THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Report by- RICHARD SHANAHAN- 2003 Churchill Fellow

Violence prevention amongst young men: A community and resilience based approach

I understand that the Churchill Trust may publish this Report, either in hard copy or on the Internet or both, and I consent to this publication.

I indemnify the Churchill Trust against any loss, costs or damages it may suffer arising out of any claim or proceedings made against the Trust in respect or arising out the of the publication of any Report submitted to the Trust and which the Trust places on a web site to access over the internet.

I also warrant that my final report is original and does not infringe the copyright of any person, or contain anything, which is, or the incorporation of which into the Final Report is, actionable for defamation, a breach of any privacy law or obligation, breach of confidence, contempt of court, passing-off or contravention of any other private right or of any law.

Richard Shanahan   21st May 21, 2004

Signed:

Index:

Introduction:

The focus of this report will be on young men and boys largely in the youth bracket (12-25), yet there will be references to the earlier ages, particularly in terms of early intervention and prevention. This report aims to address the issues of "prevention of violence amongst boys and young men" (from here on to be referred to as young men), it will endeavour to do this in a way that highlights the fact that young men and boys are full of bourgeoning brilliance and potential, and that their own development is as much dependent on those around them as it is on themselves.

In writing this report I was particularly thinking of workers who are being approached to develop programs for working with young men around the prevention of violence. This report particularly focuses on approaches targeting school environments; it has strong relevance for teachers and principles. One off "anger management" programs can deflect from the really important community building work that promotes strengths and nurtures a healthy culture that values young men. Schools and communities need to have the resolution to create policy, to create curriculum and practices that reflect a strong attachment to commonly understood values.

 I wanted readers to enjoy reading this, as l style review of some significant experiences in the Fellowship, with some of my own thoughts and views; it is subtler in its suggestions. Part two is less anecdotal; it presents a model and a series of conclusions that are about creating the conditions for young men to thrive, particularly for those who are 'at risk' of entering a violent sub-culture.

A special thank you to all those trailblazers before me, to my family, staff and the Men's Link board, to the young men who have inspired me, and to the people who have made the Churchill Fellowship what it is.

Executive Summary: 4

Name: Richard Shanahan
Organisation: Menslink Inc.
Address: PO Box 4147 Manuka ACT.
Telephone: 62394699

Project Description:
Prevention of violence amongst young men in Australia.

Places of Significance:
Northern Ireland- Youth Action: Targeted approaches along gender lines aimed at interrupting historical and cultural cycles of violence.
Holland-Gaduka Institute: Gender based approaches emphasising physical/psycho education with boys.
London- Working with Men: Gender based approaches that carefully examine context; experienced in working with schools and tailoring "localised" programmes.
Pennsylvania- International Institute for Restorative Practices:
Played a significant role in successfully implementing restorative practices into mainstream schools.
Rio de Janeiro- Viva Rio: Systemic inquiries into the relationship of violence with social structure, poverty and macro issues.

Conclusions:
- Despite the significant involvement of young men, gender specific approaches to violence prevention are under resourced, unexplored, and yet hugely significant.
- Key conditions for creating resilience and violence prevention and early intervention amongst young men are identified by the RAMP model. They are:
    1. **Relationship/s**
    2. **Acknowledgement**
    3. **Membership**
    4. **Practices**
- School based mentoring programmes are introduced nationally in Australia.
- Less focus on the problem, and greater focus on the young men's potential, will encourage successful pathways and less violence.
- Learning Practices must be informed by a balanced approach that reflects understandings from biological and sociological schools of thought.
- The impact of trauma on the development of violent responses requires research, and informed practices.
- The best one approach to violence prevention is a collection of approaches, that are based around partnerships, common values, best practice and attitudes that reflect a deep-seated belief in the potential of our young men to contribute to our community.
- Schools including pre-schools are the central focus points for identifying, accessing and supporting young men who are "at risk". With this in mind appropriate resources are required to support the "whole school" community model.
- The Australian government immediately consider a highly valued alternative curriculum within high schools – "the school within a school approach".

Dissemination: This report is available on the following web sites: www.menslink.org.au www.churchilltrust.com, it is anticipated that it will be presented at several conferences particularly those related to violence prevention, and men's health and wellbeing, it will also be forwarded to several government departments.

Churchill Fellowship Programme

Northern Ireland-

- **Youth Action- Contact (Matt Crozier)** Targeted approaches along gender lines, aimed at interrupting historical and cultural cycles of violence. This cycle is particularly referring to the entry of young men into paramilitary activity, yet much violence occurs within and between the Catholic and Protest and communities and this is strongly related to cultures of masculinity.
- **University of Belfast- (Dr Ken Harland)** Ken has a strong history in investigating the connections of masculinity to violence, talked about the strong need for young men to have to "prove" themselves. Talked about the importance of training and consulting with agencies so they can develop good practices in working with young men.
- **Greater Shankhill Alternative- (Dave)** Located on Shankhill Road, the restorative unit uses restorative practices to intervene in community crime and associated punishment assaults by the paramilitary organisaitons.
- **Ocean Trust- (Ashley)** Sailing expeditions with "at risk" young people, despite having some "issues" still having lots of success in creating an "Outward Bound" type situation.

Nederlands:

- **Gaduka Institute and Rock and water-(Freerk Ykema)** Gender based approaches emphasising physical/psycho education with boys.
- **Kardeel- (Yohann De Voogh)** Not for profit working with youth, families and schools; particularly interesting was their development of their use of camera recorder with clients.
- **Youth Care – (Karel Drexhage)** Strong family systems approach for working with families, also using camera recorder, and engaged clients in role-plays.
- **Jarabeel and the Tukker Boat Project- (Johann)** As mentioned in the main report, Johann developed a clear structure for communicating with young men, negotiating with young men and setting expectations with young men. Yohann also worked with some of the intangibles with young men, was particularly interested in inspiring them and finding out about their dreams.

London:
Working with Men: (Treffor Lloyd) Gender based approaches that carefully examine context; loads of experience in working with schools and tailoring "localised" programmes that combine with key transition points.
Bernardos: (Ralph Lillywhite) Worked with young men at risk of sexual abuse; strongly emphasised the notion of good case management practices.

Pennsylvania:
UPENN University (Brenda Morrison/Criminologist) Brenda is widely involved in crime prevention and restorative practices. Brenda talked about "boys wanting to know the rules" when in yr 5/6.
UPENN University (Alison McKinley) Referred to strong corporate involvement of volunteers in mentoring.
Fox Leadership Program (Joe Tierney) Also raised importance of recruitment; the recent movement to form mentoring partnerships with church and faith based communities, shows a fresh approach to non-religious organsations working with religious organsiations..

Big Brother Big Sisters of America national office (Joyce Corlett) Emphasised the importance of clear model and good practices.

Big Brother Big Sister East (Abigail Ellis) This conversation emphasised the strong professional corporate tradition of Big Brother and Big Sister, and their recent introduction of computerised evaluation systems.

International Institute for Restorative Practices: (Bob Costello) Played a significant role in successfully implementing restorative practices into mainstream schools.

Pallisades High School (Bridget Connell) The most comprehensive approach to a whole school approach to building resilience and creating safety. Particularly effective is the range of restorative practices involved in the school, and the "School within a School" notion that is an alternative practical academic pathway.

New York:

St Christopher Beacon School (Oma S. Holloway) This school had a wonderful spirit of inclusion and was particularly focused in creating a safe recreational place for young people and families to access courses, sporting events and childcare facilities.

Boston:

Harvard University School of Health (E Franklin Miller) Consults for community development programs associated with violence and crime prevention. This involved a strong push for local solutions and agencies working together. Attended a meeting that had interagency access and government access for grass roots community members.

Rio de Janeiro:

Viva Rio: Fight For peace project: Systemic inquiries and programs about the relationship of violence with social structure. Strong emphasis on the importance of working with agencies to create cooperation and understanding. Development of a boxing club –Fight For Peace rather than attacking the young men's masculine preferences it harnesses them. Boxing activities are coupled with a range of social skill learning programmes including conflict resolution.

UNESCO Projects: Creating alternative schooling options in Rio de Janeiro; this included funding facilities and supporting events. Interesting to note that

Vancouver:

Vancouver Assaultive Husbands Program- (Dale Trimble) Experienced practitioner in working with men on domestic violence issues, strongly emphasised the role of listening to men.

Simon Fraser University: Restorative Unit (Meredith) Particularly pushed the idea of broadening restorative principles into community settings so that it is as much about inclusion and community than it is about running a conference.

First Nation Neighbourhood Centre: Involved community evenings were different tribal groups presented indigenous ritual, dance or song.

Part 1 Main Body

We should avoid working with adolescent boys from a 'deficit'
perspective, and focus not only on their problems, characterizing and
studying adolescent boys as 'problems in the making', but on
recognizing and emphasizing their strength s and potentials. Working
with adolescent boys from a gender perspective will help to assist boys
to develop into healthy and responsible citizens, partners, and fathers.
Who Report (1999)

Thoughts and Churchill Fellowship Journal (2004)
I arrived just on time after spending two hours on London's fabled
transport system. Having come from a place not near a subway station
and arrived at Peckham, also a place with no local station nearby, I had
suddenly learnt that the famous London railway though extensive was not
extensive enough for my liking. The person I was visiting was Trevor
Lloyd, a man who has some twenty years of experience in working with
men and boys. He is the founder of the "Working With Men" project and
possibly the most experienced person working in this area in the world. I
was somewhat nervous about meeting Trevor because of his reputation
and because he had been curt with me on the phone. I suspect I was one
of many people who had called upon Trevor to share his knowledge and
experience without any kind of remuneration (though I had offered to buy
him lunch).

Having got off the red London bus to early, I walked through Peckham
consciously aware that it had the largest African/English population in
London. I have to admit that my own perceptions of having an open
mind to "all people" was under threat, as I realised that I felt decidedly
uncomfortable in this area. Was this a reasonable gut instinct reaction to
an area of increased crime and violence, or the typical response of a white
man stereotyping a marginalised Black community?

Trevor turned out to be far more generous than I had expected, and after a
warm cup of tea, we soon rummaged through the myriad of issues that
invariably arise when you discuss young men and violence. Perhaps this
is one of the most perplexing issues in doing this work: Where do you
start? When you delve into this area the tracks are endless and the forks
frequent, so after a frantic and inspiring conversation the most fruitful
question turned out to be what do you start with? Then where do you
want to go?

What do you start with?
Level one: young men are Individuals first.
Firstly you start with yourself, and the thing you can most control is your attitudes and behaviours. Anyone doing this work must reflect on his or her own attitudes to young men. When they walk though the door are you first seeing a young man with a problem? A young man who is violent and aggressive, or a young man who is a male; and therefore potentially inept in the area of interpersonal relations. This is to say that there is an inherent risk of pathologising young men well before the evidence exists, and I believe they have very sensitive radars when it comes to people who fail to see them first as an individual who is full of potential and vitality.

Having said this, I will be making generalisations about how to work with young men. I do this with the assumption that community workers carefully assess people as individuals first and search for "unique factors" that influence wellbeing. Trevor quoted a good example, "after doing an assessment of an overly aggressive young man, I discovered he was attending school without eating breakfast. By addressing this issue he was able to dramatically reduce his aggressive behaviour.

Level two: Assess the situation and decide at what level you or your organisation want to intervene.
Referrers and Community workers are required to make decisions around the form of interventions that reduce and prevent violent behaviours. Examples of these different intervention levels are:
1. One-one interventions such as counselling and life coaching.
2. Approaches that include the family, as well as the young men in the intervention.
3. Indirect approaches that develop skills and experiences away from the problem: These approaches include the "Outward Bound" adventure type experience or referral to a programme such as mentoring.
4. Group level intervention: approaches that bring together young men prone to aggressive behaviour and use psycho- educational interventions.
5. School approaches: approaches that intervene at a wider community level, such as schools; these approaches can be in several different forms such as the teaching of conflict resolution skills, or a "whole school" approach that has less focus on violence

prevention and more focus on the personal and social development of young people.

6. Macro approaches: national campaigns such as the mass advertising recently in Australia around alcohol abuse by young people. Alcohol is a significant risk factor in the incidence of violence by young men, so violence would have been a secondary targeted issue within this campaign.

Level three: At what point do we engage in violence prevention?
This can be more difficult than it first appears, as many highly skilled community workers are often engaged at the tertiary end despite reservations about where it would be best to apply their resources. Traditionally funded programmes often are tertiary focused (applied after the young men has reached a high level of risk), and recent research is pointing to the difficulties of behaviour change once young men have entered this violent sub culture stage (Currie; 2003).

The Two Boats Story:
Yet much can be learned about programmes that have engaged young men at the tertiary stage and succeeded in creating environments and relationships of safety. In Europe I visited two organisations that had remarkably similar approaches to working with young people, and young men in particular. Both interventions involved old sailing boats and seven-day expeditions that involved the crew learning basic crewing skills, including rigging, working shifts, and cooking. Yet despite the "high risk" nature of the young men; the Tukker Boat Project had not had one serious act of violence in seven years. This was in sharp contrast to Ocean Trust (North Ireland), who have been experiencing sporadic instances of intimidation and threatening behaviour. What was the Dutch group doing to create safety?

I was driven to Dan Helder by Freerk Yerma the creator of the Rock and Water Programme. On the way we discussed themes around adventure, hope and inspiring young men to be the best they possibly can. We both shared common views on the need for our cultures to address what could be described as the desire of young men to have experiences that engage them at a deeper level. Such levels might include; spirituality (or if you are uncomfortable with that call it their deepest beliefs), their thirst to be challenged, and their hopes, aspirations and dreams.   These intangibles in working with young men are the factors you will rarely come across when you read a document composed within an academic framework.

The skipper of the boat- Johann was motivated by the same factors:

"I want young men to be inspired when they go on our boat; I want them to experience adventure and discover their unique potential and talents". Yet for the first seven years of these voyages the Dutch project was sporadically hindered by "acts of intimidation and violence" the very same circumstances that are now hindering the Irish project". I was excited when Johann revealed in the past seven years, the Dutch project had no incidents of violence! "What have you done differently I asked?"

The Dutch Experience:
After one such trip I sat down and said, "something has got to give", I knew that something was missing. The boys seemed to be experiencing failure, and reacting against our efforts to teach them skills. So I decided to address an issue to do with responsibility. Instead of having a short introductory briefing, for most of the first day we worked hard on defining expectations, regular crew and the young men shared what we wanted to achieve on the voyage and we went to some effort to list these expectations. For example the boys had to name three actions that they wanted to do on the boat. This would be something like cooking for the crew, climbing the rigging, or catching a fish. We also wanted them to define how they wanted to be treated by others and how they might treat others. Then we might go further and ask them to note how we might recognise if this treatment was happening? For example they would expect that things might get "testy" but would not get abusive. If on the odd occasion they did get abusive, they would redress the issues with the person concerned.

"How did you notice if the young men were achieving their aims"?
They boys had a journal like workbook; this enabled them to list these aims, and also to list things that would happen if they were achieving these aims. So if they were aiming for good teamwork, then they would witness things like: people would be joking and having fun, people would be doing their tasks, people would be asking for help. As I listened to Johann, I was discovering the rich social skills the young men were achieving and I was excited that I now understood how important it is to "break down things" for young men.

Insights from this discussion:
- Giving young men responsibility is a sure way to value them.
- A discussion that involves carefully listening to the young men, and exploring their ambitions and hopes will help define which responsibilities they are most interested in.
- The handing over of the responsibility needs to be done carefully, clearly defining the tasks that will achieve the expectation and thus

> establishing with young men how they will know when they have
> achieved success.
> - Giving young men responsibility is a very strong statement of trust,
>   respect and valuing. Organisations need to be willing take
>   educated risks so that we enable them to have important roles in
>   our community.

After reflecting further on the Dutch experience, I realised that as workers
we often make assumptions that are unhelpful or at the least an oversight.
We should not assume that young men have enough skills to define the
appropriate steps to achieving a goal or a dream. A reality check is often
required, and Johann and his crew went to some degree to "assist the
definition" and later to teach some of those skills required for these young
men to be successful. Yet in assisting in this definition they also
conveyed strong listening skills and were able to find a nice balance
between negotiation, listening and teaching. When working with young
men part of the art is about when to teach and when to get out of the way
and let them learn themselves. Some young men seemed to have
developed a strong fear of failure, and may baulk at trying things. This
pattern may only reinforce beliefs around failure that might not be
reflective of their real potential. In working with young men it is vital we
provide enough input for success to occur and for failure to be normal
learning experience.

One theme that came up on the Churchill experience was that consistently
resorting to violence was more often a symptom of deeper themes around
identity, self-belief, and feeling unloved. Any one who has worked in the
area of drug addiction or been addicted themselves, could appreciate how
we can resort to behaviours that destroy relationships rather than build
them.

 In Brazil one organisation went to some degree to emphasise the idea of
love and nurturing. Young people who were alienated from their Favela
(poor) communities were welcomed into a mission community and given
a mentor with the mandate to consistently love (in a plutonic sense of
course) and nurture them for a whole year. What a gift! Whilst I never
visited this community, I was reliably informed that it was having great
success; yet like many programmes still needed to develop links that
enabled the residents to move beyond the mission community.

It can be confusing formulating an approach that engages young men and
accesses them successfully. Our experience at Men's link is that

"counselling" is undesirable to many young men who are sensitive to failure and problematically focused interventions. Remember what it was like when you were young and going through a hard time, a parent tells you your not doing well, and the last thing you want to hear is their opinion on what you need to do about it. To many young men, counselling has similar connotations, so we need to think "metaphor" and look for images that engage hope, simplicity and some clear focus to the interaction. For me counselling suggests no clear definition so I suggest you try something like life coaching, and from the start provide some definition by answering these sorts of questions for the young man:
What is it you do?
How long will it take?
Do we have to sit down or can walk?
What if I don't want to come back?
Can we have a short session if I have not much to talk about?
What are you going to tell my mum?

What are we looking for?
So I'll take you now to Northern Ireland, I am having a recurring nightmare, I'm lost in a Protestant working class area; it's 11pm at night, blowing a wintry gale, there are Para-military murals on walls, I'm an Australian Irish Catholic, up ahead there is a group of young men "loitering" along in front of government terraces. Panic sets in, I am sweating despite the minus temperature, I reverse out of the street, find a safer way, and finally clear the danger zone. On good advice the next day I discover that the young men, would have been delighted to talk to an Aussie, oh and I forget yet again that most assaults are by young men against other young men.

Australians have strong perceptions that young men are violent and whilst this might be partly accurate, comparatively speaking we live in one of the safest Western countries in the world.

Youth Action is an Irish youth service that is trialling innovative programmes that engage young men in discussions around violence. Funding derives from the EEC, one of the first international organisations to realise the value of working against violence by engaging gender issues. Dealing with violence is a very real issue for young men growing up in Belfast. You cannot skirt around it, they grow up in neighbourhoods that value strength, that use intimidation to solve problems, and to appear weak is to be dangerously vulnerable to attack.

Despite the cultural divides, there was a similar body language between the young men of Northern Ireland and the young men residing in the Brazilian Favela. Both groups are part of concerning world trend- COAV (Children in Organised Armed Violence). Though the Northern Ireland situation is less severe than Brazil (in Brazil's gang warfare boys as young as 12yrs old are armed with automatic weapons), chronic exposure to violent themes and fear seems to leave a scar; their body language is often closed, eyes down cast and furtive and their shoulders hunched. These young men were missing a spark, yet I wonder how much the spectre of fear is burning deep within their hearts. I wonder how much this fear impacts on their attitudes and perceptions, thus driving them away from hopeful pursuits and self-concepts.

Youth Action engaged the young men in conversations which were often about violence, it seems they had very deep understandings of it's impact, and influence in their lives. Young men who come from less violent cultures (like Australia), still face the very real predicament of having to absorb strong concepts around masculinity and what it means to be a man and be strong. In the external environment they face the influence of the peer group and the importance of conforming, yet very real social values highlight the importance of power, control, and aggression.

Yet the importance of social pressures and values must be applied in the context of the internal environment of the young men. Within, the hormones are raging; in a couple of years testosterone has multiplied by 800% +, biologically the boys are experiencing massive internal changes. I would urge workers to develop empathy for these changes and to value them.

In Bethlehem Pennsylvania I experienced the consequences of ignoring their physical development. Run by the International Institute for Restorative Practices, a school for high-risk students was implementing a fully restorative model for schooling. It utilised conferences to solve school incidents. The problem was that these conferences were completely verbal, involved sitting down for periods of up to two hours, and were conducted in rooms that had no windows and fresh air.

Yet at Palisades High School (Pennsylvania), the Institute for Restorative Practices was partly responsible for creating a model that I believe to be one of the most effective in creating safety and valuing young men. The origins of restorative practices are indigenous in nature, traditionally practiced in many cultures including the Maori, North America and Africa. It moves away from Punitive (punishment) approaches that

exclude offenders, and moves towards exposing the harm caused by the offender, yet restoring the relationships that have been damaged. Some organisations are examining restorative practices in a broader sense, and viewing it as a philosophy, that more than anything, is about "commitment to community" and embracing practices that engage examine, seek to understand and then seek to include rather than exclude offending community members.

Palisades High has provision for restorative conferences and according to one teacher; she could not remember one seriously violent incident in three years. One sensed that this school community had developed a deep understanding of restorative values, that there was a real commitment to include and value students by giving them important roles and by providing curriculum that provided an alternative stream. This alternative curriculum; "the school within a school", was about servicing students who were not suited to the mainstream academic focus. One sensed it was not an "add on", but a highly valued curriculum that exposed students to a range of learning experiences that engaged them at a very practical level (There were also a significant amount of young women who benefited from this version of schooling). An example would be that students designed a video production that would allow them to attend the feeder school and sell the benefits of the school within a school. Projects were highly relevant to functional outcomes; indeed it was very much like having a TAFE within a High school.

Palisades High is an example of a clear agenda that is attached to a strong set of values. This was a school that had applied many different arenas of knowledge and brought them together under the one umbrella. Within my short stay I witnessed a strong mix of academic, sporting and creative culture, of adult education, conflict resolution, restorative practices and teamwork, and of people, students and teachers simply getting along. I emphasise Palisades High because beyond functional church communities; schools are our last bastion for community. It is here that families come together, and that children and parents requiring extra-familiar support can be reached and influenced. It is here that effective measures can be applied for violence prevention.

Whilst I was in Philadelphia visiting a number of mentor programs; Mark Latham was creating a stir, by suggesting the importance of male role models, and the lack of mentoring in the lives of young men and men. I was excited that finally these issues were coming to political importance. I had been concerned that despite the appalling suicide rates and violence rates amongst men, there was limited political response to

the massive grass roots concern that exists within the community. Too often I have dealt with mothers who have been in dire situations (with their sons), and heard their frustration at the appalling lack of resource out there. I recently asked a senior politician in the Canberra Government what health and well being policy he had developed for young men. He looked at me as if to say- 'Why the hell would we need anything like that'?

Men's Link has recently experienced a positive increase in recruiting male mentors. Many mainstream organisations within Australia and the USA have failed to do this despite having much larger resources. I recently read an article quoting a senior 'Big Brother Big Sister' manager as saying men are not interested in helping young men. Organisations need to review their own culture and structure before they are so quick to generalise men. My experience is that many of these programs have failed to understand the specific gender needs for working with men; they need to look at organisations that have been successful (like the Scouts and Rotary).

After visiting the USA and Brazil I was convinced that mentoring programs have to be far more functional than setting up a mentoring relationship. This relationship needs to have focus and rewards for both parties, and it needs to be linked in with other mentors so that group mentoring takes place and we share the responsibility of mentoring young men. This approach is much more aligned with community values and the social needs of male volunteers.

The American research is clear (Public/Private Ventures; 1995). Mentoring does make a difference in building resilience and increasing skills and outcomes. Yet to achieve greater success in violence prevention we must look at the idea of mentoring in a much broader sense. We need to take responsibility for the conditions and structures that can mentor young men, that can enable them to overcome inhibitions, and to do this we have to create a respectful gender approach that is symbiotic with other approaches within our communities.

Part 2: Conclusions.

Context:

 An important starting point is to say that most young men will not commit illegal acts of violence in their lives, although a minority of young men will be responsible for large proportion of reported assaults reported in Australia. Earlier on in their lives, the majority of school based acts of bullying or fighting will involve young men, invariably against other young men, and this leads to community concern for young men as instigators of violence and as victims of violence. It also leads to greater social concern that other versions of violence, such as domestic violence, derive from either a social or biological propensity of young men to acts of violence.

It is at this point that I will state my own position on the centuries old nature vs. nurture argument; that is that boys are influenced by socialisation and biology, though I believe that biology is more influential than socialisation in this developmental phase, and on this particular issue. I do think it is important to have some theoretical position on this argument, as it will influence your preference for particular interventions. Yet too many resources have been wasted on interventions that are attached to political positions, rather than what actually works in general with boys. So this concept of "what works" should encourage us to make use of the "gems" that can be derived from **both** theoretical perspectives.

This report will be written with community development workers in mind. By this I mean teachers, youth workers, social workers and others who are designing programmes for working with young men, or vetting programmes for your students or clients. Working with young men is a relatively new area and because of this there are pitfalls and "grey areas" that are rarely documented. It is also an area that has it's own language and concepts and I hope to clarify some of these and suggest some "good practices" for working with young men.

A basic dilemma is faced in working with young men around prevention of violence: A lack of resources and research exists on gender specific approaches.

What was most interesting about my Churchill Fellowship was not what I found, but what I did not find. There are few sponsored institutions in the world examining and researching the area of working with men and how best to do this. The arena of violence prevention is a classic where you would expect closer examination of gender specificity. The majority of violent incidents involve men and young men in the offending role, yet institutions working in this area are slow in developing gender

approaches. Frankly, I was perplexed by this reticence and came to a conclusion that there is generalized resistance to committing resources to understanding and supporting young men to develop better pathways for personal growth. This, despite the obvious benefits for the men themselves and the whole of the community.

For violence prevention to move forward resistance at institutional and political levels must be put aside; governments and universities in particular must support balanced examination of male gender specificity. (I would refer you to the WHO website a report tabled; *Gender specificity* (2004): Working with Adolescents, for a host of reasons why we need to be developing more expertise, resource and knowledge in the area of working with young men).

Multi-Factorial Influences on violence:
As my Churchill Fellowship meandered along, I began to grapple with the diversity of factors influencing violence. In Brazil corruption and poverty spurn the growth of powerful drug lords, in Northern Ireland racial and religious divides fuelled continuing Para-military activities, in South Africa many factors come together; including cultural notions of masculinity. In an excellent article on urban violence in South Africa, Mathews, Griggs and Caine, (1999), outline a host of risk factors amongst youth and some general areas for intervention:

Risk factors and Intervention Areas: (Note that multiple risk factors increase the risk of exposure to use of violence).

General Risk Factors:	State Level Interventions:
-Poverty -Race -Location -Age	-Job creation -Poverty Alleviation -Provision of services -Implementation of Youth -Policy -Curriculum Support -Improved Safety and Security
Individual Risk Factors: -Gender -Victimisation-exposure to violence, assault -Family-one parent, -School performance -Substance abuse -Low self-esteem	**Local Level Interventions:** -Trauma Counselling -Gender Workshops -Conflict Management training -Family Support and Parenting Skills -Drug programs -Supportive Schools -Access to Supportive Mentors

The risk factors indicate that violence can be influenced at many different levels within the community. Highly effective programmes are going to be wasted, if at macro levels housing, equality and employment etc are neglected. A sobering insight for the community development worker, it does create some perspective on our situation in Australia. We do have racial and poverty issues, yet nothing on the scale that leads to the cultures of violence that exist in Brazil, Northern Ireland and South Africa. In this sense we can be thankful for the strength of our economies, and the advantages of institutions that are relatively free of corruption. In another sense we are in a wonderful position to apply our work to focused approaches that address the more subtle risk factors. So though this report focuses on Local Level Interventions and community development programmes, it does so with an acknowledgement that at many levels in our community people are making important contributions that create safety and stability.

Experienced workers will have noticed that the risk factors listed are not dissimilar to risk factors that are indicative of other problems such as drug abuse, or suicide. Overseas this theme would come up time and time again; workers would say; "look my area of expertise is not violence prevention but Drug and Alcohol prevention (or another area), however most of these young men I work with are not too different, they are often caught up in violent subcultures and are at risk of a number of negative outcomes". I found this helpful to know, it allowed me to develop a more compassionate view of young men who resort to violence, in essence they are at risk of harming others, but also of harming themselves.

We do not have to focus solely on "violence prevention" to create violence prevention. As we already have found, many behaviours and factors contribute that are not really classified as focused in that area. In Australia there are programmes that have a clear agenda of aggression and violence reduction, and I would point you to the excellent Doing Anger Differently Programme (Currie; 2003) for an example of a group work based anger management programme that is having promising results. (In general though I would urge workers to be very cautious of programmes that are short term, group based, educationally reliant, and fail to acknowledge the complexities of the issue. Particularly if they fail to communicate **sound learning principles** for working with young men and their families).

The organisation I work for (Menslink Inc), works with young men 12-25yrs old. It runs mentoring, recreational and life coaching programmes for young men. A common referral point is concerned parents (often single mums), who are experiencing intimidation from their sons, or their sons are becoming aggressive in other relationships. We are also invited into schools to run conflict resolution/anger management programmes for boys; recently we stepped back from this cycle and decided to engage in more holistic approaches. Too often our organization was becoming the "answer" to situations that required systemic responses. Now we emphasise the following inter- services practices for sustainable solutions:

- Sustainable relationships
- Partnership building
- Evaluation
- Sharing of responsibility (students, teachers, parents, services etc)
- Sound planning linked to a larger school vision plan

Access:

Anyone working with "at risk" young men will be well aware of the issue of access. Generally speaking the higher the risk of the young men the harder they become to access as they accumulate distrust and alienation from our communities. Unfortunately in situations where the family environment is violent or unstable, yet our ability to engage with the family may be restricted. For this reason the idea of 'school as communities" model: that resources rally to schools, work with them, is I believe the best way to intervene early and effectively. Ideally this means working with preschools and primary schools as well as high schools and colleges. This means the youth sector and education sector come together and developing common principles around building resiliency, community and how to value and nurture young men.
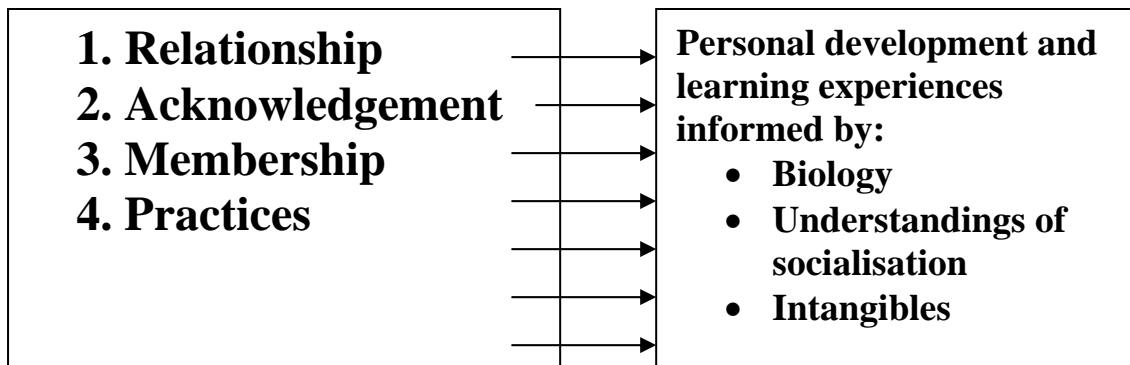
The following model RAMP is about highlighting the key areas that create conditions for young men to grow into confidence, relationship, and gain abilities that assist helpful communication. **This model maps out conditions for resilience to exist not just within the young man but also within the community around him.** So the creation of resilient conditions is then a shared responsibility. As a result young men in our communities will be unlikely to choose avenues of violence because their internal resources are increased, on par with their external resources.

In the Ramp model I have steered away from naming specific programmes (this will depend on your preferences), though I am certainly influenced by a range of practice-based principles including:

- Restorative practices
- Solution orientated approaches
- Narrative principles
- Community development principles
- Gender approaches such as the Rock and Water programme
- School/Education approaches

Understanding Conditions that Create personal development:

The RAMP Model-

1. Relationship → **Personal development and learning experiences informed by:**
2. Acknowledgement → • **Biology**
3. Membership → • **Understandings of socialisation**
4. Practices → • **Intangibles**

Relationship:
Despite these complicated factors that influence the perpetuation of violence, for the benefit of the community development worker I want to describe this subject in terms that refer to the simple concept of human relationships. Time and time again workers would meander through the multiple risk factors, and then come back to a place which said something like: "look the most important factor is the presence of healthy and supportive relationships, the boys ability to maintain and build these relationships, and the feeling of belonging to something important that flows from these relationships". Any programme designed to work with young men must start with relationships and must ask questions like:
- Do our workers have the skills and understanding to work with young men?
- Do we know how to earn the trust of these young men?
- Do we know how to get them to turn up so that we can begin talking and getting to know them?
- Do our workers have the attitude and belief that will enable them to overcome relationship challenges?
- Are there disabilities or reasons that make it harder for the young men to relate, and engage with people?
- Are we using a language that they find difficult to understand either cognitively or culturally?
- What medium will we use to develop relationship besides verbal interaction- e.g. Activity, sport, art etc?
- Are the young men willing to be a partner in the relationship? If they are involuntary then we know it gets tough?

Acknowledgement:
 The influence of relationships at individual, family and community level are noticeable in the risk factors from South Africa. Now lets bring it

back to the programme level and the perspective of the community development worker and indeed the young men we are privileged to work with. We want to build healthy relationships because we see that as natural and helpful, we know that good outcomes come out of these relationships, and if I was to describe one outcome we are particularly looking for it would be acknowledgement. Acknowledgement of the young man is important at so many different levels, so I would ask you to consider the idea of acknowledgement as a concept that covers a range of ideas. These would include: **'AAAAN'**

- Acknowledgement of young men as individuals who have unique capabilities and potential.
- Acknowledgement of particular efforts the young men make to contribute to relationships, whether it is with family, friends, teachers, peers or communities.
- Acknowledgement of growth and maturity- the young men are progressing both physically and mentally, indeed holistically, so we need to create individual moments and communal moments that are about appreciating their growth.
- Acknowledgement of specific stages of change that involve extra challenge and support- here I am particularly referring to the Primary to High Schools transition, a watershed time for boys; and the school to full time employment stage.
- Noticing- having the ability to recognise efforts in all of these areas, can make all the difference (this is why mentoring is so effective).

Membership:
Thinking in terms of relationships and acknowledgement is a really good starting point for anyone working in this area. Another good starting point is assessing whether isolation and alienation exists**: Does the young man feel excluded and unacknowledged by the mainstream community?** If he does, then acceptance within a gang, despite the inherent risks, will be more appealing. Thinking in term of relationships also raises the principle of "joint responsibility", it is no longer good enough for us to throw up our hands and say, "he is just not trying," without first reviewing our own efforts, the efforts of our schools, the efforts of the parents. This is not about looking to engage in unhelpful finger pointing at already harassed parents or teachers, it is about saying that these boys and young men do not feel a part of our community; so what can we do to re establish membership and acknowledge the roles they can play? Here are just some suggestions that will contribute to the feeling of membership:

- Give young men responsibilities that are significant within your community- e.g. let them assist the janitor with the garden or carry the bins out. Give them leadership roles within their schools. (Ensure you give them support to learn the required skills so that they can experience some success)

- Listen to young men; really listen to their ideas and stories. Perhaps engage them in conversations that are on "adult subjects" such as politics, community, sex etc?

- Value 'the giving of responsibility', for example do not hand over a two thousand dollar digital recording camera, without first going through the steps required to create respect for that object and for that 'handover'. Giving responsibility cheaply is as unhelpful as not giving responsibility at all. It is also an opportunity to "create mutual boundaries and expectations". What conditions are attached to the usage of that implement? How will he know if he has used it correctly? What will indicate that he has achieved your expectations, or something important?

- Introduce them to other adults so that they feel a part of the adult world.

- Success- Young men must experience success and a sense of contribution to their wider community- this creates motivation and membership.

Practices:
Underpinning our work, management, project and programme practices can create the basis for simple ideas such as reliability, consistency, clear communication and an assurance we are heading in common directions. Here are just a few suggestions:
- An organisational or school culture that reflects the values you are aiming for in your programme.
- Good Case management practices (with young men assessment is crucial).
- An awareness of the risks of labelling young men
- Inspirational and consistent role modelling by adults.
- Clear communication between stakeholders, and the establishment of concise policy at organisational levels.

Attached to the application of RAMP are two final crucial elements that must inform work with young men: concepts of **biology** and how neural pathways are wired differently (along gender lines), and how behaviour is influenced by **social** experience. These combinations need to combine so that we can work with young men. The following descriptions though limited, will give you an idea of what needs to inform learning, engagement and practice.

BIOLOGY:
- Activities that are physical
- Spatial Concepts- learning through visual, tactile, physical, problem solving, and creative experiences.
- When to teach, and when to let young men teach themselves.
- Issues of physical development into adulthood
- Issues of sexual development and associated self-concept

SOCIAL:
- Influence of peers, family and culture
- Influence of cultural themes of masculinity and how it might encourage violence.
- How do we create conditions that accept and respect gender differences and gender strengths?
- Influences of "normality"- what ideas of exclusion might create avenues to justify violence?
- What values contribute to "justification of violence"?
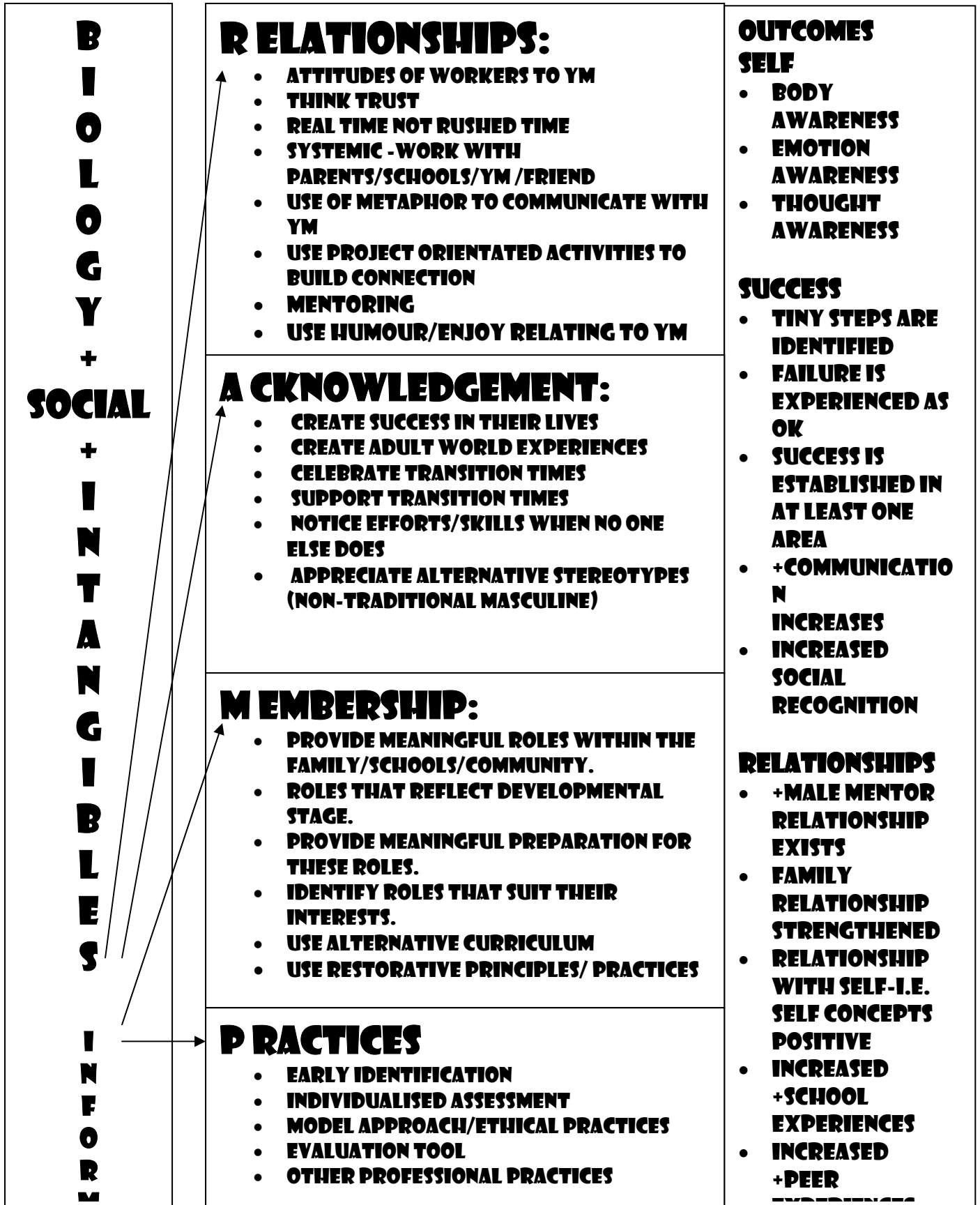- What social influences are creating negative perspectives of men?

- What social mediums/institutions influence the development of violent sub-cultures?

INTANGIBLES:

There are many intangibles that exist in working with young men and their communities. By intangibles I am referring to concepts that don't always fit into commonly accepted practices. Is it common practice to sit with a young man under the stars and share with him your common hopes for your community and yourself? To share with him our deepest beliefs, or our spirituality? It is not something that is threaded into our evidence-based programmes, to have these experiences, yet the benefits in enriching the development of community values are huge. Who sits down with them and asks- what do you want to do for your school community? How do we etch these experiences into school curriculum? How do they fit into notions of evaluation and education? What do we really want to teach young men if not an understanding of our deepest community values? How often do we as workers share our aspirations and dreams for the young men we work with? What has all this go to do with violence prevention?

RAMP MODEL

B I O L O G Y + SOCIAL + I N T A N G I B L E S   I N F O R M

R ELATIONSHIPS:

- ATTITUDES OF WORKERS TO YM
- THINK TRUST
- REAL TIME NOT RUSHED TIME
- SYSTEMIC -WORK WITH PARENTS/SCHOOLS/YM /FRIEND
- USE OF METAPHOR TO COMMUNICATE WITH YM
- USE PROJECT ORIENTATED ACTIVITIES TO BUILD CONNECTION
- MENTORING
- USE HUMOUR/ENJOY RELATING TO YM

A CKNOWLEDGEMENT:

- CREATE SUCCESS IN THEIR LIVES
- CREATE ADULT WORLD EXPERIENCES
- CELEBRATE TRANSITION TIMES
- SUPPORT TRANSITION TIMES
- NOTICE EFFORTS/SKILLS WHEN NO ONE ELSE DOES
- APPRECIATE ALTERNATIVE STEREOTYPES (NON-TRADITIONAL MASCULINE)

M EMBERSHIP:

- PROVIDE MEANINGFUL ROLES WITHIN THE FAMILY/SCHOOLS/COMMUNITY.
- ROLES THAT REFLECT DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE.
- PROVIDE MEANINGFUL PREPARATION FOR THESE ROLES.
- IDENTIFY ROLES THAT SUIT THEIR INTERESTS.
- USE ALTERNATIVE CURRICULUM
- USE RESTORATIVE PRINCIPLES/ PRACTICES

P RACTICES

- EARLY IDENTIFICATION
- INDIVIDUALISED ASSESSMENT
- MODEL APPROACH/ETHICAL PRACTICES
- EVALUATION TOOL
- OTHER PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

OUTCOMES

SELF
- BODY AWARENESS
- EMOTION AWARENESS
- THOUGHT AWARENESS

SUCCESS
- TINY STEPS ARE IDENTIFIED
- FAILURE IS EXPERIENCED AS OK
- SUCCESS IS ESTABLISHED IN AT LEAST ONE AREA
- +COMMUNICATION INCREASES
- INCREASED SOCIAL RECOGNITION

RELATIONSHIPS
- +MALE MENTOR RELATIONSHIP EXISTS
- FAMILY RELATIONSHIP STRENGTHENED
- RELATIONSHIP WITH SELF-I.E. SELF CONCEPTS POSITIVE
- INCREASED +SCHOOL EXPERIENCES
- INCREASED +PEER EXPERIENCES

Work Between the Lines:
Many schools and community organisations fall into the trap of searching for **"the"** programme that will create safety and prevent violence. **There is not one solution**, and really it is poor practice to provide interventions that fail to work with other people and interventions and institutions that are part of young men's lives, and working for the same outcome. Approaches that "work in with other programmes", that are designed specifically for the "culture of the school, group or community" and involve steady relationship building between partners are preferable. This is also hard work, and there needs to be realistic goals and resources applied.

The grey area Trauma: Early identification and assessment of trauma, and methods to work with young men around trauma are significant areas that need to be developed.
Experience of trauma is a risk factor in people becoming violent. Saying that people learn violent behaviours from poor modelling or that violence is about power is a simplistic notion. At the age fourteen I was personally subjected to a serious assault that involved a jagged bottle, my assailants were four young men. The following six years, whenever I saw groups of young men, and sometimes individuals looking slightly aggressive, or sometimes just passing me by I experienced a bio chemical shot of adrenalin and fear; this often progressed to rage and anger. I would have fantasies of "killing or maiming" these people, even though most of them were innocently passing me by. Sometimes the same emotion arose in situations with friends, even though the level of interaction was a standard schoolyard disagreement.

On reflection I had developed a neural pathway to an extremely violent situation. This left me prone to extremely aggressive, thoughts and feelings that were out of context to the situation. I have worked with many young men who have experienced similar reactions and were consistently involved in serious fights that endangered their lives and others. Once I asked one such young man to review his response "leading into conflict", his first reaction to being around young men was to establish an aggressive stance, to convey a strong domineering tone, and to make focused eye contact. Despite the outside bravado, deep-seated fear was driving this body language, and unfortunately resulting in some very serious situations. Further resources and research are required to address and support such young men who struggle with trauma and related responses. Labelling them as perpetrators might be partly

descriptive, it will certainly succeed in further alienation, but will it be helpful?

Embrace their Brilliance:

As in the case of trauma, there are not always simple answers to all the conditions that create violence. This model is about understanding the conditions that value young man, that allow them to grow and develop skills so that they can be more capable and resilient to resist violent options. In his biography-'Long Walk to Freedom' (1994) Mandela implores the reader to embrace their brilliance- 'you do not serve your community by being small'. There are always opportunities to build bridges with young men and to support and notice the times when they are going beyond themselves. Young men thrive on relationship, acknowledgement, membership and success. Sadly we cannot always stop everything that contributes to their miss spent aggressions, we can however create opportunities to appreciate and develop their unique abilities and unrealised strengths. We can embrace their brilliance!

Part 3: Recommendations.

- Despite the significant involvement of young men, gender specific approaches to violence prevention are under resourced, unexplored, and yet hugely significant. I would recommend state and local funding provide targeted resourcing for programmes and research.
- Key conditions for creating resilience and violence prevention and early intervention amongst young men are identified by the RAMP model:
  They are:
  1. **Relationship/s**
  2. **Acknowledgement**
  3. **Membership**
  4. **Practices**
- Schools and youth services source the RAMP model to review that their program reflects good practice.
- Schools and youth services create stronger links, and build cultural links that reflect common values and allow for better resourcing of schools.
- Less focus on the problem, and greater focus on the young men's potential, will encourage successful pathways and less violence.
- Learning Practices must be informed by a balanced approach that reflects understandings from biological and sociological schools of thought.
- Community based organizations explore the intangibles of working with young men so that more holistic approaches are developed in violence prevention work.
- Spirituality is an unexplored resource for violence prevention, how do we engage young men in spiritual discussions so that they can explore some of the more mystical aspects of life? (I am not suggesting we impose spirituality, rather create more depth in the young men's experiences).
- I recommend community services and faith based communities work closely together; particularly in the area of recruitment of mentors.
- Building links with religious based communities can enrich our ability to work together and tap into resources. These communities have strong resources and tremendous networks of people.
- The impact of trauma on the development of violent responses requires research, and informed practices.
- The best one approach to violence prevention is a collection of approaches, that are based around partnerships, common values, best practice and attitudes that reflect a deep-seated belief in the potential of our young men to contribute to our community.
- Schools including pre-schools are the central focus points for identifying, accessing and supporting young men who are "at risk". Appropriate resources are required to support the "whole school" community model.
- Mains stream mentoring programs develop informed policy in the area of recruitment of mentors; up to now they have been relatively unsuccessful in Australia. It is not good enough to say men are not interested in helping young men; our experience at Men's link is that they are and that recruitment policy and support policy make the difference.

References:

Currie, M. Doing Anger Differently Program. Research paper, University of Newcastle; 2003.

Mandela, N. (1994) Long Walk To Freedom; Abacus, London.

Mathews I, Griggs R and Caine G, (1999) "Understanding Youth Violence In Urban Schools; Independent Project Trust, South Africa.

Public/Private Ventures; (1995) Big Brothers/Big Sisters Melbourne Web site, 2003.

WHO (2000) Working With Adolescent Boys WHO Web Site.