

Social Work Now

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THE COVER DESIGN: The four sections of the front cover represent the four cornerstones of the Māori concept of health: te taha tinana, te taha hinengaro, te taha wairua and te taha whānau. If these faculties are adhered to and kept in balance then life will be in balance. Also appearing in the design is a stylised face with eyes at the top, nostrils in the middle and mouth represented by four "teeth" at the bottom. The kanohi is representative of all who work in the varying fields of the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Service.



No such thing as a safe smack

As a social worker in a Children, Young Persons and Their Families Service office that opposes the smacking of children, I was interested to hear of the proposed release of the *Safe Smack Parenting Programme* and the ensuing response to it.

The producer of the video claims that the intention of the video is to prevent child abuse by teaching parents how to smack in a controlled way, thereby reducing the risk of harm to a child. This approach appears oblivious to the evidence that smacking a child is an inappropriate, ineffective and inadequate response by an adult to a child's behaviour. Furthermore, it also seems to suggest that if you moderate an unacceptable behaviour it will then become acceptable. The video validates the actions of those who smack, those who prefer smacking to other forms of discipline and those people who will continue to smack because they will be able to justify their behaviour as long as they exercise some control.

Social workers and community workers who deal with the effects of violence know that redefining or renaming the behaviour does not lessen the effect of that behaviour. When we talk about smacking we are talking about a form of physical violence. We know that a child's learning is affected by observing what is modelled to them. Social learning theory says that children who are hit or who observe hitting learn that conflict can be resolved by the use of physical violence. This behaviour is taught to them as children and exercised by them as adults. Statistics from Women's Refuge suggest that 95 per cent of abusive partners were physically punished as children. This supports Christchurch Hospital's recent findings that those who were physically punished as children were four times more likely to grow up maladjusted and/or violent than those reared in "kinder"

homes. Children who are physically abused or who witness physical abuse, suffer secondary trauma such as fear, anxiety, confusion, behaviour problems, delayed learning and low self-esteem. Clearly, tolerance of physical violence (even in a controlled manner) undermines the goal of creating a safe, positive society where children will reach their full potential and lead productive lives.

I don't believe that there will be sufficient audience for the *Safe Smack* video for it to be a problem. Rather, it has provided an opportunity for discussion and to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign against physical violence.

Over the past 15 years organisations such as Women's Refuge, Rape Crisis, Men for Change and numerous other groups have dedicated thousands of hours in providing challenges, counselling and education to address the problem of physical violence. More recently, CYPFS has produced television advertisements and multimedia programmes to raise awareness about the effects of physical violence and to promote positive parenting. Daily, social workers, community workers, childcare workers, teachers, lawyers, doctors and other professionals confront the effects of physical violence. This amounts to a lot of people being involved in the issue and a lot of energy being spent.

So how do you measure the return on this investment of energy? Obviously, significant changes have been achieved over the past decade at both a local and national level. The overt smacking of children is less prevalent now than it was ten years ago. More community groups publicly oppose the smacking of children as an unacceptable form of discipline. Schools no longer physically discipline children and both schools and pre-schools have developed protocols for reporting physical abuse to statutory agencies. The

passing of the Domestic Violence Act (1995) is a legislative attempt to deal with what is perceived as a “monstrous dysfunction” in society. The Act reflects a broader understanding not only of the effects of violence between adults but also of the emotional, mental and physical damage caused to the next generations through trauma and modelling.

We know a lot of people have contributed to bringing about these changes but how many people have changed? How big is the movement that opposes physical discipline of children and promotes positive alternatives? Perhaps we need a national day of solidarity as a show of strength. It would also be a strong message to children that there are adults who are prepared to advocate on their behalf for their right to live without violence.

It is disappointing that a Waikato farmer felt the need to invest his time and money in a *Safe Smack* video, but at least he has identified himself. Hopefully by now someone in that community will have approached him in a constructive way and suggested alternatives to the behaviours that he promotes. Children learn from what is modelled to them and we all have a responsibility in that process.

Social Work Now 1998

Deadline for Contributions

August issue: 8 June

December issue: 15 September

April 1999 issue: 4 February

Obviously, the consciousness-raising, information sharing and education programmes need to continue. In support of the state-funded programmes such as the CYPFS *Parenting Without Hitting* video and pamphlet we can all contribute at a personal level by challenging violent behaviour whenever we see it and maximising opportunities to model and promote positive alternatives.

This won't get you media attention but it will make a change. ■



Ann Craig Supervisor,
Gisborne CYPFS

Social marketing – one step further

I WAS INTERESTED to read “Social marketing as a tool to stop child abuse” in the December issue of *Social Work Now* and its reference to the usefulness of the work of CYPFS community liaison social workers in helping to raise public awareness. The potential for public relations and publicity of the community liaison role is an exciting area to be explored. Liaison with not only the recognised groups that the Service deals with in the community, but also the move to include the business community highlights child abuse as being everybody’s problem.

Two initiatives that your readers may be interested to know about that we have undertaken in Whanganui are:

- Businesses have agreed to provide sponsorship of \$600 to purchase *Good Parenting* videos. These videos have been provided to community groups who work with children and families. Videos have also been supplied to libraries along with other *Good Parenting* material, child abuse and protocol information. Media publicity covering this helps make the point that the problem of child abuse belongs to everybody.
- Currently, the Whanganui office is running a newspaper promotion over five weeks to educate the community on who we really are and what CYPFS really does. Initially, the idea met with extreme reservation from the staff, however, enthusiasm is mounting and staff have put forward very interesting contributions using cartoons, graphics, flow charts etc. Community groups and businesses have provided sponsorship which has reduced

Social Work Now welcomes letters to the editor and discussions on issues raised in the journal.

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our costs considerably while achieving a unified approach to the problem of child abuse.

There is also a move to initiate a community contract with Māori radio which will provide weekly talk back opportunities along with regular daily running of advertisements. Again, business sponsorship along with government and community agency financial input will be sought for this contract which is intended to run for a year.

Gabrielle Strichen Community Liaison Social Worker, Whanganui CYPFS

Okay to talk about incest

RAPE AWARENESS WEEK takes place this year between 4 and 10 May. The theme is: It’s okay to talk about incest.

Nga Whiitiki Whānau Ahuru Māwai O Aotearoa: The National Collective of Rape Crisis and Related Groups invites you to think of how you as social workers can mark this important week.

This year Rape Crisis: Whānau Ahuru Māwai is honouring the strength of incest survivors. We will be publishing a report on incest. We are also proud to announce that, in partnership with Ogilvy and Mather Advertising and the Department of Social Welfare (CYPFS, CFA and the Family Violence Unit), we will be launching an innovative media campaign publicising incest and its effects.

A third of Rape Crisis clients between 1992 and 1996 experienced incest. As you will know, incest is a significant trauma that may have long-lasting, damaging effects and increases the risk that the survivor will experience a variety of difficulties in later life. Although many survivors live “normal” lives, most recall their experience as upsetting and unpleasant. A significant number feel themselves to be permanently scarred.

We encourage you in both your personal and professional lives to join with Rape Crisis: Whānau Ahuru Mo-wai in fighting incest. Talk about incest with your colleagues, your friends and the media.

Ceridwyn Roberts National Spokesperson, Rape Crisis: Whānau Ahuru Mōwai

The benefits and hazards of attachment

Secure attachment in childhood is important for good lifelong adjustment. **Franz X Kney** discusses what constitutes good, bad and unhealthy attachments

Intimate attachments to other human beings are the hub around which a person's life revolves, not only when he is an infant or a toddler or a schoolchild but throughout his adolescence and his years of maturity as well, and on to old age. From these intimate attachments a person draws his strength and enjoyment of life and, through what he contributes, he gives strength and enjoyment to others. (Bowlby, 1980).

Attachment refers to a reciprocal, enduring, emotional and physical affiliation between a child and a caregiver (James, 1994). As the foetus must be in the womb to survive, so must a child have a human attachment relationship in which to develop, feel protected, be nurtured and become human (ibid).

In behavioural terms, attachment is understood as "an emotional bond formed between an infant and one or more adults such that the infant will: (a) approach them especially in periods of distress; (b) show no fear of them, particularly during the stage when strangers evoke anxiety; (c) be highly receptive to being cared for by them; (d) display anxiety if separated from them" (Reber, 1985).

Attachment is also biologically based and characteristic of us as a species. It involves "a balance between the motivation to establish safe, secure relationships and the motivation to venture out to explore the world in a competency-promoting fashion" (Aber and Allen, 1987).

... The details of attachment psychology are [therefore] quite complex, comprising a genetically determined behavioural system, a mental representation of attachment relationships, a particular relationship history, and a specific environmental context" (Berman and Sperling, 1994).

Attachment-related difficulties are probably very common among our child-clients since attachment insecurity tends to develop between children and adults when there are serious difficulties in meeting each other's needs. Some attachment disturbances manifest with symptoms similar to "conduct disorder" (very hostile and aggressive behaviour) or "personality disorder" (serious difficulty in reciprocating trust, closeness or intimacy). Attachment styles acquired in childhood can set the stage for a host of relationship problems in later life as parenting cycles are passed on. While significant relationships can be disrupted physically (for example, by placement in out-of-home care), the style of attachment which has been learned in those relationships will probably be applied again – like an original mother tongue – in similar relationships later.

From the earliest age, children are active participants in the parent-child relationship, its quality and course. The child brings to the process a behavioural readiness for attachment to which the parent responds with caregiving behaviours and the combination of the two ensures the

survival and well-being of the offspring.

Both systems involve physiological functions, cognitive patterns (often referred to as internal working models) and behavioural actions. Elaborated in the course of interactive experience a matrix gradually develops for relating to others and becoming an individual self.

These processes are thought to begin well before the onset of verbal consciousness. They are, therefore, largely automatic and only partly available for conscious monitoring, even as they play an integral part in the shaping of personality (George, 1996).

Attachment theory contributes to research and prevention of relationship abuse in four major ways:

1. It emphasises the importance of the relationship context for human well-being.
2. It informs practice with families about the interactive manner in which parents and children experience each other.
3. It alerts practitioners to attachment disturbances as the possible origin of mistreatment patterns.
4. It gives direction to assessment and intervention planning.

The importance of attachment as a core topic in social work training and debate is therefore very clear.

Levitt et al point out that early life events are only one of the factors which influence later attachment behaviour because the mind makes sense of early experience not in the manner of a passive memory bank but more through selective retrieving of information which it gives new shape in the light of current experience.

Applied to attachment, different meanings of the term are possible:

1. As a state (of distress versus comfort/safety) which occurs whenever people encounter a personal loss or separation.
2. As a trait (shaped by genetic and environmental factors) which is expressed in how people think about close relationships and how they tend to react to loss or the threat of loss.

3. As interaction, that is, behaviour in specific relationships and its variation depending on the personalities of the people involved.

Attachment is different from bonding because it is more instinctive, whereas bonding relates to how people go about perceiving, experiencing and judging their interactions with each other (Parker, 1994).

Types of attachment behaviour

Two main categories of attachment are commonly distinguished: secure and insecure. Researchers have subdivided the latter into three (Ainsworth) and five (Zeanah et al) groupings for children, and four types for adults (Radojevic).

Attachment categories for children

Secure attachment

After brief separations from the caregiver (in an experimental laboratory setting), the secure child seeks to re-establish contact with the caregiver in an effective and relatively uncomplicated way. This child will normally expect an adult to attend to them in an appropriate, supportive and empathetically accurate manner, enabling them to regain emotional and physical comfort and equilibrium. The child will cling securely and easily accept the adult's comforting gestures. After a brief time (usually not exceeding a few minutes) the child appears ready again to cast its attention away from the adult for exploration and play. If the child has been distressed, appropriate feelings will be expressed genuinely and congruently, and emotional equilibrium will be regained quickly. Mothers of securely attached infants have been found to vocalise more with the baby and show more positive affection and enthusiasm about the small child. Such mothers are more sensitive to the child's signals, more affectionate, responsive and encouraging. They are also more expressive generally, attentive, more gentle and warm in vocal and physical tone, more relaxed and more confident.

Insecure attachments

Anxious

The insecure and anxious child displays distress when the caregiver is absent. If left in the company of an adult stranger, the child tends not to use the person as a secure base. When the familiar caregiver returns, the child shows less inclination than a "secure" child to reaffirm the attachment.

In turn, mothers of anxious children tend to respond in a more rejecting or ignoring manner, denying the child's request for close contact. Years later, anxious insecurity can result in deficiencies in exploratory and cooperative behaviour, difficulties with inappropriate aggression and a relatively low level of empathy when interacting with others.

Avoidance

These children tend to show ambivalence about physical contact, although they appear to be seeking it. They take longer to soothe, show anger with the caregiver more often and react strongly to the caregiver being absent.

Their cognitive development tends to be slower and their frustration tolerance more limited. They may also be overly dependent on the caregiver and display less problem-solving competence.

Disorganised

This form of insecurity is common among abused children or those whose bond with their parent has been traumatised. Their contact-making with the caregiver tends to be ineffective. For example, they may begin moving towards the caregiver, but then stop halfway and give up in an upset distressed manner, so that the adult has to move towards them to complete the reunion. Conversely, the child might acknowledge the caregiver's closeness, but will fail to complete the move towards direct physical contact.

Other features seen especially in abused children

Oppositional traits, for example, a child not doing what they are told, defiance.

Compulsive compliance, for example, uncritically obeying an order or request even though it may be clearly unsafe or not right to do so.

Paradoxical behaviours, for example, being clingy or overly intimate, or possessive-jealous, yet displaying anger and avoidance to the caregiver (similar to "borderline" patterns seen in adults).

Neglected children

Neglected children often behave as if they are unable to communicate their neediness or don't expect an effective response from the caregiver. They may also reverse the parent-child roles appearing precociously independent, or unconcerned about the caregiver and the caregiver's cues (as though failing to identify with the person).

Because the proximity of an ineffectual or abusive caregiver does not bring a clear sense of protection, the child's ability to explore the world away from the "(in)secure base" can be reduced.

In social situations, such children also tend to show or attract aggression more, or display greater suspicion towards peers. They tend to use manipulative interpersonal strategies in an attempt to gain control over others – thereby securing a semblance of safety for themselves.

Not surprisingly, they tend to have less success in forming new and viable relationships and lag behind in taking the initiative to explore new learning or activities. As a result, they can become more lonely, socially inept, or accident prone.

Features of continuity

People's personalities remain relatively constant throughout life. This is partly accounted for by the theory of "internal working models", that is, neurally-based response patterns. These are presumed to apply also to attachment. Stosny cites research by Hazan and Huth (1993) which found that stability of internal working models outweighed change by 78 per cent to 22 per cent. In other words, it is hard to change the way people are because of patterns ingrained in the nervous system.

A convoy model is proposed by Levitt et al (1994) suggesting that, from the beginning of life, the individual is immersed in a network of

social relations that moves with them through time. This network serves a protective function (similar to Bowlby's "secure base") by making support available among the convoy members. The relationships in the convoy vary in degrees of intimacy and importance and may include family members and distant relatives as well as friends and non-relatives.

How relevant a convoy can be becomes apparent when, for example, a person is asked to map their social/emotional networks and they include deceased individuals or people living far away. This highlights how the affective, non-physical dimension of convoy attachments tend to be kept "on board" throughout the lifespan. Given that individuals may need to establish new convoys, and that they may need support in this, it would seem important to appreciate the processes which may enhance or worsen convoy change and adaptation.

Due to the very interpersonal nature of human functioning, attachment-related issues are probably playing some part at virtually every juncture of an individual's personal life, particularly in childhood.

With this in mind, key points for assessing the quality of a person's attachment status include the following:

1. *Range and number (diversity) of relationships:* Parents, siblings, other relatives, spouse, children, and other close friends. The wider the range, the better the prospect of having one available which may be most helpful for a certain problem or situation.
2. *Intensity:* This often manifests itself most clearly at times of loss of a relationship through death, etc.
3. *Security/reliability:* People who experience their attachment figures as unreliable or unresponsive tend to develop more interpersonal difficulties generally, are more prone to depression, less resilient to stressors, and more dependent on others' help to solve problems, that is, they have less autonomy.
4. *Sensitivity:* This relates to how readily a person will regard a relationship as a

genuine bond. Individuals can vary considerably in this aspect. Some easily form intense attachments with many people throughout their lives, whereas others do not. The latter would therefore experience the end of one of the few available bonds as a more serious loss. People with "borderline" features tend to be more sensitive about bond insecurity than is the case with more solitary or avoidant people.

5. *Activation:* For example, newly engaged people tend to exchange more active "reconnecting" behaviours than partners who have, over time, become more certain of each other's trust. However, even partners in a long-standing relationship can be very affected when the other becomes ill, and vigorous attachment behaviours may become manifest again.
6. *Frustration tolerance (and the presence of anger):* Anger is often aroused through any form of threat to the relationship. Incompatible personalities, culture or world views can constitute such a threat. Theorists have considered that the aroused anger can motivate a person into action to defend and retrieve an attachment bond. For example, parents often hug their children (especially young ones) at the same time as reprimanding them. Anger can also serve an ego-protective function: projecting one's anxiety onto someone else can be felt as calming. Also, if a relationship is ungratifying, feeling angry is consistent with the (poor) quality of the relationship (Berman and Sperling, 1994).

Attachment patterns in adulthood

Attachment patterns of adults have certain similarities with childhood patterns (see especially Radojevic, 1996) since some adults pass their own attachment styles on to the next generation like an heirloom of mixed blessings. An adult attachment interview has been developed which can be particularly useful for assessing these transmissions (Maim and Goldwyn, 1985). It has been found that the attachment style of children may be best predicted – even before their birth – on the

basis of their parents' attachment narratives.

The following four groupings have been suggested for adult attachment patterns:

1. *Secure/Autonomous*: These adults tend to provide relatively coherent and consistent accounts of their experiences as children, irrespective of whether these were factually positive or negative. They seem able to integrate current thoughts and feelings with past experiences and to take the point of view of the other (perspective taking). They are relatively comfortable with the full range of their emotions, are free to respond empathetically to a child's distress signals and appear able to tolerate ambiguity.
2. *Insecure/Dismissing*: Discourse is characteristically defensive, sometimes expressed as an "inability to remember". These adults tend to minimise or trivialise their personal past and are divorced from feelings about it. Fathers in this group were found to "idealise a rather distant relationship with their father" (van Ijzendoorn et al, 1991). In communication with their child, they often placed emphasis on self-reliance, as well as stoicism and emotional independence when this was clearly not appropriate.
3. *Insecure/Preoccupied*: These adults seem to be still angrily over-involved with the perceived shortcomings of one or other parent, with an air of negativity. Mothers in this group tended to report experiences of little warmth and very high "protection" (ie over-control), role-reversal situations in childhood and guilt-induction. Their responses to questions tended to be lengthy, sometimes confused, overwhelmed and incoherent. Their responses to infants' attachment bids tended to be inconsistent, fluctuating between being either too intrusive or neglectful.
4. *Insecure/Disorganised*: Gaps in memory retrieval and lack of reasoning were found in these adults. They also tended to display a range of mental states such as:
 - Denial of the occurrence, nature or intensity of abusive experiences

- Psychologically confused statements (ie incongruent)
- Disoriented speech (rambling)
- Harboured fears of being mentally taken over by the abusive attachment figure (Radojevic, 1996).

The behaviour of abused and non-abused people (children and adults alike) can look very similar. A "problem" behaviour – especially a temporary one – very often signals no more than a possibility of serious mistreatment occurring without warranting an "attachment disorder" diagnosis.

Therapeutic treatment

James (1994) identified five requirements for success with remedial interventions. (Of these, the first four would also seem essential for any psychological therapy.)

Physical safety: Protection from harming others or oneself. This can apply to caregivers who oppose a child's therapy, or who fail to deliver appropriate supervision and support to a child who acts harmfully or destructively.

Psychological safety: This refers to the child's emotional safety to explore events or issues which are frightening, such as the loss of parents. Children with a history of attachment disturbance may have difficulty in attaining this sense of safety.

Therapy skills: Therapists must have adequate knowledge and appreciation of the effects of attachment-deficit upon a child's cognitive, emotional and behavioural maturation. They must also have the ability and a commitment to work with the caregivers. It is critical for a therapist to recognise their own transference arousal to the pain of the child and the arousal of carers to the child's pain. Clinical supervision is invaluable for safeguarding against this.

Therapeutic relationship: In therapeutic work with attachment disturbed people, there must be awareness and acceptance that "therapeutic breakthroughs" may not occur for long periods (ie months) and that the gains achieved in terms of attachment ability may not become

apparent for several years. Therapists must know the importance of “hanging in there” and remain available as a secure base for as long and as much as is practically possible.

Therapeutic parenting: This can require the following competencies in caregivers:

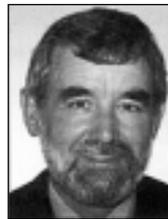
- The ability to consider issues that underlie children’s behaviours.
- The ability to acknowledge, recognise and advocate for the child’s pain.
- The skill to recognise and appropriately intervene when disturbed emotions and behaviours surface.
- Self-perception, which allows recognition of one’s own troubling arousal to the child’s characteristics.
- An understanding of a child’s need for empathy during the process of resolving past experiences.
- A willingness to participate in the child’s therapy and to comply with the clinician’s guidance.
- A willingness to work as part of the treatment team and to be candid about the good, bad, and ugly interactions in the home.
- The self-awareness to seek and use personal support or therapy when needed.
- A life outside the role of being a therapeutic parent.

Conclusion

Rutter (1995) has raised a number of cautions (shared by other authors) about the preliminary and incomplete state of empirical data on attachment. This is hardly surprising given that attachment phenomena involve biological,

neurological, social context and chronologic-maturational factors. The exact details of how, for example, attachment patterns are transmitted down generational lines are not well understood at present. Nor do we yet know which are the best conditions for correcting dysfunctional attachment styles during the various stages of a person’s life in order to stop the potentially very disabling cycles.

Even so, this review has endeavoured to illustrate the key role played by attachment processes in a person’s development. It has shed light on how many critical opportunities there actually are for caregivers to prevent or reduce serious developmental harm if they have even some rudimentary knowledge and personal attributes to respond to children’s interactive approaches in therapeutically conducive ways. This approach applies even more strongly to residential and group home care. And if therapeutically effective caregivers are to rely on social workers for direction in these matters, then the importance of attachment as a topic in social work training becomes even more clear. ■



Franz X Kney is a Psychologist based in the Christchurch CYPFS Psychological Services. He has been employed in the Department of Social Welfare since 1977 in a variety of positions including social worker and senior counsellor.

Note

Due to space considerations, the references have been omitted and are available on request from the editor at *Social Work Now*.

Kids and crime: The drive for creative solutions

Four case studies from the Youth Justice
Creative Outcomes project

In the last issue of *Social Work Now*, Pam Phillips, Senior Advisor and former youth justice coordinator at the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Service (CYPFS), outlined the major findings of the Youth Justice Creative Outcomes project. The joint Social Policy Agency and CYPFS project aimed to find examples of good youth justice practice with particular regard to family group conference (FGC) plans for serious and repeat offenders without a custodial component. CYPFS youth justice practitioners from all over the country contributed their experiences and sent in case studies to illustrate creative strategies and plans they had developed especially in keeping with section 208(f) of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989. This section says that any sanctions imposed on the child or young person who has committed an offence should:

1. Take the form most likely to maintain and promote the development of the child or young person within his or her family, whānau, iwi and family group.
2. Take the least restrictive form that is appropriate in the circumstances.

This article presents four edited case studies from the final project report *Creative Youth Justice Practice*¹ concerning the outcomes of family group conferences with John, Paul, Jason and Jacob. The names and identifying features of the four youths and others involved with their cases have been altered to protect their privacy. All the case studies and testimonials published in *Creative Youth Justice Practice* were presented anonymously.

John

“John” was charged with a burglary which occurred in a provincial town. The victim was an elderly person, frail and living alone, who had been deeply traumatised by the event. An FGC was convened following direction by the court. It was attended by the young person’s parents and eight other members of his extended family.

It was not possible for the elderly victim to attend the FGC which was being held some distance away. Therefore, in order for the conference to reach appropriate resolutions and restore the dignity of the victim, the young person’s parents paid a personal visit to the victim’s home. (John had already been placed in a different part of the country in full-time employment and was working a great deal of overtime.) The visit was very successful in that it resulted in warm and kindly relations between the two families and further visits followed. The parents apologised to the victim who, in turn, made it clear that no reparations were being sought. In fact, the victim wrote a letter to the court expressing appreciation for the visit and asking that no further action be taken against John.

The youth justice coordinator encouraged the parents to involve the extended family by emphasising the fact that the vulnerability of such an elderly victim created the potential for more serious charges. The coordinator suggested that the extended family’s help in dealing with the young person might be critical to prevent re-offending and thus the mana of the family would be more seriously damaged if this help was not sought from the wider whānau.

The FGC plan stipulated that the young

person would make a cash reparation and provide a card with his apologies and a gift for the victim, all of which would be personally delivered by one of his family members. The parents acknowledged that they were having a “rough patch” in controlling their son’s behaviour and enlisted the support of extended whānau. John was to reside with a close relative who lived in an urban centre where he would be surrounded and supported by immediate and extended whānau.

The plan built on the fact that the young person had obtained full-time employment. It provided for a regular programme of savings, managed by his mother; involvement in sporting activities, which included playing for a whānau team; and help from an immediate family member towards passing the written examination for a driver’s licence.

Monitoring was to be the responsibility of the family. The plan was completed.

This particular case stands out for:

- The lengths to which the family went to include the views of the victim;
- The exceptional reconciliation between the victim and young person’s family;
- The victim’s support for the young person;
- The detail of the FGC plan both in terms of
 - the young person’s accountability for the offence
 - providing for the young person’s development;
- The fact that there has been no further offending.

Jason

An FGC was held for “Jason”, aged 16, who had been charged with wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm and aggravated burglary. This was not the first time Jason had been involved in offending and he had first come to notice about a year prior to the latest spate. Four FGCs had been arranged for him

for previous offences but he had been uncooperative. He had also spent time in Department of Social Welfare residences. For the last two years Jason had drifted between his parents’ and girlfriend’s homes. His family were concerned about his well-being and attempted to stabilise his movements, but unfortunately their efforts were not successful.

The latest FGC was attended by family members and the victims. The participants tentatively proposed that Jason be given one more chance to prove to his family, CYPFS and himself that he was able to change and be involved in more positive aspects of life. When confronted by the victims Jason appeared remorseful, aware of the seriousness of his offending and accepted responsibility for his actions. The plan that resulted was a very strict

It was also agreed that should Jason breach either of the orders he would be brought before the court to be sentenced to supervision with residence.

one which Jason and his family saw as the best way to hold him accountable for his offending and help him to correct his negative behaviour.

All the FGC participants were in agreement that Jason should be sentenced

to supervision with activity, followed by a three-month supervision order. This involved his residing with his aunt and uncle. The other aspects of the plan were monetary reparations to each of the victims, abstention from drinking alcohol, 24-hour supervision, non-association with the victims, reporting to his social worker (supervisor) every week, attending a course and taking up employment that had been offered and remaining there until the reparation was fully paid.

It was also agreed that should Jason breach either of the orders he would be brought before the court to be sentenced to supervision with residence. This plan was successfully completed by the young person and he is now doing very well working in an apprenticeship.

The case stands out for the way in which the family was brought back to try and give their young person another (and probably his last) chance and for the extraordinary success

that they and Jason achieved. What is particularly impressive is that, given the very serious nature of the offence and the young person's grim history of unsuccessful interventions, all the participants and professionals involved in this case were still determined that they would not give up on him and that, in the end, they were able to turn him around.

Paul

"Paul" had an offending history which included theft from a motor vehicle, attempted theft, wilful damage, theft, unlawful taking of a motor vehicle and burglary, and several resultant FGCs. His parents were separated. He lived with his mother, who was alienated from her whānau while residing in the rohe of her husband. She was afraid to involve her husband's whānau. Her husband was a heavy drinker. Previous attempts to involve whānau were not successful.

The young person's offending escalated to assault with a weapon, possession of an offensive weapon and unlawful taking of a motor vehicle. These were arrest matters which were denied and went to a defended hearing. The court found in favour of the prosecution, directing that an FGC be convened and that a copy of the plan be sent to the judge. For the purpose of this FGC the iwi was introduced when it was certain that the mana of the father had been adequately dealt with and the responsibility could be extended outwards.

The FGC was held on a marae and ten whānau members participated. The whānau acknowledged that the charges were very serious and that, if dealt with in the district court, would very likely lead to incarceration. The whānau decided to meet on two further occasions to develop a plan for the young person and 15 whānau members participated in this work. The whānau stipulated in advance that they accepted responsibility for rehabilitating him and shared the shame that his actions had brought on them all. They decided that the mother would pay reparations to the victims. They asked that the court accept the family's plan and make an order

placing the young person under the supervision of a proposed iwi social service.

The full plan was very detailed with responsibilities assigned to the young person, specific members of his whānau, the iwi social service, the iwi trust board and CYPFS. Paul was to follow the rules of his kaumātua/kuia and whānau support, live in the home of a designated member of his whānau during the period of his supervision order, follow their home rules, participate in whānau and other programmes and take part in sporting activities. The schedule laid out for Paul demanded considerable discipline on his part, with strict accounting for his time. His programme was meant to address his accountability for his actions as much as his future development.

The members of his whānau were required to keep in contact with Paul by phone and home visits, support the whānau plan and provide specific support to his caregivers. The whānau was also required to convene a hui on the completion of the supervision order to review Paul's progress, discuss how to rebuild his relationship with his parents and provide an effectiveness report to the court. The young person's caregivers were accountable for his supervision and day-to-day living arrangements, for encouraging contact between Paul and his parents and reporting regularly to the rest of the whānau on his progress.

The iwi social service involved in the plan was to arrange supervision and counselling sessions, a report to the court at the end of the supervision period, monthly progress reports and accounts to be sent to CYPFS, liaison with the trust board regarding the overseeing, supervision and support for the whānau, monthly whānau meetings and disbursement of funds to the programme. The trust board members were to act as liaison between all the participants in the plan and to oversee field excursions contained in the plan. CYPFS staff were responsible for arranging the agreed payments to the iwi social service involved.

The programme set out for Paul comprised work experience, tikanga (including self-development and introducing Paul to his

tribal elders and his obligations to whānau, hapū and iwi), kapa haka (introducing haka and action songs, waiata to competition level and marae protocol), conservation and wilderness programmes and sport. There was also provision for deciding how to address educational issues.

The case stands out because of the very serious nature of the charges, the empowerment of the whānau and iwi social service, the detailed planning to set boundaries between CYPFS and iwi, the tight monitoring and reporting systems imposed on whānau and iwi, the extending of the net, holding the FGC on a marae and the acceptance of iwi to participate in the plan.

Jacob

“Jacob”, aged 16, was charged with careless driving causing death and careless driving causing injury. The charges resulted from an accident that occurred when he took his girlfriend, along with two others, riding in his mother’s car. The girlfriend died from her injuries. Neither drugs nor alcohol were involved.

The victim was her parents’ only daughter. She and Jacob had gone to school together and had known each other for some years. The families needed time to grieve before proceeding with the case, so it was a couple of months after the event before final FGC decisions were made.

The youth justice coordinator’s visit with the victim’s family was extremely emotional. The mother asked to have a church service for the victim, with the offender’s family, before the FGC. Jacob’s family was anxious to accommodate the victim’s family as much as possible, so both families attended a service at their church. The FGC was held immediately after the service. Both families formally introduced themselves even though they had known each other previously through the young people’s relationship. Twenty-one people

attended the FGC including family members, a member of the clergy, police and the coordinator. Everyone presented their views and there was full agreement to the plan.

The victim’s family wanted a memorial for their daughter and the clergyman suggested that Jacob, who played the guitar, should get a choir together for the church. This he did and the choir was still going at the time of writing, two years after it was begun. The plan included 150 hours community work which was organised and supervised by the same clergyman. Jacob ended up doing far more than that because of his continuing involvement with the choir.

Both families expressed their desire to provide some guidance for Jacob. They wanted him to settle down and do something positive with his life. They didn’t want the accident to impede his education and therefore asked that he sit five school certificate subjects. This part of the plan was monitored by the young person’s family together with the participating clergyman. The victim’s family also took an interest in the young person’s progress at school and monitored it themselves in an informal way.

Two years after the accident Jacob was still going on with the choir and had an exceptionally good school report, a copy of which was sent to the victim’s family. They expressed their satisfaction at seeing that their wishes had been carried out.

The coordinator believed that this case fulfilled the spirit of the CYP&F Act in that the young person was held accountable for his actions in a particularly appropriate fashion and there was healing between the victim’s family and the offender and his family. ■

Note

Creative Youth Justice Practice (1997) (unpublished) by Marlene Levine, Simi Tuiavii, Aaron Eagle and Christine Roseveare, Social Policy Agency, Wellington.

Are practice consultants effective in child protection work?

Paul Muir, Mary Schluter and Nick Findley

browse the overseas literature and offer a local perspective on the pros and cons of practice consultants

In the first of this two-part article looking at the role of practice consultants, both in New Zealand and overseas, we present the findings of a literature review on the effectiveness of consultants in social services, especially child protection services, the history behind the establishment of these positions in the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Service (CYPFS) and how the role was developed in the Canterbury area. The second part will describe typical work scenarios for a practice consultant, findings from a Service-wide questionnaire on the role of the practice consultant and issues for child protection services to consider when employing consultants.

Introduction

Practice consultants have been employed in CYPFS for five years and we considered it timely to review the effectiveness of our work. The first step was to clarify what studies had already been undertaken regarding the value of consultants in social services and how this fitted with our work.

This article was originally due to be presented as a paper at the 6th Australasian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect in Adelaide last October but was cancelled following the sad and unexpected death of fellow CYPFS worker Nik Singh at the conference. The authors write, "In presenting this article we are reminded how important Nik was to us as a friend and colleague. He has made a huge contribution to social work and child protection work in particular. We especially remember his energy and sense of humour. We miss him very much."

Literature search

There is considerable literature on the use of consultants whose expertise may lie outside the child protection field and how child protection services have used them in casework decision making. Cultural consultants with experience of working with minority groups are used to link appropriately with families. Consultants from the health and medical fields, such as paediatricians, help in determining non-accidental injury or neglect. Psychologists and psychiatrists assist in the assessment of relationship and attachment issues.

Consultation teams

There was also reference in the United States to teams of consultants with a variety of specialisations who make themselves available to help with casework direction in complex and difficult cases. Bross et al (1988) discuss the development of state and regional consultation teams which back-up child protection services. They believe that front-line professionals and local child protection teams can handle most cases reasonably well. But some communities may not always be able to afford additional expertise over and beyond their front-line resources or for unusually difficult diagnostic, treatment or legal issues. The writers refer to many states or regions which have developed consultative teams for exceptionally difficult or relatively uncommon child protection problems.

These teams usually include experts or

specialists in a variety of fields such as medicine, social work, law, and psychiatry. The writers talk about individual workers feeling emotionally isolated, powerless and even afraid in their work, or a child protection service feeling overwhelmed by a difficult case when there are no extra resources. A back-up consultative team can give a second opinion, move staff out of a "stuck" position, confirm or question the value of an approach, or bring new resources to bear on a case. With this back-up, individuals may be more comfortable with a position that has been reached, be secure in the knowledge that others are aware of the facts and that further consultation is an option.

Bross et al also discuss the potential for these external support teams to identify systemic weaknesses or increase the prospect for accountable systems if their contract provides for feedback to the services that use them.

Internal consultants

There are very few references to internal consultants working specifically in the child protection field. An exception is an article by Rushton and Nathan (1996) on recent developments with consultants in child protection services in London.

Rushton and Nathan present a qualitative study that suggests the challenge to raise practice standards in investigative and post-investigative child protection work may be met by greater opportunities for practice consultation.

The writers refer to a number of weaknesses in child protection services in England such as a lack of experience or appropriate practice in front-line workers, insufficient awareness of legal frameworks, shortfalls in their knowledge of human development and inadequate supervision of the quality of work. They state that child abuse inquiries have consistently called for improvements in professional support systems to reduce the risk of errors of omission and commission in child protection work.

The authors also say that the UK government has supported the appointment of a senior officer within each department for specialist consultation. They note that where

this has occurred consultants were generally asked to assist with particular cases on a one-off basis, or on a limited number of occasions. This contrasts with the role of supervision which is a continuing activity as part of the management of front-line work. Some senior officers were also asked to chair case conferences on behalf of management. There was no systematic research into the expansion of these posts or on the content or quality of the consultation provided.

This study used focus group meetings of consultants in several London child protection authorities to examine the nature, quantity and quality of consultation provided to front-line workers. The authors concluded that agencies and staff were only just confronting the fact that the posts do not fit easily into a hierarchical line management model. Conflict in role relationships and poorly specified task responsibility were often issues requiring resolution.

It also seemed that consultant posts were "vulnerable to being magnetised into managerial functions, thus attenuating their impact on the quality of individual practice". Effective practice consultation, write Rushton and Nathan, requires a clear definition of roles and responsibilities, the support of senior management, recognition of expertise and a consideration of professional and developmental needs.

Child focus

One of the benefits of the role, identified by consultants themselves, was being able to maintain a child focus in case discussions to offset the managers' preoccupation with resource constraints and procedural problems. Another advantage was the consultants' independence from daily constraints and their attendant freedom to challenge deficiencies in the system as well as to protect the social work values underpinning preventative and therapeutic work. The consultants were able to give more attention to longer-term attempts to improve family functioning – a focus they thought had been downgraded in comparison to the clustering of activity around initial investigations.

In essence, the independence of consultants from the organisational structure allowed for more creative and critical work and the opportunity to challenge the organisation. However, it was also noted that the location of consultants outside the operational line was seen as a weakness unless staff appreciated the resource, their employment had to be supported and integrated by management and organisational defensiveness over using the consultants needed to be “dislodged”.

External consultants

An article by Walsh and Moynihan (1990) discussed more generally the reasons why consultants were used in social service agencies.

These included gaining perspective on a problem, providing expertise, relieving busy staff and administrators from yet another task, “decontaminating” complex and often convoluted political issues within an agency and enabling transitions within organisations. The article pointed out that consultants seldom solve problems; more usually they assist in the development of alternative options. The client must make the decisions and ultimately solve the problems.

The article discussed the use of external versus internal consultants. External consultants are often preferred when:

- An organisation cannot afford or does not need a full-time consultant;
- It requires extra help for short periods on specific projects;
- Specific expertise or broad experience is needed and is not available internally;
- The appearance of objectivity or political neutrality surrounding a problem is desirable;
- A manager wants an outside opinion in order to make a major decision.

For internal consultants to be effective the writers believe their roles must be formally defined with clearly established professional and interpersonal boundaries. “Knowing too much” about the organisation may prevent internal consultants dealing with the “big picture” issues. However, the other side of this argument is that, because of their knowledge, understanding and experience in the organisation, other staff may be encouraged to use internal consultants in ways they would not consider appropriate for external consultants.

Walsh and Moynihan say that “the external consultant’s background should fit the history, culture and, to the extent possible, the modus operandi and administrative behaviour of the agency”.

They discuss the need for consultants to be

alert to subtle organisational factors such as interpersonal relationships and staff attitudes that might affect the content, process and scope of

Knowing too much about the organisation may prevent internal consultants dealing with the big picture issues.

consultative efforts. Consultants need to recover and articulate assumptions and then help staff test their accuracy.

If consultants do not have the ability to perform certain tasks, agencies must acknowledge the problem and change consultants when the fit is not right.

The article concludes with a discussion on values and ethics and the need for “consonance” between the consultant and the hiring agency. Mutual trust and integrity are necessary ingredients among all parties in a consultation agreement. Trust must also be earned, not ascribed.

Consultancy guides

For those who want to use consultancy advice and support, internally or externally in child protection services, Philip Hope (1992) is an excellent resource.

His book includes checklists, models and practical guidance on every stage of engaging

and working with a consultant. Not only is it a useful guide for organisations which might want to use consultants, but it is also handy for consultants wanting to ensure effective, collaborative consultancy contracts.

The book includes a definition of consultancy, establishes what consultants do, identifies consultancy principles and values, discusses various consultancy relationships, outlines the stages in choosing and using consultants, describes diagnosis and information gathering, feedback, action planning and implementation and evaluation. The key points are summarised at the end of each chapter.

Tony Morrison, a child protection trainer and consultant in England, also recommends a new book by Neumann et al (1997) which we understand has an emphasis on how consultancy is commissioned, mandated, linked to management processes, establishes boundaries and is terminated.

Learning from consultancy examples

There are some resources that give detailed examples of problems faced by social service workers and how consultants have assisted them.

One example is Jenny Hyatt's (1995) look at the effectiveness of eight external, short-term interventions in the community work field using specialist consultants. The author reviews the techniques used by the consultants, analyses their effectiveness in increasing a group's resources and looks at the consultants' impact on group members' skills, knowledge and confidence. She analyses lessons for good practice and provides frameworks and advice for consultants and community groups to work more effectively together.

A book by Obholzer and Roberts (1994) includes many examples of individuals, teams and agencies in a variety of social services whose effectiveness and morale had been undermined. Consultants helped them understand and address the processes that contributed to the inevitable

stresses of caring work.

An article by Kurland and Salmon (1992) discusses the intractable nature of many problems which create unusual stress for social workers and says that consultants need to be aware of this and encourage peer support. They emphasise helping social workers set realistic goals, encouraging them to recognise and appreciate small successes achieved by their clients and helping practitioners understand the important although often incremental nature of their work.

Another aspect they considered important was dealing with differences and conflict. Conflict may provide stimulation towards new ways of thinking and feeling. When areas of disagreement are explored, areas of agreement are often clarified. They also raised the issue that

Conflict may provide stimulation towards new ways of thinking and feeling.

many of the clients social workers work with have difficulty articulating their thoughts and feelings. Consultants, therefore, need to be thinking about activities that social workers might

encourage their clients to use to give them something concrete to focus on, especially if it involves working cooperatively.

Summary

The Rushton and Nathan article is the only one that we could find that evaluates the use of consultants in child protection services. There is considerable material that discusses the consultant's role in social services more generally. Some focus on principles and guidelines in working with consultants. Others outline examples of consultancy, the issues involved and the outcomes.

So how does this information relate to the work of practice consultants in CYPFS?

Links with CYPFS practice consultants

The practice consultant positions were created in CYPFS (then NZCYPS) in 1992. This was primarily a response to concerns about professionalism in the Service, especially perceived inadequate practice standards in

abuse and neglect cases (Mason Report, 1992).

Their purpose was “to promote excellent practice by providing consultancy advice, coaching and competence monitoring” (NZCYPS, 1992). Nationally, 43 consultants were appointed. We were appointed to three positions in Christchurch.

Role clarity

We readily identified with many of the issues raised in the work of Rushton and Nathan, especially the vulnerability to being magnetised into managerial functions. For us, one of the key issues for internal consultants is role clarity. Although the position description states “this is not a line position”, many consultants do fill operational gaps especially at a management level.

Because we were aware of this possibility at the outset, we discussed the risk with our local manager and agreed not to let this happen in our area. This ensured that staff did not see us as quasi managers who were there to respond primarily to management needs. It also encouraged all staff to consider using us as a resource.

Working as a bureau

When we look back at what has worked well, a key factor was the collegial support we were able to give each other. We were also set up as a bureau which drew on our different strengths and experiences in deciding who would respond to a particular referral as well as creating more options for staff.

For example, if gender was an issue then the bureau could take that into account when deciding who was the most appropriate consultant to respond. If we had a limitation in responding to a referral the three of us were more likely to come up with an appropriate solution than if we were working alone. An example of this could involve a cultural issue since the three practice consultants in our bureau were all New Zealand Europeans. For referrals involving

Maori or Pacific Islands issues we made a special effort to incorporate cultural advice at both client and staff level.

Operating as a bureau in a metropolitan area also provided us with more effective networks than, perhaps, a single consultant working alone out of a smaller area. They have to work harder to develop the supports required to carry out their consultancy role. We believe consultants, like any worker in the child protection field, need to have adequate support systems to work effectively.

Marketing, engagement and contracting

Another significant decision, sanctioned by the managers and supervisors, was for us to visit every team which was a potential user of our services and discuss how we might best work with them.

This clarified what were the givens and what issues could be negotiated. For example, we were open to any staff member having

a “one-off” consultation, but on-going work required a contract involving two levels in the operational line as well as the consultant concerned.

This triangular involvement was a crucial factor in the effective use of the consultants. It ensured that the others involved were a part of the process and that we jointly defined the work and the respective roles of each party to the agreement. We were able to be clear that, as consultants, we were a resource for staff, not a controller or a practice decision maker. We were not the owners of any problems which had been identified.

We decided to work collaboratively since we did not want to be perceived as the “experts”. Referrals would involve us in change processes and, if the consultancy was to be effective, there would be a generalisation of knowledge, skills and values as a result of working together with staff.

We discussed the potential roles we could

We were able to be clear that, as consultants, we were a resource for staff, not a controller or a practice decision maker.

play and encouraged staff to be creative in their thinking about how they might use us. This engagement process was a significant factor in setting the scene for our future working relationships with staff.

This process occurred in 1992 and we repeated it in early 1995. With staff turnover and organisational change we recognised that marketing what we have to offer must be a regular and on-going process. It is due again!

The second part of this article will be published in the August issue of *Social Work Now*. ■



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Nick Findley has been a CYPFS Practice Consultant in the Canterbury area for the past five years and prior to that worked in numerous roles including general social worker, family homes supervisor, training and development officer, adoptions supervisor and manager. He has been with DSW/CYPFS for 21 years.

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Kaupapa Māori and its influence on organisational change

Don Sorrenson researches the relationship between social work managers and Maori

In 1996 I completed a thesis on the responsiveness of 11 managers to Kaupapa Māori¹ at the New Zealand Children and Young Persons Service². The thesis examined the relationship between Māori and the Service since *Pūao-te-Ata-tū* and the commitment of the organisation to biculturalism. It was based in part on qualitative research undertaken in the Bay of Plenty and Waikato that included interviewing 11 staff in management positions.

The thesis argued that while organisational and structural changes were widespread within the state sector the response to Māori initially by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and then by the Children and Young Persons Service (after its establishment in 1992) became less effective. This was especially so after 1990 following the disestablishment of structures which traditionally provided links between DSW and the wider community, including Māori. While the research identified structural reform and confusion over policy as pivotal factors in disadvantaging Māori, managerial attitudes were also significant in determining the responsiveness of the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Service (CYPFS) to Kaupapa Māori.

Three major themes emerged from the research and are summarised in this article. With the Service's current emphasis on developing iwi social services it may be of value to consider these with a view to improving the response of the Service in the future. This research was undertaken more than two years ago and is limited to interviews with only 11 managers. It is not an overview of the situation throughout CYPFS nor does it reflect subsequent initiatives.

State sector reform and its impact on Māori

State sector reform and the restructuring of DSW and CYPFS disadvantaged Māori, according to the thesis research, through the disestablishment of organisations such as the Social Welfare Commission and the district executive committees (DECs). These structures had given Māori an avenue for effective participation and input into policy and practice. A consequence of these – and other – disestablishments were that partnerships between Māori and DSW had to be renegotiated. The research indicated that no significant renegotiations had taken place which could have led to meaningful participation by Māori with input into policy and practice. This was despite reassurances from the Associate Minister of Social Welfare in 1991 that appropriate mechanisms would be put in place to “maintain both consultation with client and ethnic groups and feedback” (McClay, 1991).

One of the major contradictions evident within this study was that the consistent philosophy espoused by managers was one of inclusion and participation but that there was a lack of adequate structures to ensure effective participation with Māori.

Yet participation was highlighted in the study as vital in creating DSW responsiveness. The crucial issue for the Ministerial Advisory Committee (1986a) when discussing biculturalism was also participation; participation in the form of sharing responsibility and authority with appropriate Māori people. Within the context of participation, eight of the 11 respondents in

this study considered that they did not have a close working relationship with Māori. Meaningful participation could not, therefore, even begin to occur.

Confusion

Some of the reasons for a less than satisfactory response to Kaupapa Māori may lie in apparently contradictory messages at government level leading to confusion over the policy regarding Kaupapa Māori.

Bryson (1995) claimed that, "political environments may shift, leading people's attention elsewhere". One apparent shift in CYPFS has been to fiscal imperatives and there has been significant restructuring to address possible financial and organisational difficulties. There has also been a lack of clarity regarding the expectations of the organisation and of those within it, including managers, says the study. Some of the confusion is around the definition of terms but there is also confusion around how Kaupapa Māori policies are to be implemented.

CYPFS policy in regard to Kaupapa Māori was originally encapsulated in *Pūao-te-Ata-tū* and latterly *Te Punga*. However, policies regarding Kaupapa Māori are also the result of many avenues of input as well as being articulated in other policy documents. CYPFS policy, as such, does not focus on specific decisions regarding Kaupapa Māori, but on clusters of decisions surrounding the issue. The business plans cited as part of this study reflected a vague and imprecise understanding of requirements in the area of Kaupapa Māori, in that plans were expressed in terms of general objectives rather than specific actions and were largely unquantified.

The study acknowledged that there were different understandings of biculturalism and also of the Treaty of Waitangi, although it did note that the differing interpretations have historically favoured the mainstream. The Ministerial Advisory Committee (1986a)

considered that biculturalism was about "sharing of responsibility and authority for decisions with appropriate Māori people". It was this meaning that DSW initially accepted through its embracing of *Pūao-te-Ata-tū* and which also underpinned the concept of biculturalism within the thesis.

Although biculturalism became a goal for government organisations as a result of the higher profile given to the Treaty of Waitangi by the Labour Government in the 1980s, understanding of its theory and practice remained incomplete because there was little uniformity, coordinated effort or agreement on what it really meant in practical terms.

The study's sample reflected this lack of understanding and, consequently, how managers were actually meant to interpret biculturalism.

The respondents commented that the way they were able to interpret the Treaty within their work was not integrated with their personal interpretation of the Treaty.

When respondents were questioned specifically on the Treaty of Waitangi they offered a number of interpretations on the place of the Treaty and how it

should be interpreted and implemented. All respondents recognised that it held an important place within both the public sector and CYPFS but there was a general confusion around its interpretation and its relevance to the policies and practices of the organisation.

There was a consistent comment from the respondents that the way they were able to interpret the Treaty within their work was not integrated with their personal interpretation of the Treaty. The responses indicated that there was some frustration among respondents that the implementation of the Treaty of Waitangi that they perceived as occurring within the Service was shallow and did not allow for a shift in power from Pākehā to Māori. It was noted, however, that these managers were in a position to influence that change. Respondents also considered that the recommendations of *Pūao-te-Ata-tū* had been

undermined over time, despite CYPFS continuing to espouse the relevance and importance of the document.

Attitudes to power and change

The apparent frustration among some respondents at the lack of meaningful implementation of the Treaty of Waitangi indicated a sense of powerlessness within that group. Throughout the interviews many of the 11 managers revealed that they considered they had little or no influence to change things, including how the Treaty should be responded to and they indicated that such decision-making occurred more at the national office level. Schermerhorn (1984) considered power as an essential leadership resource that managers use to achieve an interpersonal influence through which their leadership is ultimately exercised. He argued that:

Power is a force or a capability that, when successfully activated, makes things happen. For many people, though, the word power carries a negative connotation that includes undertones of manipulation or political action.

Quinn et al (1990) highlighted this ambivalence but disputed the contention that managers are in a powerless position:

Supervisors and managers are never powerless unless they chose to be. Claims of powerlessness are often forms of flight from responsibility.

Quinn et al further argued that managers who find themselves in that position actually choose that stance and it could be interpreted as a reluctance to accept responsibility.

The study gave some indication of the difficulty that CYPFS has had in translating intentions into actions. There were, for example, significant differences between what was written into major organisational documents such as planning papers or mission statements and what actually occurred in the day-to-day practice of responding to Māori clients and communities.

Gaps

The research identified gaps in training for many of the respondent managers and this lack of training was seen to impact on the response to Māori. Seven of the 11 respondents had attended training provided by the organisation but significantly most of this had occurred in the late 1980s when Kaupapa Māori had been given a greater priority. In the Mason Report DSW commented that it had not made good progress in achieving aspects of its stated aspirations in relation to implementation of the CYP&F Act (Ministerial Review Team, 1992). The interviews for this research also revealed that managers in 1995 considered that the Act was still not being implemented as well as it should be and there were recurring themes of management powerlessness and an apparent lack of training in effecting this implementation.

The literature review within the thesis revealed that effective participation of Māori was one of the main requirements for organisational responsiveness. It also revealed that many of the structures that facilitated this participation, such as the DEC's and Mātua Whāngai, had been dismantled or run down. Managers considered that they were not in a position to change these policy decisions but they also had generally not ensured that other structures were in place. It was, however, within their powerbase to ensure local structures and arrangements were in place for Māori participation and powersharing, consistent with a responsive organisation and the Treaty of Waitangi. Effective relationships with iwi had not been consistently established and most respondents did not have the knowledge or networks to effect this. The result was not only confusion for Māori and confusion and feelings of powerlessness from the managers interviewed, but also the retention of Pākehā managerial power.

Conclusion

The thesis explored the responsiveness of the Service to Kaupapa Māori using *Pūao-te-Atatū* as a benchmark to gauge the effectiveness of this response. The research was undertaken

in the Bay of Plenty and Waikato so the findings may only be relevant to that area. It should also be pointed out that the research was done in 1995 and there has been some movement since then to begin establishing iwi social services throughout New Zealand. My hope is that this research will add to an understanding of why there have been shortfalls in responsiveness to the needs of Māori and that it will contribute to improvements in the future.

The research suggested that there were many reasons for the decline in meaningful participation of Māori with CYPFS which centred around three main themes: structural and organisational reform; policy confusion; and management attitudes.

While it was perhaps predictable that the literature review would show that reform, restructuring and definitions of terms had a negative effect on the ability of the Service in the study areas to respond to Māori, what was less predictable was that the attitudes of managers, especially around notions of powerlessness, also played a significant part. A major result was that power remained with Pakeha managers.

In terms of commenting on what *Pūao-te-Ata-tū* envisaged some ten years ago, the organisation can be seen as having made an initial response to “share responsibility and authority for decisions with appropriate Māori people” (Ministerial Advisory Committee, 1986). This study provided some understanding as to why that initial momentum was unable to continue, that is, with the disestablishment of DEC’s, Mātua Whāngai and the Social Welfare Commission.

Quinn et al (1990) writes that modern organisations, as never before, are in need of competent managerial leaders both in the areas of technical competence and interpersonal excellence. In New Zealand this means the competence and courage to change; firstly to share power and then to learn to work alongside their equal partner, Māori, as well as the ability to manage and provide cultural safety for a bicultural workforce and bicultural community. ■



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Notes

1. The term “Kaupapa Māori” is used as an inclusive and encompassing term that includes all the concepts associated with Māori and the Service. This includes the Treaty of Waitangi, *Pūao-te-Ata-tū*, Te Punga, biculturalism and the relationship the Service has had with iwi.
2. The research for the thesis was carried out in 1995 before the name of the New Zealand Children and Young Persons Service (NZCYPS) was changed to the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Service (CYPFS). The Department of Social Welfare is also referred to throughout because the NZCYPS was not established as a business unit within the Department until 1992.

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Debunking myths and building bridges: the reality of adoption

In part two of her review, **Mary Iwanek** assesses emerging patterns and current issues around adoption in New Zealand

Since any review of the history of adoption will show major shifts in approach over the years, it is not surprising that today there is a wide range of opinions, beliefs and attitudes about adoption and its practice. Professionals working in the field and in counselling situations with people need to be aware of this history along with the changing historical contexts in which adoption placements have taken place so they can offer appropriate help and support.

Statistics show that approximately 3.2 per cent of the New Zealand population is adopted. If one adds two sets of parents, grandparents, siblings, half siblings and so on, it is clear that a large proportion of the total population is somehow touched by adoption.

Approximately 123,000 adoption orders have been made in New Zealand since 1881 including include family and step-parent adoptions. The largest number of adoptions by strangers was in 1968 when 2617 adoptions were recorded representing 69.2 per cent of all the adoption orders made that year and 6.09 per cent of live births. In comparison, by the end of fiscal 1997, 661 adoption orders had been made, of which 131 were adoptions by strangers and represented 18.3 per cent of the total orders that year and approximately 1.1 per cent of live births. There is, however, a new increase emerging mostly due to inter-country adoptions by both relatives and non-relatives in the New Zealand courts.

While there has been a sharp downward trend in the numbers of adoption orders in

recent years, New Zealand still has by far the highest number of adoptions in the western world. The proportion of stranger adoptions versus non-stranger adoptions started to decline after 1968 and this drop has often been associated (somewhat simplistically) with the introduction of the domestic purposes benefit and availability of abortions. On closer examination, however, various interrelated factors are responsible for the decline. These are:

- The abolition of an illegitimate status when the Status of Children's Act 1969 removed all legal discrimination against a person born illegitimate.
- The consequent lessening of social stigma and pressures against mothers keeping their children.
- Economic independence as single parents found it easier to get paid work and could afford childcare.
- More readily available childcare for working parents.
- De facto marriages became more acceptable.
- The domestic purposes benefit enabled mothers to care for their children.
- Parental pressure lessened and extended family members offered more support.
- Religious organisations as well as medical, social and legal professionals exerted less

pressure and influence on birthmothers to place children for adoption.

- Effective and more readily available contraception resulted in fewer unplanned pregnancies.
- The option of adoption was re-evaluated as more information became available about its impact on people's lives.

By the time the domestic purposes benefit was introduced for single parents in 1973, adoption by strangers had already dropped by more than 20 per cent. When abortion became more readily available in New Zealand in the late 1970s, adoption numbers had already considerably reduced by approximately 60 per cent.

It is generally assumed that the primary objective of adoption is "to provide a child who would not otherwise have a family, and who would benefit from family life, become a member of a family which is able to give love, care, protection and security which comes from permanent nurturing relationships" (Adoption Legislative Review Committee, Victoria, Australia 1983).

The New Zealand Adoption Act 1955 does not define adoption. Neither does it set out the objects, principles or social goals of the Act; it merely describes the necessary procedures for obtaining an adoption order and legal effects. Adoption authorises and effects the legal transplant of the child, severing relationships with its family of origin and creating a new set of family relationships through the adoptive parents. An adoption order seeks to transmute biological and genetic links by legal decree and creates artificial parenthood in favour of the adoptive parents (Trapski's Family Law Volume V, Brookers 1995).

Although the fundamental effect of an adoption order has not changed over the years, the social goals or reason for obtaining one has. Apart from the more traditional reason to adopt, other reasons have emerged which include:

- Providing a means to exclude one parent from having access to children, for example step-parent adoptions.
- Providing relief from a liable parent's financial responsibilities.

- Providing clear inheritance rights which can exclude others.
- Reducing estate death duties.
- Offering an alternative to abortion.
- Circumventing immigration limitations.
- Adoption for ideological reasons, for example, global overcrowding or resolving racial disharmony by creating bicultural or multiracial families.
- A way to cement "blended families", for example, his, hers and ours.
- To obtain free or cheaper health services and educational qualifications for children living in other countries.
- Saving children from third world countries out of religious motivations.

These changed reasons for adoption can create tensions and conflict of interests for the people involved.

Open adoption

Open adoption began in New Zealand in the mid-1970s and provides a process through which birth parents and adoptive parents can meet, exchange identifying information and keep in touch over the years. The frequency and regularity of contact between the birth families and adoptive families is an individual arrangement, to be agreed upon by all parties. It is commonly referred to as a contact agreement and is, by its very nature, a flexible arrangement that can be reviewed over time by any of the parties involved as the need arises. The agreements cannot be legally enforced and have no formal standing as a legal contract.

The main reason for supporting openness in adoption is to ensure that a child has continuing access to both families. As the child grows older, she or he usually participates in making decisions about the type and frequency of contact. Adoption social workers can be involved in helping the two families to reach a mutually acceptable contact agreement. Currently over 90 per cent of all adoption placements with strangers are open to a greater or lesser degree. Although the Adoption Act does not provide for open

adoption, the Adult Adoption Information Act 1985 insures that at age 20 access to information exists legally as of right for those placed after 1986. Ultimately, however, legalising open adoption is not going to guarantee a positive or perfect outcome for everyone involved in the process. Open adoption is about relationships and like all relationships, difficulties and breakdowns occur. It requires good will and the sensitivity of the adults concerned to make it work.

Inter-country adoption

Alongside the drastic drop in adoption by strangers or non-relatives in western society there has been a worldwide increase in inter-country adoption placements. Although in New Zealand the large numbers of local adoptions saw the emergence of inter-country adoption later than in other countries.

Until 1988 most inter-country adoptions in New Zealand were relative adoptions particularly from the Pacific Islands and Asia. It was not until the Romanian situation developed that New Zealand inter-country adoption by non-relatives increased. More recently this has been the case from Russia.

Most inter-country adoptions, however, do not appear in the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) statistics as many take place overseas and applications are processed by the Department of Internal Affairs for registration of New Zealand citizenship by descent. The local statistics refer to adoptions processed by New Zealand courts.

New Zealand has the highest number of inter-country adoptions per head of population in the world. Although parliament passed the Adoption Inter-Country Act last December it is still too early to say whether this will result in more or less inter-country adoptions. Recent statistics show that there are some significant differences in the profile of applicants who intend adopting non-relatives overseas compared to those in the

local pool for adoption of non-relatives within New Zealand.

The right to information

The 1985 Adult Adoption Information Act allowed adopted people aged 20 years or more to apply for a copy of their original birth certificate and other identifying information held in DSW adoption records. If birth parents have not activated a veto preventing the release of identifying information, the birth certificate will be sent to a counsellor nominated by the adopted person and released in a mandatory interview. Once an adopted person has received the original birth certificate they can search and make contact at their own pace.

Birth parents may apply for the release of their child's adopted name although adopted people may also place a veto on the release of identifying information. If there is no veto, a DSW social worker will endeavour to

find the adopted person and ascertain their wishes concerning the release of identifying information to the birth parents. No mandatory interview is required for the

New Zealand has the highest number of inter-country adoptions per head of population in the world.

birth parents.

Before identifying information is released, a lead-in time of six months is given to enable people wishing to place a veto sufficient time to do so. Counselling is available to any person wishing to place a veto, however this is seldom taken up. The veto lasts for ten years and may be lifted or renewed at any time.

In passing the 1985 Adult Adoption Information Act, parliament had accepted the view that adoption practice in the past had been premised on false assumptions, particularly relating to the myth of birth mothers being able to forget and make a new start. It accepted that society had a responsibility to adopted people and their birth parents to provide identifying information to enable all parties to find peace of mind and a resolution of any

internal conflicts. Access to identifying information by other people such as adopted parents, grandparents and siblings is excluded under the Act. However, under section 23 of the 1955 Adoption Act any person can apply for access to information under any special grounds.

Number of applications

The total number of adoption orders made between 1881 and 1991 was 123,000 although many of these include family and step-parent adoptions. Usually, applications under the Adult Adoption Information Act only consist of those who were adopted by strangers. The total number of stranger adoptions for those over 20 years of age (1900–1976) is 52,538. The number of original birth certificates applied for between September 1986 to December 1996 was 22,926 and the number of birth-parent applications was 6163.

This gives a total number of applications between 1 September 1986 to 31 December 1996 of 29,080. Approximately a further 1000 applications were received between 1 January 1997 and August 1997.

Taking into consideration the fact that a number of people born between 1900 and 1996 will have already died, it can be safely said that approximately 65 per cent of all people adopted by strangers or their birth parents have obtained identifying information about each other. Research in New Zealand further indicates that approximately 95 per cent go on to make personal contact, suggesting that information alone is not sufficient and that personal contact is desired whenever possible.

Applications continue to be received in steady numbers with people of all ages applying. The age range is from 20 to 96 years of age with no difference in the ratio of older or younger applicants. One survey (Iwanek, 1991) showed that 65 per cent of those adopted between 1900–1940 applied for their original birth certificates, which is the same as

the overall ratio.

Research undertaken by me in 1992 showed that between 1965 to 1975 adoption orders made in Wellington courts represented 44 per cent males and 56 per cent females. The ratio of male to female applicants under the Adult Adoption Information Act shows exactly the same ratio dispelling the myth that searching for birth families is predominantly a female concern.

Vetoes

One aspect of the 1985 Act was the possibility of placing a veto to prevent the release of any identifying information. The rationale for the veto was based on the following assumptions:

1. It was believed that birth parents had a right to protect themselves from any invasion of privacy especially where a birth may have

been private and secret. The veto system gives protection to the extent that it prevents the registrar-general of Births, Deaths and Marriages and DSW from giving out identifying

information for as long as the veto is in place.

2. It was equally believed that adopted people also needed to be protected from birth parents intruding unexpectedly on their life. Adoption had not been the choice of the adopted person so they needed to exercise choice as adults to decide whether they wished their identity to be released to their birth parents or not. It was also felt that an adopted person needed extra protection since their adoptive parents may not have told them they were adopted. It was therefore argued that birth parents wishing to have identifying information needed to apply through DSW so a social worker could trace and contact the adopted person first.

Most of the vetoes were placed within the first six months of the Act from 1 March 1986 to 1 September 1986 and were in place for ten

Approximately 65 per cent of all people adopted by strangers or their birth parents have obtained identifying information about each other.

years unless removed earlier. However, the number of cancelled vetoes prior to the ten year expiry period was low and out of 3825 vetoes placed by birth parents between 1 March 1986 to 31 December 1996 only 102 were cancelled. Many vetoes expired after their ten year period, however, and since many were placed during the first six months of 1986 most had expired by the end of 1996. By 31 March 1997, 2730 vetoes had expired, leaving currently in place 993 vetoes by birth parents.

The total numbers of vetoes placed by adoptive people was 1303. Of those, 85 were cancelled, 861 expired at the end of their ten year period, leaving 357 for adopted people as of 31 March 1997.

Do vetoes work?

The information I have so far gathered suggests that the veto system has not been effective in what it set out to do since a large number of people made contact despite a veto being in place. The reasons appear to be as follows.

Many adopted people already have information which can lead them to their birth families. Adoptive parents who, at time of placement, ascertained the name of the birth parent, may pass this on to their children who, in turn, can search for their birth family. The reverse applies to birth parents.

A survey of several adoption support groups I undertook in 1989 showed that of 76 adopted people receiving a veto on their birth certificate, 75 embarked on a search immediately. It seems that receiving a veto on a birth certificate, without any written explanation, only acts as an encouragement to search more intensively. Of the 75 who embarked on a search, 72 were able to trace their birth mother successfully within six months. Of the 72 who traced their birth mother, 69 made contact; the other three at that stage were satisfied with the information only. Of the 69, 64 initiated contact personally with their birth parent and five used mediators. Of the 64 who made personal contact, three had requests for contact declined, the others had a positive outcome. Of those who used mediators two had positive

outcomes and three declined contact.

Some adopted people who received a veto took this as an indicator that the birth mother did not want contact. Accordingly, when they embarked on a search rather than contact the birth mother they made contact with other members of the family. This is likely to be more of an upheaval for the birth mother than if she had met them in the first place.

Discussions with counsellors have shown that most birth parents placed vetoes because they wished to prevent others close to them from finding out or they were too afraid to face the adopted person and possible blame. In practice, however, in placing a veto the birth mother was in more danger of being found out than if she had not.

Currently the veto system is proving even more unworkable as indexes of births, deaths and marriages have become freely available in public libraries and genealogical societies. This makes it even easier for people to search even when a veto is placed. The research is quite clear that adoptive people and birth parents do not wish to hurt each other and are usually very concerned not to upset anyone.

Birth fathers and other relatives

Adoption counsellors are generally concerned about the rights of birth fathers. There is evidence that these fathers also wish to find out information about the children placed for adoption, however they are often not named on the birth certificate. Under the Adult Adoption Information Act 1985, birth fathers are able to apply to the Director-General of Social Welfare if the DG is satisfied they are the father. In theory, this is not difficult if the birth mother gave a clear description and a name at the time of the birth and an adoption file is available. In practice, however, adoption records were not well kept in the past which disadvantages those birth fathers. Adopted people are currently dependent on the birth mother for information about the birth father and this can be difficult to get if the mother still feels hurt or betrayed.

Siblings and half-siblings, grandparents and other relatives are also not provided for in the Adult Adoption Information Act yet, increasingly, they are wishing to search and

make contact. Their only current option is to apply under s23 of the Adoption Act citing special grounds.

How effective is the Act?

It appears from the research that the Adult Adoption Information Act has been overwhelmingly successful in providing for those who wish to have identifying information about each other. Search and reunion may not always have a happy ending, but is still worth pursuing. It has also identified that for those who are not included in the Act, information is difficult to obtain.

The outcome of the legislation has also put to rest a number of powerful myths and misinformation expressed by many prior to the passing of the Bill.

The notion that only two per cent of adopted people want to know or find out about their birth parents is simply no longer true. The great majority of adopted people want to apply for this information when legally allowed. It was also generally held that birth parents wanted to remain anonymous and would oppose this legislation. Again, this has been totally disproved as most (96 per cent) of birth parents have not placed a veto and welcome information when an approach is made by adopted people. The idea that only adopted people who suffer from mental illness or emotional instability will embark on a search has also been shown to be a fallacy. Counsellors report most are well-adjusted and capable people.

Those people who claimed to speak for the silent majority and opposed access to information on their behalf can no longer do so.

Because of the large numbers of people applying, it is possible to say confidently that by far the majority of adopted people and birth parents want access to information and not just a few unhappy adopted people or their disturbed birth parents.

Access to identifying adoption information is not responsible for the sharp decrease in adoption placements or the rise in abortion rates as is often suggested, since statistics show that prior to open adoption and access to adoption information under the 1985 Act, adoption placements had already decreased by more than 50 per cent and 40 per cent when abortion became more readily available.

Adoption practices and laws have gone through major changes not just in New Zealand but throughout the world. The issue of closed secret adoption in New Zealand has mostly been addressed by the Adult Adoption Information Act 1985 and voluntary agreements for open adoption at the time of placement between adoptive parents and birth parents.

Inter-country adoption is a relatively new phenomenon in New Zealand and it is likely that it will become the major form of adoption in the future. The Adoption Inter-Country Act provides for a system of cooperation between countries to bring about the best placement for children when it has been considered that the only way some children are able to experience a family environment is through an inter-country adoption. ■



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Notes

1. Part one of Mary Iwanek's overview on adoption was published in issue eight of *Social Work Now* and focused on international and New Zealand history.
2. Full references are available on request from the editor.

Family violence and teenage dating trouble: is there a connection?

Sue Jackson explores the links between violence in the family and abuse in adolescent dating relationships

The family is the first, and arguably the most significant, environment in which children learn about themselves and others. The question as to whether growing up in a violent family increases the chances of children reproducing the violent patterns they have witnessed underlines the theory of intergenerational transmission of violence (Herzberger, 1983; Kalmuss, 1984).

To date, the research literature as a whole suggests some support for the theory. Within the dating violence literature, a number of studies have tested the relationship between violence in the family of origin and violence in dating relationships. Most have found that exposure to violence in the family of origin, as a recipient or a witness, increases the risk of using or experiencing violence in dating relationships (Marshall and Rose, 1990; Tontodonato and Crew, 1992). Only a few of these studies have investigated the links between family of origin violence and dating violence in younger high school populations (eg Mercer, 1988; Smith and Williams, 1992), despite clear advantages in addressing the issue at this stage. Not only are senior high school students entering their first serious heterosexual¹ relationships but they are, most often, still living in their families of origin. Given the timeliness of targeted intervention for high risk groups in the high school years, extending the research literature with a younger age band is of particular value.

This article² is drawn from a much larger study which investigates the extent, nature and contexts for the occurrence of dating violence in the heterosexual relationships of senior high school students. It presents the findings on experiences of abuse in the family and how these relate to abuse experienced in high school students' dating relationships.

Method

This paper presents selected data from the forced choice items of a 50-item anonymous questionnaire about abuse in dating relationships and in the family. The questions on dating abuse were developed directly from qualitative data gathered in focus group discussions with high school students. Items measuring "emotional abuse" included behaviours that denigrate, isolate, threaten and control partners, consistent with a number of Tolman's (1989) categories in the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory. Sexually abusive behaviour incorporated a continuum from kissing to sexual intercourse and was defined as "any unwanted sexual activity". Physical abuse was defined as any of six physically aggressive behaviours (eg held down, pushed, punched) that occurred in other than a "fun" way. Items which measured experience of abuse in the family defined abuse as hurt of a physical or emotional nature, unwanted sexual activities and threats, with examples provided of each.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained by the University of Auckland Human Subjects Ethics Committee.

Participants

Participants were 201 female and 176 male senior high school students, aged between 16 and 18, who volunteered to take part in the study³. Participants were drawn from five coeducational high schools in the Auckland metropolitan area., selected for their commitment to violence prevention programmes

Procedure

Participating schools selected classes attended by the majority of students, primarily English and study classes. The researcher provided full information about the study then invited students to participate if they wished. The response rate across all schools was high. All students received the questionnaire in order not to draw attention to non-participants. Non-participants continued with class work.

Results

Table one shows the percentages of participants experiencing each type of dating and family abuse.

It can be seen that emotional abuse is the most commonly reported type of abuse in

both dating relationships and the family. Although unwanted sexual activity is relatively common in dating relationships, it is considerably less reported in the family. Physically abusive behaviour is the least reported type of abuse in dating relationships but its occurrence within the family is reported by a majority of participants. It should be noted that all types of family abuse may be under-reported given that the measure of each type of abuse comprised a single question. Research in the child sexual abuse and rape literature indicates that lower reporting rates are associated with such methodology (eg Gavey, 1994).

The perpetration of abuse in the family is detailed in table two. A substantial number of participants report emotional abuse (“put down, made to feel bad about myself”) by a sibling (69.9%), and for about half of these participants the abuse happens more than just occasionally.

Participants experience emotional and physical abuse from fathers precisely as much as from mothers. Almost half of those reporting physical abuse by fathers experience it more than occasionally, but less than a quarter of those physically abused by their mothers experience it more frequently. Abuse is least perpetrated by another adult in the family, except if the abuse is sexual. Although only a few participants report sexual abuse by a parent, about half experience the abuse often. Sexual abuse by siblings is reported at the same level as for parents.

The extent to which participants observed violence in the family is displayed in table three. Mothers are observed verbally abusing fathers to the same extent as fathers are observed verbally abusing mothers (50.5 per cent). This pattern changes for physical abuse in which fathers are seen abusing mothers at almost twice the rate mothers are observed physically abusing fathers. Observed abuse of siblings by mothers occurs to about the same extent as by fathers, but observing abuse by another adult in the family is least reported.

Of interest to this study was the “double

Table 1: Experiences of each type of dating and family abuse reported by high school students.

Type of Abuse	Female		Male	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Dating				
Emotional	163	81.5%	132	76.3%
Sexual	131	65.5%	91	47.4%
Physical	35	17.5%	23	13.3%
Family				
Emotional	153	84.5%	127	82.5%
Sexual	22	11.3%	7	4.3%
Physical	126	66.3%	104	66.7%
Threat	64	33.7%	63	40.9%

Table 2:

High school students' reports of each type of abuse experienced in the family according to perpetrator.

Type of Abuse	Perpetrator							
	Mother		Father		Sibling		Other adult	
Physical	107	30.6%	107	30.6%	204	58.3	36	10.3%
Emotional	169	49.9%	169	49.9%	237	69.9%	102	30.1%
Threat	72	20.2%	76	21.3%	73	20.6%	35	10.1%
Sexual	7	1.9%	6	1.7%	7	1.9%	21	5.8%

Table 3: Occurrence of types of interparental abuse and parental to sibling abuse observed by high school students according to perpetrator and victim.

Perpetrator/victim	Type of abuse		
	Physical	Verbal	Any
Mother to father	32 8.8%	185 50.5%	
Father to mother	58 15.7%	185 50.5%	
Mother to sibling		101 26.9%	
Father to sibling			110 30.0%
Other adult to sibling			31 8.7%

whammy" issue, that is the extent to which those who experienced abuse from parents also witnessed abuse between their parents. It can be seen in table four that slightly more than half of participants (51.8 per cent) who experience abuse in the family also observe parental abuse. The next largest group is those who experience family abuse, but do not witness parental abuse (26.32 per cent). Relatively few do not experience either abuse or witnessing (12.37 per cent).

Table 4:

High school students' reports of observing and experiencing abuse in their families.

No observed or experienced abuse	47	12.4%
Observed but no experience of abuse	36	9.5%
Experienced but no observed abuse	100	26.3%
Observed and experienced abuse	197	51.8%

An exploration of the links between experience of abuse in the family and abuse in dating relationships was central to this study. The relationship between dating abuse and abuse in the family is shown in table five. A sizeable majority (63.4 per cent) of participants report experience of abuse in both their dating relationships and in their families. Few participants escape abuse altogether (4.2 per cent), although some experience abuse in one relationship but not the other. Separate analyses were undertaken for the relationship between observing abuse in the family and experience of dating abuse.

Table 5:

High school students' reported experience of dating abuse and family abuse.

No abuse in either family or dating	16	4.2%
Abuse in family, not dating	56	14.7%
Abuse in dating, not family	67	17.6%
Abuse in both dating and family	241	63.4%

Table six shows that slightly more than half of participants who observed parental abuse in their families also experienced abuse in their dating relationships. A little under 30 per cent who had not observed violence reported experience of abuse in a dating relationship. Taken together these data suggest that experiencing violence in the family has a stronger relationship with dating abuse than does the observation of violence.

Table 6:

High school students' reported experience of dating abuse and witnessing family abuse.

No witnessing family abuse or experience of dating abuse	36	9.5%
Witnessing family abuse but no experience of dating abuse	36	9.5%
No witnessing family abuse but experience of dating abuse	111	29.2%
Both witnessing family abuse and experience of dating abuse	197	51.8%

The exploration of links between family and dating abuse were further examined through correlational analyses. Although data was tested for correlations between each type of abuse in the family and each type of dating abuse, only the overall family abuse correlations are presented here. With one exception, correlations are small but significant. Experience of family abuse shows a significant correlation with emotional dating abuse ($p < .01$), sexual dating abuse ($p < .05$) and physical dating abuse ($p < .01$). Results indicate that witnessing family abuse significantly correlates with emotional dating abuse ($p < .01$) and sexual dating abuse ($p < .001$) but physical dating abuse only approaches significance.

Discussion

These findings show that a substantial majority of the high school students have experienced some form of abuse in their families and dating relationships. Similarly, a majority have observed their parents being abusive toward one another or toward a sibling. The extent of reported experience of abuse in dating relationships and in the family raises considerable concern. There is now an accumulated body of literature which documents the damaging psychological and social effects for adolescents of experiencing and witnessing violence in the home (Forstromm-Cohen and Rosenbaum, 1985; Hogleund and Nicholas, 1995; Silvern et al, 1995). Although less well documented in the literature, dating abuse presents similarly damaging emotional consequences (Follingstad, Wright, Lloyd and Sebastian,

1991; Henton, Cate, Koval, Lloyd and Christopher, 1983).

There are a number of inter-relationships between types of abuse. Experiencing abuse and witnessing abuse is one such inter relationship. This relationship is well documented in the family violence literature (Jouriles, Barling and O'Leary, 1987; O'Keefe, 1994; Sternberg et al, 1993; Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1980) There is some suggestion that both witnessing and experiencing violence creates a double whammy, or an incremental effect, in terms of the damaging impact (Davis and Carlson, 1987; Hughes, Parkinson and Vargo, 1989; Jaffe, Wolfe, Wilson and Zak, 1986).

The relationship of greater interest to the present study was that between dating abuse and family abuse. The finding of small but significant correlations between various types of family and dating abuse lends some support to social learning perspectives. Clearly, children growing up in violent homes are vulnerable to abusive experiences in their own relationships at high school age. Of interest, but beyond the scope of this study, is what makes some children more vulnerable than others.

Sibling abuse

Apart from the link between family and dating abuse, sibling abuse warrants particular attention as it is reported by a considerable majority of participants. It could be argued that abuse by a sibling is just part of "normal" sibling rivalry but there are indications in the research literature that the impact of sibling abuse can have detrimental effects similar to those perpetrated by an adult. Boney-McCoy and Finkelhor (1995) note in their large scale victimisation survey of adolescents that the majority of assaults were committed by those of a similar age and the levels of distress were considerable. Their findings caution against minimising aggression on the basis that the perpetrator was another child. Sibling abuse may also relate to the perpetration of abuse as found by Mangold and Koski, (1990) who report that boys' abuse of their sisters related to their abuse of non-family members. Finally, sibling aggression is perhaps an indicator of general aggression in the family, reflecting the

way in which parents interact with one another and their children.

Considerations

There are a number of issues that need to be considered regarding the findings. First, it is difficult to know how much of the family physical abuse comprised disciplinary punishment, despite the fact that the examples given of physical abuse did not include "smacking". However, the key component of the question was the experience of being "hurt". It is therefore irrelevant whether or not the context for this experience was parental discipline. Further, although physical punishment may be legally sanctioned in New Zealand, deemed to be a parent's right, this does not mean that it is not abusive.

The second issue relates to methodological factors. All participants in the present study were high school students, primarily living with their families. The degree to which this may have influenced their reporting of family abuse is an unknown factor. On the one hand this could increase the accuracy of their reporting of abusive behaviour but on the other dependence on their parents could mitigate against reporting its occurrence. While some participants would have been reporting current or recent events, questions required them to recall any incidents from childhood. Hence, as in any retrospective methodology, earlier events may not have been considered when reporting abuse.

An additional reporting issue relates to the nature of the questions used to measure abuse (including witnessing) in the family. A single global question was used to measure each type of family abuse. A number of studies within the child sexual abuse and rape literature have clearly demonstrated how abuse is under reported where one or two questions are used to measure it instead of a series of descriptive questions (Peters, Wyatt and Finkelhor, 1986; Koss, 1985). Thus the extent of family abuse may be considerably wider than demonstrated by the reported results.

Implications for intervention and prevention

Concerns about the level of abuse need to be addressed through intervention and

prevention. Although a broad brush approach is clearly needed, which targets family, community, media and individuals, the focus here is on high school students. Two aspects will be considered: a history of exposure to violence in the family and abuse in dating relationships.

Targeting prevention for those who have been exposed to violence in their families addresses the vulnerability that this background creates for a high school student in their heterosexual relationships. Such prevention can operate at two levels. The first is individual help for those who have been abused in their families. This is important because unless the emotional consequences of abuse have been dealt with, the ability to have healthy, effective relationships with a partner is likely to be impaired. Ensuring this help is provided may be problematic, not because the services are not available, but because of a tendency for adolescents to not seek outside help (Henton et al, 1983; Pirog-Good and Stets, 1989). It is only perhaps through greater awareness and discussion of violence issues that the acceptance of help seeking might be increased.

At a more generalised level, prevention can target groups of students whose experiences of violence in their families make them vulnerable to perpetration or experience of abuse in their own relationships. One example is the Youth Relationships Project (Wolfe, Wekerle, Reitzel and Gough, 1995), a comprehensive programme using a range of age appropriate methods which aims to "build strengths, resilience and coping skills as a way of enhancing functioning".

The high school years are eminently suitable for the introduction of wide-scale violence prevention programmes, particularly the prevention of dating abuse. As with those exposed to violence in the family, there are two levels of intervention or prevention required. First is assistance for those who are or who have been in abusive dating relationships. An example of the type of therapeutic approach that specifically addresses the issues of dating violence for young women is the intervention described by Rosen and Stith (1993). A variety of other approaches are documented in Levy's

(1991) book *Dating Violence, Young Women in Danger*. Group programmes merit particular attention because of their age appropriateness, their ability to reduce a sense of isolation and the support that can be provided by peers inside and outside of the group.

Target areas

Prevention programmes need to target several areas, of which two key ones are education about violence and relationship skills. In educating about violence it is important to include the following: a definition of violent behaviours; knowledge about power and gender and their relationship to violence; and an analysis of the media and how it perpetuates violence.

The component regarding relationship skills is a critical one. The high school students surveyed had little experience with intimate relationships and when this inexperience is coupled with identity issues, stereotypical notions of romance and peer pressure they are extremely vulnerable to entering or remaining in an abusive relationship. Prevention programmes need to address these areas of vulnerability as well as providing opportunities for students to practice skills to resolve problems or issues that come up in a dating relationship. Further, students need to know constructive ways of dealing with some of the intense emotions they experience in a relationship which can sometimes lead to abusive responding. There are now a number of comprehensive programmes targeting the high school years which incorporate education and skills components (eg Sudermann, Jaffe and Hastings, 1995; Lavoie, Vezina, Piche and Boivin, 1995).

Apart from school-based education programmes which might form part of a health curriculum, there is an important place for peer education groups. In the focus group discussions with teenagers, students identified preferred ways of learning about relationships. Across every group, male and female, students agreed that group discussions would be the most useful and helpful. Although research oriented, the focus group themselves raised considerable awareness and positive peer learning about dating relationships and the abuse that could occur

within them. Peer relationships are primary in adolescence and it makes a great deal of sense to use this in a constructive way to facilitate prevention education.

Prevention I think is gonna come from like this talking about it and I think we all agree that a guy who's gonna beat up a girl is a total dork and I mean if there was someone here that didn't think that then you know we might be able to change his view.

Mike, 16-year-old male focus group participant. ■



Sue Jackson (formerly Henderson) is currently undertaking a PhD at the University of Auckland. Her research project investigates abuse in the intimate relationships of teenagers and aims to inform the development of primary violence prevention programmes in secondary schools. Previously, Sue has worked as a clinical psychologist specialising in child and family work and as a senior psychologist for CYPFS.

Notes

1. Students were told in the participant information sheet, the questionnaire itself and verbally prior to them participating, that the study was mainly about heterosexual relationships and why the author had decided this. The questionnaire itself was wider than just dating relationships and students not in heterosexual dating relationships had a number of questions to answer in other sections.
2. This article is based on a paper presented at the 2nd International Conference on Children Exposed to Family Violence, London, Ontario, Canada, June 1997.
3. With regards to follow-up support for students disclosing abuse, the questionnaires were anonymous so those who experienced abuse could not be followed up. However, informed consent warned students that the questionnaires could raise issues that they might find upsetting; they could stop doing it at any time and did not have to answer questions if they did not wish to. They were given telephone numbers and names of places and people they could contact if they needed and the author consulted with guidance counsellors from the start of the project who also made themselves available. The author also stayed on after the sessions and told students they could talk to her about any issues arising from filling out the questionnaires.

Ed note: Due to space considerations the references have been omitted. Please contact the editor at *Social Work Now* if you would like a copy.

Psychologists and their obligations to social workers

Aspects of the relationship between psychologists and social workers are not always clear, warns **Stewart Bartlett**, in determining who has access to reports

In their day-to-day casework, social workers employed by the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Service (CYPFS) are often involved with psychologists. They may be instructing them to assess risk, to analyse a child's relationship with the significant adults in their life or to assist with the preparation of a plan for court. They may be providing information for a psychologist who has been appointed by a youth or family court. They may even be involved in the process of challenging a psychologist who may be employed by a party opposing the Service in court proceedings.

It is probable that many people involved in care and protection and youth justice processes are unsure about the rules under which a psychologist must operate. One of the reasons is that the rules aren't clear, and one of the reasons why the rules aren't clear is the considerable tension between a psychologist's professional obligations and their duty to the family court.

This tension was highlighted in a case involving psychologist Lynn Haye last year when she was found guilty of professional misconduct and conduct unbecoming by the Psychologists Board. Haye was facing allegations that she had breached certain Board rules by, among other things, collecting information in an unfair fashion and by not arriving at conclusions which she should have.

On appeal at the Christchurch High Court clarity was provided by Justice Chisholm (**Haye v the Psychologists Board** AP71/96,

25/11/97). Justice Chisholm allowed Ms Haye's appeal against the findings of the Psychologists Board. The court primarily allowed her appeal not for procedural reasons but more because the facts did not disclose a breach of her professional obligations and duties.

Justice Chisholm made a number of interesting comments about the obligations of psychologists, the most notable being:

- Section 29A Guardianship Act reports remain the property of the family court and the court has the "exclusive power to determine whether such reports should be utilised for purposes outside the Family Court."
- Where a psychologist is appointed by the court to provide it with a report, they will not be under a professional duty to the parents of the child.
- A psychologist accepting instructions from one of the parties owes no professional duty towards other parties.

Ownership of court reports

Should it ever have been in doubt, Justice Chisholm found that the court has the sole ability to determine how s29A reports and, by extension, reports requested under s178 and s333 of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act 1989 (CYP&F Act), are to be used outside of the court process.

The relevance to social work practitioners is clear. Should a social worker wish to use a report, whether by showing it to a third person

or presenting it to an FGC or in any fashion, they must obtain the explicit consent of the family or youth court before doing so. By not doing so one would earn – at the least – the ire of the court and – at the most – a threat of contempt proceedings.

The decision, I believe, answers the question about where the power lies in the conflict between the court's sole power over such reports and the social work coordinator's duty to provide an FGC with all relevant information (ss23 and 255 of the CYP&F Act). The court's power will always prevail over the coordinator's duty.

Psychologists' duty to the court

When psychologists prepare a court report they have a professional duty to that court, as Justice Chisholm has stated:

A psychologist will not be under a professional duty to the parents of the child. To the contrary, it is important for the psychologist to remain free to fearlessly discharge

the duty to the Court, taking into account the welfare of the child, and if necessary to criticise either or both parents notwithstanding that such criticism may be resented by the parent or parents.

Psychologists' duty to their client

Where a psychologist is instructed by a party to family court proceedings, Justice Chisholm is clear that a professional duty is owed to the party giving them instructions. He is equally clear that no professional duty exists towards other parties. In the case of Lynn Haye, contention arose after she had been instructed by a party to a custody dispute to critique a s29A report prepared by a court-appointed psychologist. The court considered Ms Haye had no obligation to gain the consent of the other parties to the proceedings before obtaining information about them. Nor was she obliged to offer the other parties an opportunity to present their view on the matter.

Justice Chisholm suggested that to create a duty to other parties in addition to the instructing party would "almost certainly impose conflicting duties and impossible burdens on the psychologist, particularly in custody and access situations".

His decision is of interest to social work practitioners especially when one considers that CYPFS itself often instructs psychologists to perform certain tasks.

Despite the fact that the Service will not always specifically be a party to court proceedings – for example, a psychologist may be instructed by a social worker to undertake certain tasks to help them with an investigation pursuant to s17 of the CYP&F Act – it is worthwhile considering:

- That, applying the Haye decision, the psychologist's client is the social worker.
 - Accordingly, the professional duty is owed to the social worker, even though the social worker is in no way the subject of the psychologist's assessment.
- To have a relationship which is as clear as it can be will ultimately benefit the social worker, the psychologist and, if it ultimately becomes relevant, the court.
-
- No professional duty is owed by the psychologist to other people even though they may be subject to his or her professional scrutiny.

If we can distil these concepts from the Haye decision (and – although there is much good reason to do so – that is not certain), then aspects of a social worker's relationship with the psychologists they are instructing are brought into sharper relief. And to have a relationship which is as clear as it can be will ultimately benefit the social worker, the psychologist and, if it ultimately becomes relevant, the court.

Question

A final question must also be asked: What are the instructions from the social worker to the psychologist? Is help required to further a s17 investigation, or to produce a s128 plan, or to

give information to an FGC pursuant to s23? Whatever the purpose it is always best to clearly specify the reason and align it to the Act as closely as possible. This will enable psychologists to understand the nature of their professional relationship with the various people and entities they will be dealing with during the course of providing their assessment or report. It will leave no doubt that the social worker is the client.

The absence of a professional duty does not, of course, necessarily dilute other legal duties which may exist for the psychologist, for example, under the Privacy Act or possibly under the Code of Health and Disability Service Consumers' Rights. Significantly, a psychologist retained by the Service may have duties imposed upon them by the court,

prescribing how they will (or more likely how they will not) conduct themselves in relation to certain matters.

Nonetheless, a psychologist pursuing their business with a clear picture of their professional relationships will be of more use to a social worker than one unnecessarily limiting their assessment because of duties that do not exist or because of professional boundaries which are unclear. ■



Stewart Bartlett is a solicitor in the Legal Service at CYPFS national office.

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Adoption and Healing: Proceedings of the International Conference on Adoption and Healing

Published by the New Zealand Adoption Education and Healing Trust, Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand (1997)

Reviewed by Norma Miller

The long-term impact of adoption is now recognised and the International Conference on Adoption and Healing provided a forum for professionals to focus on the issues which emerge for birthparents, adopted people and adoptive parents, at each stage of the life cycle and beyond.

The book contains 39 papers and is divided into six clearly indexed parts: history and legislation; theory and research; attachment issues; practice issues; healing; and personal stories.

In light of the increasing trend towards intercountry adoption, the research of Professor Rene Hoksbergen will be valuable reading for politicians and prospective intercountry adoptive parents. He indicates that many foreign adoptees suffer some kind of behavioural disturbance, especially reactive attachment disorder.

Attachment theory and practical responses to attachment disorder are described in several papers. Judith Morris provides a helpful case study for any social worker with the time to work therapeutically with an older child with attachment problems.

I attended this conference and experienced the powerful impact many sessions had on the audience. I was interested in comparing this with the written format. One of the international guests, Dr Joyce Pavao, captured people with her lively presentations. I was delighted to find that her papers were also enjoyable to read. She presented a model which presumes that there are normal developmental crises that occur in adoptive systems. She described her use of "brief-long-term therapy" and covered issues such as counselling birthparents regarding their "second first child".

Several different therapeutic interventions for healing the loss associated with adoption are presented and some of these have applications for

adoption healing groups. The emotional intensity felt by so many adoptees and birthparents is clearly illustrated in Judy Durey's paper and is a theme repeated in the healing and personal stories sections. After search and reunion Judy writes of the "individual process of reintegration ... perhaps a slippery coalescence which gradually seeps throughout the body, as we work towards autonomy and our understanding expands".

Post-reunion realities are addressed in several papers and as Ann Weaver and Anne Nation suggest, reunion does not end the pain but brings new and different issues.

Three papers elaborate on the traditional Maori whangai system and these and others supported the need for a variation or abolition of current adoption legislation. Harry Walker gave a dynamic oral presentation on this topic but, unfortunately, the impact of his personality and visual aids, like Judy Durey's video, cannot be captured in writing.

The book will be a valuable resource for adoption social workers and counsellors. Parts, such as that on attachment issues, Cas O'Neill's paper discussing support in permanent placements and Murray Rowe's description of a parenting programme, will be useful for social workers involved with children in care. I commend the New Zealand Adoption Education and Healing Trust for making it available at the very reasonable price of \$24.75 (gst included).

Children and Young People in Conflict with the Law

edited by **Stewart Asquith**

Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London (1996)

Reviewed by Lyle Galloway

As the title indicates this book covers children and young people in conflict with the law in England, Wales and Scotland.

Each chapter is written by a social work researcher or a group of researchers and provides a synopsis of research relating to children, young people and the law. The book is one of a series

that researches a whole range of social work subjects.

The book is well presented and most chapters have an introduction to summarise their content. The chapters cover areas such as preventative strategies (what's working/what's not), statistical data on the disposal of offending behaviour through the courts, work with female offenders, community-based alternatives, secure units and – for the youth justice purist – a full chapter on the restorative justice model. Information primarily comes from research done in Wales, Scotland and England with one chapter imported from research completed in America on children and violence.

The book is a good read and, since it comes from a research perspective, it doesn't seem to have an axe to grind on any of the specific findings and occasionally it balances an argument by providing counter findings. The ethical and political patterns evident in the UK's approach to youth offending are also a reality in the New Zealand setting and in that sense the book confirms for us the issue of youth offending as a global problem. Of some comfort (arguably) to the NZ youth justice worker is the fact that our current legislation already incorporates a restorative justice approach (which the UK is now evaluating) and that the CYP&F Act 1989 currently attracts strong political goodwill.

The book has wide appeal as a tool for opening minds to different approaches to the management of youth offending. For those currently in the youth justice working arena the book is quietly affirming of the philosophy underpinning current practice. Although the book could be seen as containing snapshot research, the information is current and presented in a balanced style. It could therefore be of some value to those in a position to look at and influence policy decisions.

Finding Solutions to Social Problems: Behavioural strategies for change

edited by **Mark Mattaini** and **Bruce Thyer**

Published by the American Psychological Association, Washington DC (1996)

Reviewed by Fiona Coy

As the title suggests, this text focuses on behavioural analysis as the key to addressing nagging social problems. Its scope is much more sophisticated than the "simple" behaviourism of the early days (Psychology 101!) and its style is manifestly readable. It illustrates the development of understanding in this complex field through linking concepts from the past and hard-won lessons to the advances of current theories. This text aims to help us avoid the temptation of the familiar and instead to seek positive outcomes.

Stated aim

From its stated aim to help progress towards addressing social problems, the book traverses the gambit of social life: from the general to the specific and from the state to the individual via community and private relationships.

The tension between political imperatives and the science of identifying mutable variables in behaviour, that may be accessible to intervention, provides the challenge to government policy makers and operational programme developers. This text provides a worthy support to both types of work and a beneficial link between the two.

Finding Solutions to Social Problems provides a cautionary note against stereotyping human behaviour – from the child abuser to the policy analyst. It reinforces the crucial importance of individualised, objective assessment in all cases of child maltreatment and the obvious value of multidimensional models of intervention in "success" outcomes. It identifies successful approaches as those that take into account both context and individual behaviour patterns, recognising that social isolation, financial pressure, individual behaviour and other factors are tightly intertwined. Successful combined programmes include community-based parent support plus individual behaviour modification (eg anger management), plus informal social activity plus connection to needed resources and services. Few of us in CYPFS would dispute the efficacy of such an holistic intervention programme since the eternal problems of availability and coordination are where plans, quite frankly, turn to mush! And that is where government strategies come in.

If policy is to be successful in achieving its objectives then this text provides some valuable and practical information and advice

along with models for consideration.

This book suggests that:

Government in a democracy is ultimately the people and we, as individuals and collectively, have ultimate responsibility for the well-being of our children. This responsibility can best be addressed through effective partnerships between government agencies, private organisations, families and individuals. At a time when cutting budgets is a major focus of many in government, ...the danger of increasing levels of deprivation and uncontrollable aversives are particularly crucial to consider... Our collective responsibility to children continues to be an ethical and moral imperative that cannot be neglected.

Ethnic New Zealand: Towards cultural understanding

edited by **Daphne Bell**

Published by the New Settlers Focus Group,
Hamilton (1997)

Reviewed by Richard Tan

This book was produced by the New Settlers Focus Group in Hamilton to provide readily accessible information about different communities to enable the staff of voluntary and statutory agencies to better understand their clients.

The book provides two to three pages of descriptions of people from 36 nations including their country's demographic information (history, language, religion), cultural information (greetings, etiquette, families, titles and naming, food, dress, holidays, festivals, rites of passage, gestures and body language) and unacceptable behaviour. There is also an explanation of each ethnic group's pattern and reasons for migration to New Zealand.

A summary of the common religions practised by cultures which may be less familiar to the people of New Zealand includes information on Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism.

The book is easy to read, well presented and contains helpful maps and demographic illustrations. How-

ever, it is also difficult to read in one sitting as the information becomes repetitive. The reader will quickly become aware of the similarities between cultures in many areas such as expectations of children and socially unacceptable behaviours. For example, in many cultures children are expected to help with housework and it is not appropriate to point with the foot. It is polite to accept refreshments in nearly all the cultures surveyed although bringing gifts on visits is much less universally acceptable if the hosts are not to be offended or embarrassed. One would need to have a good head for details to remember whether it is appropriate for the men to shake hands with men or women, or for women to shake hands at all as part of their greeting. Appropriate physical contact within and between the sexes also varies between cultures.

More detailed information would be required for people working closely with minority groups in New Zealand, for example, if we were providing social work intervention. A list of references following the description of each cultural group would also have been very useful although one suspects this was not done because there is little available literature in this area.

Despite some minor shortcomings, this book is a worthwhile resource as an initial guide for workers coming into contact with minority ethnic groups.

Ethnic New Zealand: Towards cultural understanding is distributed by Education Resource Centre, PO Box 1387, Hamilton for \$22 (gst and p&p inclusive).

Patterns and reflections: Mehemia

The findings of 12 case reviews that relate to children and young persons who died during 1994 and 1995

compiled by **Liz Kinley** in collaboration with **Mike Doolan**

Published by the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Service (1997)

Reviewed by Lorraine Hill

In effect, this work is a report on research undertaken into the context, environment and organisational situations surrounding the deaths of 12 children who were

known to the Service at the time of their deaths.

The material is presented in an appealing form and design which is easy to read and succinct. There has been a clear attempt to condense the report without losing any of the impact or crucial information and it also offers challenges to its readers. The case review process involved a large number of professional people from widely varying backgrounds and perspectives.

The report begins with an introduction by Mike Doolan, Chief Social Worker at CYPFS, which provides an overview of the Service's work and focus in the area of child protection, the fraught nature of care and protection practice, and decision making in high risk cases.

The aim of the report is to critically analyse the Service's response to the 12 children and their families to increase our knowledge and decrease the likelihood of such situations recurring.

The report first provides information on the social and familial backgrounds of the children including age, gender, ethnicity, family situation, absent parents and sibling relationships, along with health and behaviour issues.

Key themes were then established including drug and alcohol issues in the family, family violence and suicidal and self-harm behaviours – the latter for the older age group of 14–17 years of age.

A summary provides well-known sets of negative factors or patterns in a child's environment which confirm high-level risk indicators for the children and young people. These indicators have also contributed to the growing knowledge base in child protection practice.

The Service's involvement with these children is next examined, in terms of the numbers of referrals, length of time between first and last referral, the primary reason for each referral, and the total length of CYPFS' involvement.

The reviews showed that while some of the cases had received appropriate and professional service from CYPFS and other community child protection providers, other areas were also identified for specific learning and development.

From the information gathered around the Service's involvement, a number of professional practice, training and organisational issues were established as critical to safe practice and quality service delivery.

Every care and protection social worker in this Service fears or dreads the time in their career when

a child on their caseload may be re-injured or die and this report suggests a number of issues which, when addressed, will provide opportunities for improved management of risk in child protection cases.

Finally, Patterns and reflections: Mehemia identifies a strategic response for CYPFS to the practice, training and organisational issues which have been raised, including actions and initiatives to address them.

This report is of crucial interest to all individuals, organisations and groups involved in the provision of child protection services and is of special significance to workers in our Service. The in-depth reviews of each of these cases gives valuable insight into those elements which hinder safe care and protection decision making and practice and into the management of child protection services.

"The patterns and reflections highlighted in this report will now become an integrated part of the practice wisdom which supports child protection social work in New Zealand," *Patterns and Reflections: Mehemia*. ■

The reviewers

Norma Miller is an Adoption Social Worker at Gisborne CYPFS.

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Richard Tan is a Psychologist for CYPFS Specialist Services in Christchurch.

Lorraine Hill is a Supervisor at the CYPFS Papanui office.