepa's absence from school, (described in chapter five), was because he was needed to look after the younger children while his mother was out of the house shopping. It is the researcher's view that this example of condoned truanting was regretful and could have been avoided. Fortunately for Arepa his mother knew that his absence from school was affecting his education and when a M.O.K.O. officer suggested that she seek help from her extended family, she agreed.

She says:

I'm wrapped that my boy is back to school and I got the old people (her mother and father-in-law) to thank for that.

A feature of Arepa's truancy was the difficulty his mother was experiencing, without the support of her husband, in providing for their children. Arepa's grandmother, (chapter five), passed quite candid comments about his father, (her son), in regard to this issue. Her comments highlighted the parenting problems in Arepa's home. Arepa's mother explained:

... you know 'bout families like us aye, so it's sweet as to talk to you aye bro' ... me and my *tane* (husband) we couldn't keep our shit together .. something always happened and it was never his fault.

Parents need support to help them manage their homes. Arepa's mother who once condoned her child's truancy, has made significant changes to improve his life and the lives of her children.

6.2.4 "Mum under pressure"

There were many days when Wiremu (case study three) could not attend school because of the re-occurring headaches from the injuries he had received earlier in a car accident. His mother, under some pressure from Hariata and five year old Paora to stay home as well, yielded to their demands and permitted them to do so. She felt it difficult to send the younger two children to school without Wiremu being with them.

She explains:

My children are very close .. I'm real proud of that fact. Because my eldest had started to miss school the others were becoming a little bit stroppy and I couldn't put up with them asking to stay home too.

Within the broadest Maori context this is understandable for Maori children to feel the need for support of the *tuakana* (eldest child). An inquiry from one of the teacher's about Wiremu's absence is described by their mother as unnecessary and invasive of Hariata and Paora's lives.

The request by the school for their mother to maintain regular contact regarding her children's absence was a pressure upon her. It was her view that having contacted the school on a few occasions, the school could have been more sympathetic. A further contributing factor (discussed in the previous chapter) which was placing pressure upon Wiremu and Hariata's mother, was the financial difficulties they were experiencing. She was unable to send her children to school with lunches or to provide for them in a way she wanted and by allowing Hariata and Paora to stay home as well, it eased one burden but in fact created another.

The parent's condoned truanting in this situation was thus an outcome of other factors in Wiremu and Hariata's lives.

6.2.5 "Going to the marae with Nana and Papa"

In case study five, Tau's life with his grandparents provided this study with an example of a dilemma for some Maori families in the way that they traditionally *whangai* ('given' to be raised), their *tamariki/mokopuna* (children/grandchildren), to their *kaumatua* (elders). As leaders of their community Tau's grandparents were required to be present on their *marae* at special events such as *tangihanga* (funerals) or *hui* (meetings). Their decision to take Tau with them is certainly understandable within a Maori context but is unacceptable within the educational guidelines regarding student attendance promoted by all schools.

The dilemma that is created in this situation does not necessarily involve the issue of parenting but an issue of cultural appropriateness in terms of how Maori are to learn traditional practices. Maori people have learnt within an environment where they are immersed in the language and protocols of their culture. This was what Tau had experienced. Unfortunately, Tau's regular attendance at school was affected.

His aunt suggested in her interview that Tau's truanting would not have developed had he been allowed to stay longer with his grandparents. She says:

I am certain that had stayed longer with his grandparents he would have learnt about the value of what they were teaching him and how it all fits in to the things that he was learning at school. But this never eventuated.

The way in which some Maori families today have their *kaumatua* raise a *mokopuna* is a practise that is likely to continue. Should a *whanau* decide that this is an appropriate way in which it cares for it's members, then proper support is required for the *mokopuna* and *kaumatua*. The evidence suggests that Tau's condoned truancing was not intended, however his absence from school in his earlier years meant that his casual attitude to school had become entrenched.

6.2.6 "Housie versus School"

Like other single parent families in this study, Eve's mother, (case study seven) had difficulties in providing for her children. However, the way in which she condoned Eve's truancing was detrimental to her child's learning. This has been discussed in the previous chapter and it is a significant feature of this study that a parent would seem to have neglected her responsibilities.

By the mother's admission:

I only ask Eve to stay home sometimes last year and then the start to this year. Not all the times was for me to go to Housie, I had to see some people too, cousins and that. I know now that it was the wrong thing to do, my sister that we stay with had a long talk to me 'bout it.

When Eve explained that she had to stay home so that her mother could go to Housie, the researcher was momentarily speechless. It could be seen that Eve's mother had sacrificed her child's education to allow her to pursue her own leisure and social activities.

Fortunately, extended family members had rallied to support Eve and her family. Hopefully this support has ensured that the younger siblings will not experience the same condoned truancy.

6.2.7 Summary

Without sufficient support at home it would be extremely difficult for parents/guardians to return truancy students to school. It would be even more difficult when parents directly or indirectly plan and encourage their children's absence from school.

Fergusson *et al* (1995), described the outcomes of their research into truancy and based upon their evidence, identify child rearing practices, parental conflict, childhood experiences and family and residential stability as being significant contributors to truancy. This aspect of their work which focused upon the family and home-life experiences of the truancy student, supports the findings of this study.

Alternatively, there are parent training programmes that have been operating in America and the United Kingdom, which focus on the development of the family and the benefits of parents' awareness of the needs of their children.

Hawkins describes how training for parents has assisted in reducing truancy:

Parent training programmes have been linked with a variety of positive family and child outcomes, ranging from improved family interaction to reduced child problems and improved school adjustment (Hawkins 1992: 89).

The challenge of encouraging parents to fulfil their responsibilities and ensure that their children are regularly attending school will remain a focus of agencies working with families of truanting students for many years ahead. This statement is particularly relevant when in five of the seven case studies, there was some form of direct or indirect parental/guardian condoned truanting. What is unique to this study are the cultural practices in South Auckland society and in particular Maori.

6.3 Teachers, Schools and Resources

6.3.1 Introduction

The willingness of all the schools of truanting students to work positively with these students has been a particularly encouraging feature of this study. New programmes to assist truanting students have been developed in almost every case study, except case study three where Wiremu and Hariata started a new school.

This part of the chapter discusses the programme options developed by the schools of the truanting students. Also discussed is the effect that schools have on truanting and the students' and parents' stories of their experiences with schools.

6.3.2 The Junior School

The stability of a truanting student's home was described by principals as being important for these students to successfully return to regular school attendance. From the schools' perspective the positive contribution by parents in the lives of their children, begins with encouragement and regular support.

All the principals saw the education of the students in this study as a partnership between themselves and the students' families. The concept of a collaboration between school and home is not new and there is evidence in the data of this philosophy being practised. The first example of this is discussed by the principal at Arepa's school in case study two. From this meeting with Arepa's grandmother, he described his appreciation of her discussing intimate family details which she believed caused Arepa's truanting. She also explained that now that Arepa was living with her and her husband she expected him to be attending school far more regularly. Of their meeting the principal says:

We understand that he (Arepa) had some problems which caused his irregular attendance at school and we really appreciate his mother providing us with some background to the problems he had at home.

... he is making steady progress in the reading recovery programme that was set-up for him and with the support he gets from home, we expect him to do really do well ...

Arepa's grandmother describes the meeting from her perspective:

Ka nui taku whakama i te wa i haere au i te korero ki te tumuaki.
(I was very shy when I went to talk to the principal.) He remembered my *tamariki* (children) 'specially George my youngest. Anyway I told about my *mokopuna* Arepa and about what happened and that.

He was very good to me and my *moko* in his office and when I left he said *haere ra* (goodbye). Not bad aye for a *Pakeha*.

The principal at Tau's school in case study five explained the success of an alternative programme for students with 'gaps in their learning'. She stated that the school recognised the improvements in Tau's attitude when he had returned from the Activity Centre. Furthermore, the school was prepared to overlook his alleged involvement in negative behaviour at school to seek support for him. This principal's comments about extra resources needed by schools to assist some students was the only reference made on this issue throughout the study.

She describes the situation with Tau:

We were upset with his vandalism of school property and we believe he was responsible for other things around the school, but we had chosen not to pursue them for the sake of doing something more constructive for him. And now he has returned to us with a better more focused approach to his school work ... when the appropriate resources are available with the time that these students need individually many of these students with learning or behaviour problems, can be a part of effective programmes that can assist them.

For the four primary and intermediate students, their school experiences were largely positive. Only one of these students criticised his teacher or school.

Primary school students spoke warmly of their "kind teachers" who were "nice" to them. Arepa in case study two remembered the stories that his teacher read to the class at his school. Wiremu and Hariata in case study three also enjoyed the schools that they had attended.

6.3.3 The Senior School

The principals of the secondary schools attended by these students provided opportunities for truanting students to become involved in special programmes to assist their return to school. All these special programmes required the support of the students' families to ensure that the intervention strategies would be effective and that the truanting students would regularly attend school.

Chris (case study one) spoke well of his return to school. This has been assisted by the support he received from his teachers. His mother confirmed that his return to school was made easier by the attitudes shown towards him by his teachers. His mother says:

My boy Chris has got to stay at school now that he has started to go everyday. The principal has been awesome and so have his teachers .. they've given him some work to bring home and I know this might sound strange, but it's the first time I've seen him doing homework.

The principal describes Chris' progress at school:

There has been a very positive change in this student's attitude towards school. We understand that he has support outside of school which has helped him get to school. The reports that have come in from his subject teachers have been encouraging. The "after school programme" which is based here at school to help with the students' literacy needs in the school, is an option that he has taken-up and is benefiting from.

Cal and Tina's successful return to school had been supported by the special programmes that they have been involved in. Cal joined a class of students who were not attending mainstream classes. The previous chapter discussed how Cal's membership in this class provided opportunities for her to participate in activities that helped to improve her attitude towards school. One of her favourite activities was the daily journal writing. Her comments on this programme is described in the previous chapter.

For Tina, the transition back to regular school attendance was only difficult in terms of re-establishing herself socially with other students. She quickly settled to her work and she was making steady progress.

Their mother describes their progress at school and at home:

I'm just .. we're just relieved that they are back at home with us and they've turned the corner. They are happy at school and I .. we are learning to trust them again. Tina has made a real commitment to her school work and I know that Cal is trying hard at school too.

The schools response to Cal and Tina's progress is provided by the principal:

Since their return to school and their performances with the Maori club in the festival, these girls have made a successful return to school and their studies. I am yet to hear a negative report from any of their subject teachers and I don't expect to neither. It shows that the faith placed in them is being rewarded by their hard work.

Harry and Cal the younger members of case studies six and four, made reluctant restarts at attending school. For Tanu and Tina the older members, the prospect of external end of year school examinations seemed to provide the impetus for their focus on their school work. This perhaps also reflects the age difference and therefore the maturity of the older students. It is also important to note that Tanu and Tina were capable students who had experienced some academic success in their junior grades.

Tanu's mother explains her feelings about their return to school:

The teacher at the school he tell to me to help the boys fix up the bad things that they done at the school. My husband he's mad at the boys for they wagging, I blame the school .. he say no, it's the boys and us the parents.

I know now for sure that they at the school all the time. It make me a happy for the M.O.K.O. to check up all the time. And the school said that they tell to me straight away if they (the boys) don't listen or be funny at the school .. I think that is a good thing.

The principal responds to some of the comments by Harry and Tanu when he describes their progress:

... Tanu's comments of boredom and his criticisms of classroom management by some teachers is probably a true reflection of the difficulty that the odd teacher might have. Some teachers could find the students at this school a real challenge.

We are quietly optimistic that the diversion programme and the interest shown in them by the computer tutor will give them an opportunity to settle-down at school.

Five of the six secondary school truants in this study, made negative comments of school. Typical of their age and generation perhaps, but their observations of teachers and their school were quite critical and negative. Having been involved in the school system a little longer, these students had a clearer perception of what to them was a good teacher and a good school.

6.3.4 Summary

Reference has been made in this section of a principal's comments of the resources that are available outside of the school to help the truanting student from her school and it is a point that other principals and teachers could have commented on if they were directly asked.

The ability for schools to provide alternative programmes for the returned truant is important. The many hours of school time lost to truanting students can never be replaced, but the options that the school provides the truanting student is an attempt to raise these

students to the level of their peers and is also a reflection of the school's commitment to the students and the student's community. Epstein provided an analysis which considers the reasons for developing "school and community partnerships", when new programmes are being developed, she states:

...schools need to view students as children, if they are likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school in children's education and development. Partners recognize their shared interests in and responsibilities for children, and they work together to create better programmes and opportunities for students (1995: 701).

Reference is made to this model because it underlines the importance of the students' families being involved in the implementation of any new programme a factor that has proved significant in this research. This demonstrates the schools' willingness to work with parents and the community, and also increases the potential for the intervention to succeed.

6.4 Multi-contributors in Intervention Strategies

6.4.1 Introduction

The success of all the intervention strategies in these case studies has been dependent upon the student and his/her family to making changes in their lives and being more pro-active in ensuring that the truanting student was properly supported and sent regularly to school. The supporters outside the family of a truanting student have a crucial

role in monitoring the success of the intervention strategies, they will be discussed in this section.

6.4.2 Government Agencies

The details of every student referred to the M.O.K.O. truancy programme is provided by the school for future reference. The most difficult of these truanting students are considered by representatives of the government agencies on the M.O.K.O. management committee. (The agencies have been listed in chapter one of this study)

The combination of the variety of agencies on the committee ensures that a greater volume of resources is available to support each truant. This has been one of the successful features of the M.O.K.O. programme and the few referred students who are not effectively returned to school from the intervention programme have moved out of the Otara community. In a community where there are a large number of transient families, the number of these students could be significant. In the researcher's association with these government agency representatives, he has been impressed with their willingness to support the M.O.K.O. officers in attending to the students referred to their programme.

An example of this co-operative approach was in the support that Eve's family in case study seven, received from the C.Y.P.S. officers who arranged for an officer from the Income Support Division of their Ministry to meet with her mother. This was immediately arranged after

the C.Y.P.S officers were notified of the issues affecting Eve's family and the effect those issues were having on Eve's attendance to school.

Another example of a co-ordinated group approach is with Harry and Tanu (case study six) and the diversion programme that was designed for them. This was organised through the co-operation of the school, C.Y.P.S. and a Community Police officer. This co-ordinated approach set out to provide a disincentive for Harry and Tanu's continued gang affiliation. In effect it was punishment for their absence from school, a deterrent to further drug and alcohol use and a method of supervising their after-school hours.

For Cal and Tina (case study four), their activities with the 'Crew' were well-known to the local Police. Their decision to monitor Cal and Tina's progress with the intervention strategies for their truanting, through their representative on the M.O.K.O. management committee, was extremely helpful. By allowing these students to resolve the difficulties they were having at home and at school, the Police provided them with an opportunity to redeem themselves before their family in the first instance and then with their teachers and school. The M.O.K.O. officers knew that the Police supported the strategies for these students and that meant there was less pressure on these students to return quickly to school.

The most important agency in the interventions of these students truanting was their school. Every student involved in this study was welcomed back to the school and all were provided with a special

programme either at school or for homework to assist them with any remedial work that might be needed. The very positive attitude by the schools towards these students is a strong feature in every case study. Each school involved in this study recognised the need to generate support from the parents/guardians of the student and a rapport between the teachers and the parents was quickly established. Important communication barriers were removed and this in the long term should prove very positive for the school and the student.

6.4.3 Voluntary Community Groups

There were three voluntary groups who were part of the intervention strategies for these students. They were all very positive about their role in each case study and they demonstrated a strong sense of community spirit.

A leader of a community youth club who works with Chris (case study one) spoke of the reasons why he chose to work with the youth in the Otara community. He explained that they were not his own words but those of his mentor, a local teacher, who summarised the need for active community workers:

If I don't help these young people now then when I am old, I have no right to complain about the adults that are making decisions for me .. I actually lose the opportunity to contribute to the long term development of my community.

A leader of the Niue Elders' group involved with Harry and Tanu worked from the view that every Niue child, teenager and adult was his

responsibility. He frequently claims to be related to every Niue person in Otara. He demonstrated a willingness to organise other Niue elders to support these families that were having difficulties, particularly in the area of parenting. This group's involvement with these students and their parents was crucial to the success of the interventions has been discussed in the previous chapter. However, as an example of a group's commitment to their community and especially to those of their ethnicity, the Niue Elders' group was a welcome contributor to this case study.

6.4.4 Summary

The benefits of a multi-agency approach to truancy are a feature of the intervention strategies for the students in this study. The evidence shows that issues such as truancy cannot be considered as a problem which should be addressed by the Ministry of Education only. The complex problems of truanting students require many community volunteer groups and agencies to contribute to the intervention strategies as well.

Ainscow *et al* (1994), promotes the involvement of agencies to strengthen the work of a school. It is their view that the ability to draw upon the support of outsiders can make an effective impact upon teaching and learning. They also recommend that government departments create policies that encourages non-education agencies to support the students in the school. This is supported by Waddock

who described the benefits of developing a new method of delivering government services. She suggested that "turf battles and programmatic approach" have restricted societies' thinking with respect to meeting families' needs. She also stated that:

governmental agencies (should) ... take a more customer-driven, holistic and systemic approach to their tasks by focusing on services delivered to meet customer or client needs (Waddock 1995: 185).

The ability to respond to the causes of truant behaviour often requires the input from more than one agency and so a co-ordinated approach is certainly beneficial. It remains to be seen whether each agency needs to be represented on M.O.K.O. by an individual officer. This could prove economically unsustainable in the long term.

An integral part of ensuring that these agencies are effective is the support and co-operation of existing groups and organisations that have a 'finger on the pulse of the community'. Groups such as those who have a Christian base to their work or Trusts that are advocates for the youth that they work with or the various community elders groups representing the ethnic groups in the schools are examples of such local organisations. Networking with these voluntary organisations can only benefit the community. The agencies involved in these case studies recognised the importance of acknowledging the contribution of the volunteer groups, particularly because these groups are often more effective in situations where an immediate and

rapid response is required for each student referred to the M.O.K.O. truancy programme.

6.5 Conclusion

Three major issues emerged from the data which was predominantly from the particular perspective of the students involved. Comments by parents and teachers have given this study a balance between those of authority and the students. It is their lived experiences that have been developed for discussion in this chapter.

The next chapter will discuss recommendations on how to respond to truancy in the context of the findings of this study: the implications and recommendations for further research.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

" Whose behaviour does your child reflect? "
(Ministry of Social Welfare poster, 1997)

7.1 Introduction

In the initial stages of this study, I had hoped to learn about new and interesting truancy intervention strategies by taking part in designing and developing such strategies. The results of the strategies we implemented have been very encouraging. They have proven to be effective with those participants for whom the intervention strategies had been designed. It is uncertain whether these intervention strategies will be effective with other truanting students because the evidence illustrated that there are complex issues and problems which are unique to each truant. Therefore it is extremely important that future truants have different intervention strategies developed so that their individual problems are able to be addressed and their regular attendance at school is not hindered. This chapter discusses three themes that include recommendations for truancy interventions.

They are:

- Preventative Action
- Responding to Truancy
- A change of philosophy

The final part of this chapter makes suggestions for further study and research.

7.2 Preventative Action

It had been suggested rather cynically to the researcher by another teacher that the early identification of truanting students would require the use of a "crystal ball". I considered the possibility of developing methods to assist teachers and parents identify student behaviour and home situations that had an adverse effect upon the attendance of students at school and lead on to truanting. However, the evidence in this study illustrated that it was not possible to generalise about the type of student who is likely to truant or the type of home environment that the truant student may experience.

What the evidence did illustrate however, was that there is a need to educate parents as to the importance of their children attending school regularly. Parenting Programmes were recommended in the literature (chapter three) as a method of supporting parents to recognise their responsibilities in the education of their children and encourage regular school attendance. Such a programme has been developed at the Te Puke o Tara Community Centre where the researcher is the director.

In recognition of the home-related problems that truanting students experience, this programme aims at parents learning the skills to manage their homes; budget their home finances; communicate with their children; work with teachers; understand their children's needs at school; provide a learning environment at home for their children; participate in learning or study centres for their children and use the existing community groups to support their families.

There are twelve families involved in one of the classes and nine of these families have children who were truants. The programme was trialled for an eight week period to determine its content and focus. There has been a quite favourable response from the participants to this programme. This programme is not a direct preventative action that is reacting to truancy, but it is an attempt at a proactive response from the view that a problem of truancy exists in the community and that positive models of good parenting practices are needed. The key to the success of this programme are the tutors who are well-respected amongst their own ethnic group in the community. Tutors have demonstrated the ability to communicate with the participants in a way that is not judgmental of their abilities as parents. The support by church leaders and community elders has been crucial to the success of this programme. The programme has intentionally been given a low community profile to ensure that the dignity for the parents who choose to participate is retained. In this way, no negative stigma is attached. The attendance and participation has been by invitation only and all participants to date voluntarily attend. The tutors operate

two classes of the same programme for their own respective ethnic group, Samoa and Tonga. A similar programme for Maori parents is to start in term two of the 1998 school year. The decision to operate the classes within each of the ethnic groups is to allow the opportunity for participants to speak in their own languages or within their culture. Funding has been provided through the community education programme at a local college and the participants are asked for a *koha* to cover the costs of teaching resources.

The long term sustainability of these programmes is uncertain and will be guided more by the continued availability of tutors and resources, rather than by the need for some parents to participate. It is in the researcher's view that it is highly likely that the long term prospect of parental condoned truancy would continue. The type of parenting programme that is being developed in Otago provides an example for others.

The researcher would certainly like to believe that in a perfect world the notion of a "crystal ball" being used to predict the future behaviour of some students would not be mentioned even in jest. But the experiences of the truants in this study are reminders that the reality in which they live confirms the imperfections of this world. This makes the prevention of truancy the responsibility of the community at large, because the long term effect of these students behaviour effects us all.

7.3 Responding to Truancy

The evidence revealed how some students' decision not to attend school was influenced by factors that were largely outside the school environment. While all of these factors were unfortunate, it would be incorrect to think that they were unavoidable because of the complex nature of the issues in the lives of these students' and their families.

However, if it is anticipated that if students are indeed likely to truant then systems to respond to this issue must be in place. These would include government agencies, school systems and teachers, and community leaders. The co-ordination of these services and systems is also recommended as being important and is therefore recommended by this study. Within the Otara community, the M.O.K.O. programme has assumed that role.

This process undertaken by M.O.K.O. to respond to truancy is effective because of three strategies employed.

The first was the M.O.K.O. officers immediate response to the referrals. Chapter one outlines their methods of operating and they have confirmed that those students referred to M.O.K.O within three days of being absent from school have a greater likelihood of being returned to school.

Table 13 illustrates the successful return of students who were referred after three to five days absent and ten to twelve days absent. The large number of students referred to M.O.K.O. in February is

because schools refer those students who were enrolled the previous year and had not started for the new year. This is a practice that was established with the secondary, intermediate and middle schools in Otara.

Table 13

| M.O.K.O. REFERRALS (1997) | | | | |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| SUCCESSFULLY RETURNED TO SCHOOL | | | | |
| AFTER 3 - 5 AND 10 -12 DAYS ABSENCE | | | | |
| MONTHS | 3 - 5 Days | | 10 - 12 Days | |
| | <u>Referred</u> | <u>Returned</u> | <u>Referred</u> | <u>Returned</u> |
| February | 123 | 98 | 15 | 6 |
| March | 75 | 66 | 8 | 1 |
| April | 28 | 23 | 4 | 0 |
| May | 23 | 20 | 2 | 0 |
| June | 16 | 11 | 1 | 0 |

Source: M.O.K.O. Files, 1997.

The second M.O.K.O. strategy was the monitoring of those students who have successfully returned to school. Schools where students were returned to were contacted and each school was visited twice a week for the students to understand the monitoring process as a way of supporting their regular attendance at school.

An important part of the monitoring process was the preparing of reports for the schools and parents. As explained in chapter one, the M.O.K.O. programme set a target of responding to a referral within 24 hours. In this way teachers and schools were able to monitor the progress that was being made in returning the students to school and the performance of the M.O.K.O. programme could also be assessed by those schools, for whom the programme was established to serve. Where other issues in the students' lives were required to be addressed, M.O.K.O. officers co-ordinated the appropriate agencies to provide the necessary support for students and parents. This response also needed to be quite swiftly implemented, so that the negative influences which causes truancy were promptly addressed.

The third M.O.K.O. strategy which was significant in their success was their ability to establish a professional working relationship with officers of government agencies. The sharing of information concerning students and families when trying to locate truants was important. Whilst no details of the families were provided by government agency officers, M.O.K.O. officers regularly requested confirmation of absent students who were not at the address provided by the school and had in fact moved to another community. The welfare of the students was the priority in this process. In this way they were taken off the schools' rolls and a clearer perspective of truancy in Otara could be established. The agency officers should be

commended for their involvement at this level. The utilisation of their resources to assist in locating these students and their families was much appreciated. This also confirmed the early evidence in this study of the transient nature of a small part of the population in Otara. This example of professional goodwill was established at the "grass-roots" level amongst officers and is recommended to continue further to include managers, administrators and policy makers. It is a demonstration of a willingness to share in the responsibility of responding to truancy.

7.4 A Change of Philosophy

The establishment of the District Truancy Programmes in this country began in 1995. As explained earlier in this study M.O.K.O. is one such programme. While all these programmes are managed and co-ordinated through the Ministry of Education, the source of funding is the Prime Minister's Committee on Crime Prevention.

As the co-ordinator of the M.O.K.O. truancy programme, the researcher had queried the reasons for such a development and was politely told by Ministry of Education officials to accept the funding regardless of its source. Herein lies the philosophical problem that the researcher has identified. He considers that this funding process is an illustration of the government's view upon truancy as unusual problem. Furthermore it should be viewed by students, parents and teachers that this an effort by the government to shift the issue of

truancy away from an educational focus. It is the researcher's contention that the government's position on this matter is quite incorrect. It is essential that truanting students return to their schools to complete their education. This issue must remain within the domain of the Ministry of Education. Educational problems require educational solutions and in attending to truancy, other agencies need to contribute their resources to ensure that truancy is minimised.

It is appropriate to recommend in this section that adequate resourcing of individual programmes for truanting students should be considered. If policy makers are committed to addressing the problem of truancy then it is recommended that policies are created which allow for schools and communities to participate in responding to truancy. Empathy with schools and communities where truancy is epidemic is critical to successfully addressing the problem of continuous truanting.

7.5 Further Research

The following are suggestions for further study and investigation as they are recognised as factors influencing truancy.

- i. A case study research on the truancy of students in the primary school area, to provide long term preventative measures for these students behaviour, to support and their families and to provide the necessary programmes to ensure continued education of these students.

- ii. The distribution of information on international studies and investigations in Parent Programmes that have been designed to increase parental involvement in their children's education.
- iii. A study on reasons for some parents choosing not to seek support and financial assistance for their families from government agencies who provided such services.
- iv. A study of truancy in the communities of different ethnic and socio-economic groups in Auckland to establish an overview of the extent of the problem. This would also establish an understanding of significant reasons as causes of such behaviour and a review of current intervention practices. This study illustrated that the lack of evidence as to the number of truants in a community can result in inappropriate resourcing of old systems and affects initiatives for new programmes.
- v. A report or study of all existing truancy programmes to ascertain their progress and therefore provide evidence for continuing such programmes. That the study be conducted on the short and long term effect of students and their families of such programmes, without reference to the "value for money" mentality that pervades government policy decisions.
- vi. An investigation into the creation and design of policies that would encourage a liaison between government

agencies so that they may be able to provide the necessary expertise and resources in some truancy cases. This would allow local managers of government agencies to work closer with community initiatives which are working towards responding to issues such as truancy.

7.6 Conclusion

Contained in the Report of the Science Committee to the New Zealand government is the recommendation for:

the involvement of parents, children, schools, the community and several government agencies, as being integral to being able to quickly respond to cases of truancy (The Report of Science Committee 1995:112).

The researcher notes that this recommendation was made over two years ago and to his knowledge very few initiatives have been developed in his community. This is a confirmation of the recommendations in this part of the study. This report clearly identifies the "main players" in the issue of truancy and promotes the view of an integrated approach which must respond "quickly".

This study is limited to the lives of ten students and their families. The evidence that they provided is an indication of some of the issues that exist in the lives of truanting students that have lived their

experiences, in their communities. They do not therefore represent the many other New Zealand students who might have experienced life differently and might also be truanting. The students do however represent themselves, their families and their community.

It is hoped that in sharing their lives with the readers of this research, that parents, educationalists and government agencies would investigate ways in which they may participate in addressing the issue of truancy.

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APPENDIX A**LETTER TO THE M.O.K.O.
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

30th October 1996

2 Advocate Place,
MANUREWA.

The Chairperson,
M.O.K.O. Management Committee,
P.O. BOX 61-020,
OTARA.

Tena koe,
re - Research Project
Nga mihi o te wa ki a koutou katoa.

This letter is to support my verbal request that I lodged at your last meeting, with regards to your support of my studies for next year.

As stated I would like to discuss with the Truancy Officers:

- any possible participants to be interviewed
- some background information of each of the participants that could be included in the group interview

So that I may understand the role of the Truancy Officers in the interventions that occurred for each of those students, I would like permission to work with them. They will need to share aspects of information relating to particular students, who have successfully returned to school. I also, will formally be contacting the Principals of each of the schools that have students who will be asked to participate in my research. Furthermore, I will be contacting each of the parents/guardians of the participating students, to request permission to interview their child/ren.

I thank you for the encouragement and support that was expressed at your meeting and I look forward to sharing the outcomes of my study with your committee.

Naku noa,
Reuben T. Riki.

APPENDIX B**LETTER TO PRINCIPALS**

3 February 1997

2 Advocate Place,
MANUREWA.

The Principal,
----- School,
-----,
OTARA.

Tena koe,
re - University Studies

You may recall that I spoke at last year's Otago Principals' Association Meeting about my completing a post-graduate degree.

This year I have received a "Teachers' Study Award", so that I may complete this degree while on paid leave. The study is based upon truancy in Otago, with the view of understanding some of the causes of this behaviour and identifying strategies that have been used to intervene. There have been some very successful intervention strategies in our community. One involved a student in your school,

It is my intention to formally, contact the parent/guardian of this student requesting permission to interview him/her. I would like also to have you contribute, by commenting on the progress of this student and about the school's role in the student's development.

I will make formal contact once again, after I have permission from the parents, to interview their child.

Heoi ano,

Reuben T. Riki.

APPENDIX C

LETTER TO PARENTS

3 May 1997

FROM: Reuben T. Riki,
2 Advocate Place,
Manurewa.

TO: *(Participant and his/her family)*

Tena koutou, Talofa lava, Kia orana, Fakalofa lahi atu, Greetings,

I have been the Director of Te Puke o Tara Community Centre for the last nine years. Some of you will know me from there, or when I taught at Ferguson Intermediate or Tangaroa College. Others of you will know me from the Otago Rugby League Club or especially from the Otago Fleamarket on Saturdays. Hopefully, you all know me as one of the Otago City Councillors for Manukau City Council.

Because I want to return to full-time teaching, I am completing a Masters degree in Educational Administration at Massey University in Albany. This is a qualification that would help me become a better teacher. This year I am studying the progress of students in our community that have not been regularly attending school.

I would like your permission to work with your child ----- who has not been regularly attending school. He/She will be supported in a programme that I would like to help plan and monitor. As well as your family members, M.O.K.O. truancy officers, the school and other agencies will help support ----
----- return to school.

I would like to meet you at your home very soon to discuss whether I am able to interview your child/ren, about how he/she/they, are progressing at school after being involved with their Intervention Programme. I know through the M.O.K.O. programme that ----- is attending school regularly which is excellent. I know that the things that helped them return to school can help other students in our community.

When I come to visit I will explain:

- that the interviews can be at home or at school (whatever you are comfortable with)

- issues of confidentiality (no one will know their names or their family or where they live)
 - they will be able to read what they have said about school and you can also read what you have shared in the interview
-
- you will receive copies of the tapes and/or the transcripts
 - how you are able to withdraw from the interviews
 - or perhaps asking me not to use the information your child has given in the interviews.

I will drop a note in your letter box this week giving a date and time for my visit and then I'll telephone before I visit. I look forward to meeting you all.

Yours sincerely,

Reuben T. Riki

APPENDIX D

PERMISSION FORM

Date:/...../1997

I have had the research study explained to me and I understand what is involved.

I agree for my child/ren to be interviewed by Reuben Riki.

I understand that I can ask him at any time not to continue with the interviews.

My child/ren and I also understand that I can ask him not to write parts of what my child/ren has said in the interview.

I agree for the interviews to be held at: (*delete one*)

- home when I am present
- at school with a teacher present

Name of Parent/Guardian

Signature

APPENDIX E

CASE STUDY

INTERVIEW OUTLINE AND QUESTIONS

Prepared Questions

There are two interview schedules for each of the participants: prepared and actual questions. The researcher prepared different questions for each of participants to assist the researcher to understand the truanting experiences of the individual students. The questions were designed to encourage the participants to express themselves in a manner and language that they felt comfortable with. These questions are listed below for each case study and they precede the actual questions used in the interviews.

The reader will notice that actual questions asked during the semi-structured interviews follow-on from the responses to the previous questions.

Case Study One

CHRIS / 15yrs / Male / Maori

Prepared Questions

1. How long have you been attending school regularly this year?
2. Can you describe for me how you feel about school now?
3. Before M.O.K.O. got involved with you and your family what were your feelings about school then?

4. What were the main reasons that you didn't go to school regularly?
5. What were the important things that helped you return to school?
6. Who were the people involved and what did your family members do to support you returning to school?
7. What are some of your aims at school for this year?

Actual questions

DAY ONE:

1. When was the last time you went to school regularly?
2. How often did you go to school at Primary and Intermediate?
3. Who was home with you? Were there others in your family away from school too?
4. Did you enjoy going to school at Primary or Intermediate, at any time? Why? Why not?
5. So what would you do if you didn't go to school?)

DAY TWO:

6. Can you think of anything that you did like at school?
7. What made you start going to school more often?
8. How were things when you returned to school?

DAY THREE:

9. You tried Correspondence School one time too, what happened?

10. How is your relationship with your brothers and what do they think about you going to school again? ... Do you and your brothers still go out and do those things you were doing before?

Case Study Two

AREPA / 9yrs / Male / Maori

Prepared Questions

1. What's the name of your new school and how long have you been going there?
2. Do you like this new school?
3. Who are you living with now and how long have you been living there?
4. Where were you living before?
5. How many schools have you been to?
6. What were the main reasons for not going to school all that time?
7. Where did you go to when you didn't go to school?
8. Can you tell me the special things that happened to you that helped you go to school all the time?
9. What are some of the neat things that you do at this school?

Actual Questions

Day One:

1. How are things at home? How are things at school?
.... What do you mean "a bit different"?
2. When did you first start missing school?
3. How many schools have you been to and where are they?
4. I want you to tell me about what it was that kept you away from school? Why didn't you go to school?
5. What do you mean when you say "you couldn't" go to school?
6. What about when you were younger? Can you remember the reasons for not going to school?

Day Two: (in the presence of his grandmother)

7. The last time we talked I was asking if you could remember some of your reasons for not to school.
... So when this happened you didn't go to school?
8. Tell me about which school you went to and for how long?
9. Tell me about going down to the Glade? Who were you with and what sort of things do you do? How often did you go there?
10. Were there many young people who should have been at school?
11. What made you want to go there all the time, instead of going to school?
12. Tell me about the school that you are going to now.
13. What is it about this school that you really like?

14. Do you have lots of friends there?
15. Do you do lots of work at school?
16. (To the grandmother) Can you please comment as to the reasons you believe your mokokpuna has settled in at school so well?
17. (To the Mother) The involvement of the M.O.K.O. team into the case of your son's absence is not clear from what your mother-in-law and son have said. Are you able to say a little more about their involvement?

Case Study Three

WIEMU / Male / 10yrs / Maori & HARIATA / Female 9yrs

Prepared Questions

(To the mother),

1. I am interested in the car accident your family was involved in and the injuries your children sustained.
2. Did these injuries affect the attendance at school of Wiremu and Hariata? What happened?
3. What were some of the difficulties you experienced with the previous school's communication to you about your children's absence from school?
4. How, if at all did, M.O.K.O. help you and your children?

(To Wiremu)

5. Do you like your new school?
6. What are some of the things you like at this new school?

(To Hariata)

7. What are some of the things that you are learning in your new school?
8. What is your *Kaiako's* (teacher's) name?

Actual Questions

(To the mother)

1. What was the result of the accident as far as injuries to yourself and the children were concerned?
2. Can you be a bit more specific about the injuries of your eldest son?
3. Can you relate these injuries to his absence from school?
4. Why did the other children start to miss school also?
5. What was your response to the involvement of the M.O.K.O. people in your case?
6. What brought about the decision to change schools?

(To Wiremu)

7. You missed a lot of days at your other school after the accident, some of it for doctor's visits, some of it to stay home Did you like going to school before the accident?
8. What was it that you liked about going to that other school?
9. Were there some things that you didn't like about going to that school?
10. Tell me about these headaches? What must you do when this happens?

11. How are things going at your new school? What are some of the things that you like about your new school?
12. Your sister and younger brother, do they like the new school too?

Case Study Four

CAL & TINA / 14 yrs & 15yrs / Females / Samoa/Maori

Prepared questions

(To Cal)

1. What were some the reasons that you did not attend school regularly?
2. What types of things did you do when you were not at school?
3. What was your relationship like with your parents during this time?
4. What was your opinion about going to school?

(To Tina)

5. What were the main reasons for your truanting?
6. Can you describe for me some of the activities you were involved in when you were not at school?
7. Describe your attitude to school, teachers, your parents and your peers.

(To Cal and Tina)

8. What things had the most influence upon your truanting behaviour?

9. What are some of the changes you have made so that you may return to school?
10. Describe the involvement of M.O.K.O. during this time.
11. What are some of your aspirations for the rest of the year?

Actual Questions asked

DAY ONE:

1. CAL, how is the new programme at school?
2. What sort of activities do you do in the new programme? Are any of these activities helping you to some day rejoin your old class? How are these things helping you?
3. TINA, you have rejoined your old class. How are things since you returned? What sort of activities are you doing in the fifth form? What is the major difference for you, compared to what was happening last year?
4. What about the things you are doing this year at school, and what's different about this year?

DAY TWO:

5. What were some of the things that kept you both away from school? How have you dealt with those things? Are they still an issue for you both?
6. Just share what you feel like talking about. I'm not here to judge anyone, I know I can learn from the things that you did how you felt about things, etc.
... please, just continue.

7. When did you meet with the M.O.K.O. people and how did they help?
8. What were some of the things that have helped you both attend school more regularly, or what are some of the things that have changed your lives (at home or at school)?
9. I don't mean to interrupt ... but I want to be sure that this is going to help me understand why you missed school.
10. So therefore the introduction to Christianity was the major reason for you to change your behaviour?

DAY THREE:

11. So the way you both have dealt with things is to do with
12. What are some of your aims for the rest of the year at school and at home?

Case Study Five

TAU / Male / 11yrs / Maori/Rarotonga

Prepared Questions

1. Can you describe some of the things that you did at the Activity Centre¹⁵?

¹⁵ "Activity Centre" - A special unit established to support students with behaviour difficulties, which prevents them from progressing at school. Students receive close monitoring of their learning abilities and positive forms of expression are encouraged. Most return to mainstream schooling within a short time of being at the Centre.

2. Why were you at the Activity Centre?
3. Can you describe for me where you lived before you came to Otara, who you lived with and how you came to live in Otara?
4. Can you talk about some of your reasons for you not going to school regularly?
5. What happened that made you start to go to school again?
6. How did going to the Activity Centre help you?
7. What sort of things did M.O.K.O. do to help you?
8. How do you feel about school now?

Actual Questions

1. When did you return from the Activity Centre and how have things been going since you returned to school?
... What's the time-out room?
2. What were some of the things you learnt at the Activity Centre?
How have these things helped you? (At home or at school?)
3. Before going to the Activity Centre, what were some of the reasons you didn't go to school regularly?
4. Can you say again what it was that started you missing school?
5. What happened after the holidays?
6. Talk about the things that changed your attitude towards going to school. The things that helped you to want to go back to school?

7. Your parents / guardians said that you have been getting on very well with others in the house and that you are helping out at home.

Case Study Six

HARRY & TANU / 15yrs & 14yrs / Niue

Prepared Questions

1. Harry, can you describe the events that led to you and Tanu being suspended from school?
2. Tanu, can you describe the way you felt about school before you were suspended?
3. Harry, what were the main reasons for stopping going to school? Were there difficulties for you at home or at school?
4. Tanu, what were some of the things you and Harry did when you were not at school? Where did you go? Who were you with?
5. Harry, can you explain the things that occurred that helped change your attitude to school?
6. Tanu, what are some of the things that keeps you interested at school?
7. Harry, what your goals at school for this year?

Actual Questions

DAY ONE:

1. What were the events that led up to you two being suspended from school? (Events either at home or at school or in the community)
2. What about before that?
3. What were some of the things that stopped you going to school?

DAY TWO:

4. What about your activities with the B-----?
5. What happened when M.O.K.O. turned up at home?
How did that meeting go?

DAY THREE:

Please continue with the discussion about the meeting in the M.O.K.O. office.

6. How was the diversion programme and what did you do?
7. What were the things that changed for you? Your attitude to school? Your attitude to your family?
8. So how are things at school?
9. What about home, out on the street, life at school and your classes?

Case Study Seven

EVE / 14yrs / Female / Rarotonga/Maori

Prepared Questions

1. What events occurred at the beginning of this year that affected your attendance to school?
2. How did you feel about going to school at the start of the year?
3. What did you do when you were not at school?
4. What did M.O.K.O. do to help you return to school?
5. What do you consider to be important things for parents to do to encourage their children to attend school regularly?
6. What would you like to do when you leave school?

Actual Questions

1. Which school were you enrolled in for this year? Why didn't you go there?
2. How did you feel when the M.O.K.O. officers came to visit you at your home? What happened when they arrived? How did your Mum react to their visit?
3. You've already talked about some of your reasons for not starting school, but are there any other reasons?
Perhaps you could talk about what you did during those days you missed school?
5. What about the things you did at home instead of going to school?

6. What happened when you started back at school once you received your uniform and stationery?
7. You are going to school regularly now and how have things been at home and school?

APPENDIX F:

LETTER OF THANKS TO PARTICIPANTS

10 October 1997

2 Advocate Place,
MANUREWA.

Tena koutou, Talofa lava, Kia orana, Fakalofa lahi atu, Greetings,

I'm writing this letter to thank everyone for their contributions to this study. I discussed with you all many times, how this study would have little value without you all sharing your experiences with me and having nearly finished this study I can confirm that I was ABSOLUTELY correct.

To the students, I would like to sincerely thank and acknowledge you all for the *koha* (gift) of your stories to this study. I am grateful for your honesty and I hope this study honours your trust. The moments during interviews, when we all laughed and some of us cried, will remain strong in my mind. I also will always remember the respect you showed me during our work together. I hope that your stories can help other students like yourselves.

To the parents, I want to thank you for your support and guidance during the interviews. You have all asked for the tapes rather than the transcripts and I respect and understand why; all our cultures are based upon an oral history and

I know that the stories your children have told will part of your families history.

Thank you all once again.

He mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.

Kindest regards,

Reuben T. Riki.