An action research project examining anger and aggression with rural adolescent males participating in the Rock and Water Program

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An Action Research Project Examining Anger and Aggression with Rural Adolescent Males Participating in the Rock and Water Program

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Thesis Declaration

I certify that the work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original, except as acknowledged in the text, and that the material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the University's rules, requirements, procedures and policy relating to my higher degree research award and to my thesis. I certify that I have complied with the rules, requirements, procedures and policy of the University (as they may be from time to time).

Paul Edwards
Abstract

This research project began out of the need to find out why there was increasing aggression in the school and wider social environment among boys and young men as this was impacting referrals to local and state child and adolescent mental health services. The Rock and Water Program (RWP) was used as a means of contacting 187 rural adolescent males from four schools on the north coast of NSW in order to explore their views relating to anger and aggression as well as their perception of the RWP, which is a popular program used with boys in Australian schools. Working with focus group participants showed that historical-cultural attitudes have a direct impact on this cohorts experience and expression of anger while also impacting their views related to learning activities and programs.

A qualitative research methodology was utilized where focus groups were the method of data collection and thematic analysis the means by which the focus group data set was structured and analyzed. An action research framework of three cycles (phases) was utilized to enhance the focus group structure allowing for responsiveness to participant feedback by broadening and clarifying the inquiry, which enabled the following research questions to be thoroughly explored:

1. What do participants think about the RWP?

2. How would participants change the RWP to improve it?

3. How do adolescent male participants recognise anger in themselves and others?

4. Under what circumstances would adolescent male participants become aggressive?
5. Where do adolescent male participants learn skills to deal with aggressive incidents?

The RWP was clearly endorsed by focus group participants as a positive means of engaging them in a program that targets, among other issues, problematic anger and aggression. Focus group participants highlighted how anger and aggression need to be studied through the specific cultural lens from which they view the world and that despite a negative stigma associated with anger management they did want to learn skills to deal more effectively with their anger. They identified a folk theory of anger where anger is experienced as something separate to the self that contributes to a reduced personal responsibility for any negative consequences resulting from their anger or aggression. Participants’ dialogue about anger potentially masked certain skill deficits that have remained unaddressed due to the historical-cultural belief that anger reduces the ability to think clearly. A number of personological and situational primes (antecedents) for aggression are identified by focus group participants that are directly linked with an historical concept of Australian masculinity known as larrikinism.

The socio-cultural practices that initially attempted to deny and absorb the larrikin element ultimately embraced and endorsed its aggressive behaviour in such a way that it continues as a fundamental component of focus group participants’ identity. This historical-cultural genesis to anger has directly impacted focus group participants’ experience of anger and explains why they act aggressively in certain contexts.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Anger and aggression are at problematic levels among Australian adolescent males. The perspectives of rural adolescent males, especially regarding how they define anger, how they recognise anger in themselves and others and what leads them to engage in aggressive incidents is poorly understood. This chapter describes the background that led to an interest in anger and aggression in rural adolescent males, outlines the aims and significance of the research, introduces the Rock and Water Program (RWP) and presents an overview of the thesis structure.

Genesis of the study

The researcher’s role as Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) with the Coffs Harbour Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), prior to being recruited by NSW Health into the Child and Adolescent Mental Health State-wide Network (CAMHS-Net), involved many local meetings and liaisons with multidisciplinary staff across government and non-government sectors. During these meetings it became very clear that among the myriad of mental health concerns for both boys and girls being expressed, the issue of problematic anger and aggression in young men was causing increasing frustration. This frustration was voiced by a range of stakeholders (Appendix A).
As a Quality Improvement activity an audit of referrals received by the Coffs Harbour CAMHS for the years 1999 to 2003 was attended by the researcher. The audit aimed to determine the number of referrals that documented either anger or aggression as the major or significant reason for the referral. Data could not be collected from 2004 onwards as a new system, the Mental Health Outcomes and Assessment Tools (MHOAT), was introduced and manual referrals no longer utilised in the service. Over the five year audit period there were 1361 referrals, an average of 270 per year. Of these 31% were for anger and/or aggression and 69% of those referred for anger and/or aggression were males. Table 1.1 illustrates the significance of the problem.

Table 1.1 Results of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service audit 1999-2003.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total referrals to CAMHS</th>
<th>No. Referrals for Anger or Aggression</th>
<th>Total Referrals</th>
<th>No. Males Referred (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>69 (64)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>54 (73)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>75 (69)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>36 (69)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>59 (71)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2003</td>
<td>1361</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>293 (69)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While still based at Coffs Harbour Health Campus the researcher’s role changed in line with the CAMHS-Net strategy, which was a state-wide initiative of NSW Health to link mental health and paediatric expertise across NSW. The Director of CAMHS-Net identified anger and aggression among young men as a priority research topic for CAMHS-Net staff and along with the CAMS-Net Nurse Manager encouraged the researcher to pursue his interest in this area.

While transitioning from CAMHS to CAMHS-Net the researcher had introduced and continued to deliver the Rock and Water Program (RWP) in a number of local high schools specifically for young men with problematic anger. The RWP was well received by teaching staff, parents and participants. During personal communication with the research representative from the Department of Education and Training, concerns were expressed that the RWP was catering to problematic masculine stereotypes by incorporating martial arts principles. This initial resistance was also experienced by the University of Newcastle’s Family Action Centre which was advocating the benefits of the RWP (Hartman, 2006).

Having facilitated the RWP in a number of schools and witnessing its growing popularity throughout Australia and overseas the researcher became confident that the RWP provided, within its delivery framework, an opportunity for engaging with young men in order to hear about their experiences of anger and aggression. There was no literature at that time to suggest that this had been done with rural adolescent males in an Australian context.
The Rock and Water Program

The Rock and Water Program (RWP) was developed in the Netherlands by Freerk Ykema, a physical education teacher, who had been involved in the implementation of an earlier program in the Netherlands called ‘Action and Reaction’. Action and Reaction had been developed as a component of a wider community strategy to combat the sexual harassment and abuse of girls and young women and aimed to teach boys and young men about respecting boundaries, the value of feelings and the integrity of girls (Ykema, Hartman, & Imms, 2006, p. 2).

Ykema became concerned that as teachers implemented ‘Action and Reaction’ they were conveying negative concepts of masculinity as many teachers emphasised the role of boys as perpetrators of violence too emphatically. The view of boys as trouble-makers and the idea that ‘boys will be boys’ seemed to be perpetuated by the program, thus Ykema sought a more holistic program that examined the reasons behind aggressive behaviour. He was particularly interested in engaging with young men to reflect upon the question, what is it to be a ‘real’ man? (Ykema et al., 2006, pp. 3-4).

The RWP uses physical activity, competitions, challenges, role play and discussion to engage boys in critical reflection that challenges dominant views of masculinity. Activities are structured to encourage boys to experience and value the diversity of each group participant while teaching them a range of communication, conflict resolution and social skills (Ykema, 2002).
The RWP takes a psycho-physical approach, as adolescent males are first and foremost physical in this world, and helps adolescent males to examine aggressive behaviour and the reasons behind it (Ykema, 2002). The RWP has been an incredibly popular program throughout Australian schools, with approximately 20,000 teachers trained in Australia and 2,000,000 students engaged in the program worldwide (Hartman, 2011). A session by session description of the RWP, how it was used in this research process, is provided in Appendix C.

While preparing the research proposal the researcher delivered the RWP at a local high school as a Mental Health Service Quality Improvement Activity with 40 participants (two groups of 20 Year 8 and 9 boys). Results from the program were submitted and the program was awarded the 2005 Mental Health Association Mental Health Matters Award for ‘outstanding excellence and commitment to mental health promotion’ in the youth category. In 2005, a University media release regarding the research project generated an amazing level of interest with articles appearing in 14 newspapers nationwide while also generating seven nationwide radio interviews. The level of community interest in this topic and the subsequent request from multiple local high schools to implement the program in their school further highlighted the importance of the research project and the need for evidence and a deeper understanding of how anger and aggression affects our rural adolescent males and whether or not they experienced aspects of the RWP as helpful and relevant.
Aims of the study

The research aims to:

- Identify how rural adolescent male participants (aged 12-17 years of age) experience and express their anger,
- Identify why rural adolescent male participants (aged 12-17 years of age) act aggressively,
- Collaborate with rural adolescent male participants in the evaluation and improvement of the RWP for more appropriate use in the context of the North Coast of NSW.

Overview of the thesis structure

- Chapter 1 has provided an overview of the genesis of the study, the significance of the study and study aims, and the thesis structure along with introducing the RWP.
- Chapter 2 is a review of the literature and examines anger from an historical perspective identifying the links between problematic anger and adolescent mental health. Specific literature deficits relating to rural adolescent males experience of and expression of anger are identified, which have led to the research aims and questions for this thesis.
- Chapter 3 presents the research design, methods utilised, sample strategy, study location and context, an overview of the data analysis and ethics approval.
- Chapter 4 presents the results of the qualitative research project and has been divided into five sections. Section one presents a summary of the three AR cycles and identifies the difficulties encountered in attempting to achieve change in response to
participant’s comments. Section two presents the initial set of focus group questions and their prompts along with a full listing of questions and prompts asked throughout focus group discussion and the three action research cycles (in a summary format). Section three presents an example of the thematic code manual utilised to generate codes, code descriptions and direct quotes from the verbatim transcripts. Section four presents participant responses, in full, to the focus group questions as generated directly from the thematic code manual. Section five presents examples of the thematic maps that identify specific themes emerging from participant responses and subsequent codes to the research questions.

- Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the specific themes generated by participant responses to the research questions and has been divided into three sections. Section one discusses participant engagement in the RWP as well as the elements that they identified as creating a negative stigma (possible disengagement) against ‘anger management’ programs. Section two explores the implications of a folk theory of anger that directly resulted from codes formulated by the way participants identified their experience of anger. Section three presents a historical-cultural discussion regarding how young men in the west have been encouraged to express their anger, which is directly linked to the Australian concept of larrikinism. A number of personological and situational ‘primes (antecedents) for aggressive behaviour’ are presented as identified by this cohort of rural adolescent males.

- Chapter 6 draws the thesis together with conclusions presented along with study limitations and specific recommendations for future research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Problematic anger and aggression are often the outward manifestation and expression of deeper mental health issues in young men and therefore an understanding of anger from their perspective is primary to the exploration of anger management programs identified as a priority for government and non-government agencies.

The views of rural adolescent males related to anger and aggression are almost absent in the literature, hence this chapter will review how anger has been viewed historically along with identifying the links between anger, aggression and mental health issues in adolescents. The discussion will focus specifically on what is known about rural adolescent males’ perceptions of anger and aggression and will propose that an understanding of anger from their perspective is primary to the identification of proactive and innovative anger management strategies. The Rock and Water Program (RWP) has been identified as the means for engaging rural adolescent males in order to attempt to gain their perspective.

Anger and aggression: An historical view

Historians note that the Illiad of Homer (8th – 7th century BCE) is the oldest extant work of western literature and commences with the phrase, ‘Wrath of Achilles’. This means that the very first word of the western canon is ‘anger’ (Potegal & Novaco, 2010, p. 13). The study of anger is in no way a recent pursuit with the oldest descriptions of anger present in
Egyptian hieroglyphics in which two types of anger are differentiated. One type of anger is portrayed as the monkey, which is loud and demonstrates all sorts of overt behavioural displays and yet is harmless. The other type of anger is portrayed as the bull, which is calm and contained and yet threatening and extremely dangerous (Potegal & Novaco, 2010, p. 18). Ghazinour and Richter (2009) along with Daniel et al. (2009) similarly point out that anger can be communicated outwardly, either verbally or physically, or it can be communicated inwardly, being suppressed and withheld.

The construct of anger is considered to be multidimensional with distinct affective, behavioural and cognitive dimensions (Cox & Harrison, 2008, p. 371). The affective dimension of anger refers to the emotional experience and is what is generally referred to as anger. The behavioural dimension of anger, most frequently referred to as aggression, represents a set of behaviours that are aimed at causing harm to another or achieving retaliation for a perceived wrong. The cognitive dimension refers to a set of cognitive appraisals, which guide the valence of perceived emotion. The cognitive dimension of anger is often referred to as hostility in the literature (Cox & Harrison, 2008, p. 371). Research into aggression, such as fear induced aggression, or hostility and rage as distinct constructs have only provided further ambiguity. Thus the terms anger, aggression and hostility may merely serve as convenient, heuristic labels to differentiate between the affective, behavioural and cognitive components of a single construct (Cox & Harrison, 2008, pp. 373-376).

Spielberger, in his earlier writings, provided an important distinction between what he termed ‘state’ and ‘trait’ anger. State anger was described as ‘an emotional state marked
by subjective feelings that vary in intensity from mild annoyance or irritation to intense fury and rage” or, an expression of anger in the moment (1988, p. 1). In contrast, trait anger was defined as “chronic individual differences in frequency, intensity and duration of state anger episodes”, or the individual disposition and propensity to anger (Spielberger, 1988, p. 1).

Spielberger (1988) was one of the first researchers to explore the links between state and trait anger and was able to demonstrate that individuals with high trait anger were at greater risk of reactive aggression when confronted with a perceived hostile situation. This exploration into factors contributing to high levels of trait anger has been a major contributor to the understanding of human aggression and the role that perception fulfils within the process.

Anger as an emotion has wide-reaching implications and seems to be inextricably linked to the very core values of an individual and their sense of identity. Schieman suggests anger is ‘provoked by social interactions that threaten identity, fairness, personal competence and intimate relationships’ (1999, p. 274). Anger has been recognised throughout history as an emotional response to perceived threat, the obstruction of a goal and discontent (Aslan & Togan-Sevinler, 2009; Lazarus, 1991; Spielberger & Reheiser, 2010). As such anger fulfils a self-protective function that serves to maintain personal boundaries (Butcher & Spielberger, 1983).
Potegal and Novaco point out that from the earliest of recorded human history, ‘various philosophies of human nature, moral conduct and the search for perfection in human behaviour have struggled to determine the essentials of anger’ (2010, p. 9). The stoic philosophers believed that everybody had inclinations or impulses toward or away from certain objects and that if these impulses exceeded reason they became passions that were irrational. This led the stoics to the belief that virtue required moderation of all behaviour and that moderation was only possible when the individual became indifferent to the external elements of life which freed them from the passions (Yuille, 2007). Augustine (354-430AD) disagreed with the stoics and claimed that to disregard the passions was to lose humanity (Yuille, 2007).

Wilkowski and Robinson, (2010) cite Horace (20 BCE) along with Seneca (45 BCE) and Galen (180 CE), who identified anger and rage as a type of madness or lunacy that robbed people of their ability to reason and behave rationally (see also Kemp & Strongman, 1995). Plato taught that reason could demonstrate mastery over the passions and utilised a charioteer as a metaphor for reason who he asserted must master the black horse of passion before it overpowered and enslaved the will (Potegal & Novaco, 2010).

Many of the ancient writers saw anger as facilitating courage whereas others, like Seneca, described the use of anger to enhance courage as being an undisciplined concept that created a pseudo-courage only fit for barbarians (Potegal & Novaco, 2010, p. 19). Seneca referred to the discipline or ‘rationality’ of the Roman army who regularly defeated the ‘fury’ and ‘passion’ of the undisciplined Germanic tribes as an example of how the
Aristotle taught that anger arising from injustice was a powerful motivator to reinstate justice; however, he was against spontaneous and uncontrolled displays of anger (Kemp & Strongman, 1995). Within Buddhist thought, anger is perceived as a moral blemish that is to be mastered along the pathway to enlightenment whereas Hinduism suggests anger results from hindered desire (Potegal & Novaco, 2010, p. 17). Hindu folk theories consider anger and rage as uncivilising and prescribe that the individual should cultivate the ability to control such emotions (Raval, Raval & Becker, 2012) and Muhammad is said to have taught that the power resides not in being able to strike another, but in being able to keep the self under control when anger arises (Bashir, 2007).

The Bible teaches that “he who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is impulsive and quick tempered displays folly” (Proverbs 14: 29). The Bible also asks the question: ‘What causes fights and conflicts among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?’ (James 4: 1). James concludes that people become angry and aggressive because they do not get what they want (4: 2). Two of the medieval thinkers, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1140 CE) and William of St Thierry (1140 CE), compared anger to a dragon and identified two types of anger: beastly or passion driven anger which was considered sinful, and rational anger, which materialised as zeal and discipline (Kemp & Strongman, 1995, p. 398).
Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) proposed an integrated and holistic view of the self, asserting that man was a unified being where no immaterial aspect could exercise authority over the other parts. Edwards promoted rationality as primary to feelings and therefore believed that emotions had to be interpreted and made subservient to the power of reason; however, he also argued that we cannot discard emotion as somehow being opposed to rationality or of no use (Deckard, 2010).

Edwards was adamant that our desires and feelings were indicators of the heart’s inclinations and as such were clear indicators of one’s spiritual condition. Feelings were therefore not to be ignored, repressed or subjected immediately to control, but rather to be listened to as a source of understanding of who one is at that moment (Deckard, 2010). Powlison (1996) similarly describes anger as involving the whole person: body, emotions, mind, motives and behaviour, while Richard Baxter (1615-1691) defined anger as being ‘primarily against the love of our neighbour and as against the soul itself’. He continues, ‘anger is the rising up of the heart in passionate displacency (sic) against an apprehended evil, which would cross or hinder us of some desired good’ (Baxter, 1825, p. 284).

As Cox and Harrison (2008) point out, despite the prevalence of anger the construct continues to be inconsistently defined by many researchers, leading to incongruent findings in the literature and incomplete theoretical models. They continue that confusion surrounding anger results from semantic issues and differing theoretical orientations among researchers (pp. 374-377). “Few, if any, of the anger models from cognitive, psychophysiological or neuropsychological literatures can be shown to have unequivocal support” (Cox & Harrison, 2008, p. 379).
Since our earliest writings we have struggled to determine the essentials of anger. Philosophers have debated the role of anger with some calling for it to be mastered, tamed, managed and controlled while others describe it as serving a self-protective function or as a powerful motivator to reinstate justice. All agree that anger has an impact on a person’s ability to reason, their ability to behave rationally and their mental health, however, disagree as to whether or not this can be advantageous or damaging to the individual and wider society.

**Links between youth mental health and anger**

Young people seem optimistic; the majority rate their health as good, very good or excellent as noted in these reports: the Australian Infant Child Adolescent and Family Mental Health Association (2011); the NSW Department of Health (2010); the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2009), and in the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (2008). Health status is one of the most widely used measures of human progress. According to Eckersley (2008) it is difficult to argue that human society is making progress if health is not improving; however he disagrees with the orthodox view that young people’s health is improving, arguing that mortality rates are no longer an accurate summary measure of overall health and wellbeing. Wellbeing is not just a function of physical health but also incorporates emotional, mental, social, and spiritual health (NSW Department of Health, 2010).

International evidence highlights the growing issue of mental health disorders among children and adolescents, the increasing complexity of presentations and the resulting
issues around lack of expertise and resources to deal with this increase (Bennett & Offord, 2001; Birelson, 2003; Bor, 2004; Eckersley et al., 2006; Hopwood, Lynch, Aplin, & Berejiklian, 2008; Muir et al., 2009; NSW Department of Health, 2006, 2008). The World Health Organisation (WHO) has gone on record with the sobering statement that ‘by the year 2020, childhood neuropsychiatric disorders will rise by over 50% internationally to become one of the five most common causes of morbidity, mortality and disability among children’ (Australian Infant Child Adolescent and Family Mental Health Association, 2011, p. 3).

Australian youth are impacted by non-fatal chronic illness, especially mental disorders. Estimates of the prevalence of youth mental health disorders in Australia differ in part because different authors provide statistics for different age groups, and some of the statistics provided are national while others are state-based. For example, according to Eckersley (2008) up to 20-30% of young people suffer from significant psychological distress at any one time. Within the 12-24 years age bracket mental disorders account for almost 50% of the total burden of disease (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2009, 2011; NSW Department of Health, 2010). Further, the AICAFMHA (2011) estimate that more than 500,000 young Australians between the ages of 4-16 (14-18%) experience mental health problems of clinical significance while NSW Health (2008) report 250,000 children and adolescents from NSW between the ages of 0-17 years are living with a mental disorder. The Youth Affairs Council of South Australia (2006) and the Australian Psychological Society (Littlefield & Stokes, 2011) extrapolate from government estimates claiming up to 75% of young people will have experienced mental illness by the age of 25. Indeed, Mission Australia, in their ninth National survey of over 50,000 Australians
between the ages of 11 and 24 years, found that youth reported mental health problems as a major concern and source of stress (2010, pp. 10-13).

The ramifications for our youth are undeniable. When mental disorders in young people are not diagnosed promptly to allow rapid and effective intervention, there can be considerable long-term social and economic consequences including disruptions to normal development, family relationships, education and ability to obtain successful employment (Commonwealth of Australia, 2004). Professionals who work with young Australians have identified a lack of information and expertise to deal with complex mental health issues as well as a lack of adequate services (Boyd et al., 2006; Scott, 2011; Youth Affairs Council of South Australia, 2006). Australian of the Year in 2010 and mental health expert, Professor Pat McGorry, suggests that up to 750,000 young Australians are denied access to the mental health services that they desperately need to prevent ongoing morbidity (Medew, 2010). Sawyer et al. report: ‘The scarcity of specialist services for young people with mental health problems limits the provision of appropriate support to school based and primary health care services and the provision of specialised treatment for many young people’ (Sawyer et al., 2000, p. 48).

These serious issues of public concern have been acknowledged by the Australian Psychological Society (APS) which claims that “there has never been a greater need than now for a nationwide system of comprehensive psychological support services for Australian children and young people” (Littlefield & Stokes, 2011, p. 4). The Commonwealth of Australia (2004) has similarly identified the mental health needs of Australian children and adolescents as a priority (p. 4). Access Economics (2009) in their
report to ARACY state that ‘a disturbing consequence of high rates of mental illness in Australia’s young is the high rate of suicide with 90% of suicides attributable to mental illness’ (pp. 7-8).

The Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY, 2009) argues that the social and developmental needs of young Australians have not been met, suggesting that Australian society is now faced with a growing population of young people who have extreme difficulty regulating their emotions, who don’t seem to acknowledge the equal value and rights of others and who struggle to find meaning and purpose in their lives (p. 37). A number of factors are associated with youth violence including inadequate social skills, a lack of meaningful relationships and a lack of meaning and purpose (Carlozzi et al, 2009).

ARACY undertook a number of collaborative projects to review the wellbeing of Australian youth. While the focus initially was on youth disengagement it became apparent that the issue of preventing youth violence was the more pressing issue negatively impacting the mental wellbeing of Australian youth. The project focus was transformed into developing strategies for the prevention of youth violence and antisocial behaviours among young people 10 – 14 years of age (Williams, Toumbourou, Williamson, Hemphill, & Patton, 2009).

Young people’s health is impacted by a range of intersecting factors with a safe environment identified as a basic right, and exposure to family or societal violence
negatively impacting the emotional and cognitive development of young people, contributing to poor physical and mental health (ARACY, 2008). Eckersley and Reeder state ‘the recent upsurge in public brutality is hard to explain. It is possible that Australian society has reached a tipping point, where the confluence or conjunction of many social changes and developments, short-term and long-term, specific and broad, has produced social conditions conducive to violence’ (2008, p. 11).

In their submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family, Community, Housing and Youth regarding the impact of youth violence on young Australians, ARACY suggests that rises in violence and antisocial behaviour are merely symptoms of a wider breakdown within society that manifests with young people who have been unable to develop the emotional and social skills needed to regulate their emotions (2009, p. 10). One of the developmental tasks of adolescence is learning how to regulate emotions, including the experience and expression of anger, however, the relationship between anger and youth violence is still a poorly understood phenomenon (Carlozzi et al., 2009, p. 446).

Cox and Harrison (2008) point out that anger is not a clinically defined syndrome, however, is commonly treated in clinical settings and is present in many of the disorders described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (p. 371). Authors such as Deffenbacher et al. (1996) suggest that one reason for the lack of research into anger is that too often anger, hostility and aggression are treated as overlapping constructs and therefore used as interchangeable terms. They further suggest that the emotion of anger has not been separated from the behaviours and other ways in which it may be
expressed (p. 131). Richardson and Halliwell similarly assert that ‘anger is an emotion and aggression is a type of behaviour’ (2008, p. 5), and yet within the literature the two are often treated as being one and the same thing.

Richardson and Halliwell clearly state ‘problem anger, despite its sometimes frightening visibility, has often been ignored as an area for research and service provision in the mental health field’ (2008, p. 5). Researchers such as Krahe (2013) point out that there needs to be more study of anger as a critical antecedent of aggressive behaviour and that promoting people’s ability to control their anger should reduce aggressive responses. Raval, Raval and Becker similarly assert, “anger has a vital role in understanding the aggressive behaviour of youth” (2012, p. 321).

Young people with problem anger are at increased risk for negative outcomes in terms of their mental health, general health and interpersonal relationships (Carlozzi et al., 2009; Kerr & Sneider, 2008). Anger plays an important role in the experience, onset, and maintenance of depressive symptoms and disorder in adolescents and yet is poorly understood (Jackson et al., 2011, p. 463). Poorly managed anger and aggression among adolescent males is linked to increasing rates of anxiety, depression, suicide, self-harm, crime, poor school engagement and performance, bullying and schoolyard assaults; (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2002; Bireelson, 2003; Bor, 2004; Cautin et al., 2001; Conner, Meldrum, Wieczorek, Duberstein, & Welte, 2004; Grunseit, Weatherburn, & Donnelly, 2005; Gudlaugsdottir, Vilhjalmsson, Kristjansdottir, Jacobson, & Meyrowitsch, 2004; Kermode & Keil, 2003; Lerner & Galambos, 1998; NSW Health, 1999; NSW
Department of Health, 2008a; Richardson & Halliwell, 2008; Rowe, 2002; Silver et al., 2000).

The Centre for Mental Health clearly asserts that ‘there is a robust association between aggression, suicide and attempted suicide in adolescents’ (2000, p. 363). Anger, whether internalised or externalised, has been linked to reduced impulse control and increased suicidal tendencies (Cautin, Overholser, & Goetz, 2001; Daniel, Goldston, Erkanli, Franklin, & Mayfield, 2009; Kashani, Dahlmeier, Bordoïn, Soltys, & Reid, 1995; Kotler, Iancu, Efroni, & Amir, 2001; Silver, Field, Sanders, & Diego, 2000).

The United Kingdom Mental Health Foundation has recognised the negative impact that prolonged experiences of anger can have in relation to individual and societal wellbeing, stating ‘we are way behind the pace in understanding anger and the responses that can be made to problem anger’ (Richardson & Halliwell, 2008, p. 2). With this in mind it is difficult to believe that problem anger has not even rated as a mental health issue and therefore received limited attention within the scientific literature (Kemp & Strongman, 1995). Kemp and Strongman (1995) make further comment that ‘despite the ubiquity of anger in everyday affairs and despite a proliferation of theory and empirical research on emotion in the last 20 years, psychologists do not, in general, have much to say about anger’ (p. 403).

Findings from the U.K Mental Health Foundation research into problem anger are also relevant for consideration in an Australian context. They conclude that:
• We need improved pathways to treatment for patients who have problem anger;
• We need greater training of health professionals to identify, empathise with and treat problem anger;
• We need greater acknowledgement of problem anger as a valid reason for referral to emotional and psychological support;
• We need greater provision of specific programs of treatment, individual and group, to help people deal with their problem anger;
• We need provision of specific training for practitioners wishing to become ‘anger specialists’;
• We need programs more widely available for children whose aggressive behaviour has led them into trouble at school; and finally,
• We need greater provision of information about, and education related to, anger management in schools, in the workplace, in other community settings and in the media (Richardson & Halliwell, 2008, p. 25).

Blake and Hamrin (2007) claim that attempts to study anger and aggression in children and adolescents are complicated by the lack of clear definition of the anger construct (p. 210). Fives, Kong, Fuller and DiGiuseppe (2011) state ‘although much is known about the negative outcomes of anger and aggression, we know little about the variables that elicit anger and aggression in adolescents’ (2011, p. 200).
Anger: An emotion to be managed

According to the Australian Institute of Criminology, ‘the management of anger is a crucial issue in the prevention of violent crime’ (2002, p. 1). Australian studies of violence on school grounds have documented an increasing number of incidents over the last decade, especially among adolescent males (Bor, 2004; Grunseit et al., 2005). In an Australian study into preventing youth violence Williams et al. (2009) defined violence as aggressive behaviour where the young person had ‘attacked someone in the previous 12 months with the intention of seriously hurting them, or they had beaten someone so badly that they probably needed to see a doctor or a nurse’ (p. 23).

The labelling of anger as being ‘bad’ as opposed to being ‘sad’ or ‘mad’ means that problem anger is constantly linked to aggressive behaviour (Richardson & Halliwell, 2008). When problem anger is thought of in terms of its most destructive and overt display in the form of physical aggression we see research into problem anger being dominated by the criminal justice literature with a focus on aggression and concepts of management and containment dominating (p. 5). Another implication of this ‘bad’ label for people experiencing problem anger is that they do not meet the criteria for mental health intervention, as services for problematic anger are limited to the point of being unavailable.

The identification of youth at risk of, or involved in, violence must be a national priority and the effectiveness of anger management programs must be evaluated to determine if they increase school connectedness, promote positive interpersonal interactions and reduce
anger related behaviours (Thomas & Smith, 2004, p. 146). Factors contributing to community violence are so complex that prevention should focus directly on youth via school-based interventions that target classroom teaching strategies and peer mediation (Cooper, Lutenbacher, & Faccia, 2000; Saunders, Gooley, & Nicholson, 2000; Burns et al. 2008). The United Nations General Assembly has recommended that the prevention of school violence requires programs that encourage non-aggressive approaches to conflict resolution, anti-bullying policies and the promotion of respect for the diversity of masculinities within the school community (Pinheiro, 2006, p. 38).

Over a decade ago researchers identified a lack of evidence regarding which anger management programs demonstrated benefits and of those claiming positive results what exactly these benefits were (Snyder, Kymissis, & Kessler, 1999). When trying to determine which anger management programs have been researched appropriately many studies have serious limitations or have taken place under well-controlled research conditions which means that ‘ecological validity’, or the extent to which these findings can be transferred to other contexts, has yet to be established (Egan, 2007, pp. 14-16). Many anger management programs that do report successful outcomes are difficult to replicate due to unclear methodologies and/or concentrate on self-report measures as opposed to actually evaluating the program (Burns, Bird, Leach, & Higgins, 2003).

Edmonson and Conger (1996) reviewed 18 studies of anger management programs. The results were inconclusive because there were marked differences in the length and content of the programs and the studies were characterised by a range of methodological flaws including small sample size. Meta-analyses conducted by Saini (2009), Smith et al.
(2006), and Glancy and Saini (2005) similarly conclude that despite the recent proliferation of anger management programs there is no clear evidence to guide mental health professionals in the assessment and treatment of problem anger. Few short-term programs have reported long-term reduction in anger levels and aggressive behaviour in adolescents (American Group Psychotherapy Association, 2002; Currie, 2004; Edmonson & Conger, 1996; McArdle, 2004). One 10-year meta-analysis of anger management groups concluded that only 15 studies out of 153 indicated any reduction in aggression with children and adolescents (Burt, Lewis, & Patel, 2010). Smith, Larson and Nuckles assert that ‘it is far from clear how effective these approaches to anger management are for school-aged children’ (2006, p. 365).

The preceding research cited covers the period from 1996 to 2010 and demonstrates clearly that few anger management interventions can claim to be evidence based. The programs demonstrating positive results involving family, peers, community and school curricula are in practice rarely available, extremely costly to implement and not suitable for the busy clinician over brief time intervals (Burt et al., 2013; Burt et al., 2010; Lask, Taylor, & Nunn, 2003; Park-Higgerson, Perumean-Chaney, Bartolucci, Grimley, & Singh, 2008; Scott, Knapp, Henderson, & Maughan, 2001).

Blake and Hamrin (2007) identify cognitive behavioural techniques as the most widely studied and empirically validated treatments for anger and aggression in youth, however, point out that there is a wide variation in the content and delivery of interventions that fall under the umbrella of cognitive behavioural techniques ranging from affective education and behavioural modification to cognitive skills training or a combination thereof. They
highlight how few studies research the school-aged population (pp. 218-219). “Traditional anger management groups by themselves do not sufficiently prevent aggressive behaviour” (Burt et al., 2013, p. 124). Burt et al. clarify that traditional anger management focused on aggressors ignores the environment in which the aggressive behaviour occurred (2013, p. 124).

Blake and Hamrin refer to prevalence reports that identify anger-related problems such as oppositional behaviour, verbal and physical aggression and violence as being some of the more common reasons that children are referred to mental health services (2007, p. 209). Often the public perception is that mental health services have the capacity and expertise to implement effective interventions for problematic anger and therefore counsellors and mental health clinicians are increasingly being referred youth with significant anger problems. However, in reality these services lack both the resources and expertise to coordinate multi-agency approaches (Bennett & Offord, 2001; Blake & Hamrin, 2007; Bor, 2004; Lench, 2004; Richardson & Halliwell, 2008). ‘If these intervention programs can be implemented that target young people with anger and aggression problems prior to them starting families, the domestic violence and child abuse rates in the country might be brought down’ (Lench, 2004, p. 528).

The RWP is an example of a program that aims to address school violence. Its popularity grew quickly throughout Australian schools, with approximately 20,000 teachers trained in Australia and 2,000,000 students engaged in the program worldwide (Hartman, 2011). Imms, while discussing the Commonwealth Government Department of Education, Science and Training-funded (DEST) Boys’ Education Lighthouse Schools (BELS)
Project, identified that almost 30% of the 54 clusters of schools in the BELS program used the RWP to some degree. He points out that there is a growing amount of anecdotal evidence supporting the RWP and claims that it undoubtedly has a positive impact; however, he concluded that most clusters ‘failed to provide evidence of impact at the end, beyond the anecdotal’ (Imms, 2006, p. 16).

In a Commonwealth report on evidence-based teaching practices to improve the motivation and engagement of boys, the RWP was utilised by two of the case study schools because it was an intervention ‘working towards social outcomes, aiming to develop social skills and attitudes’ (Munns et al., 2006a, p. 55). In the expanded report on the case study two schools, implemented the program. First, a primary school from northern NSW, with significant economic disadvantage and escalating aggression among male students, implemented the RWP (Munns et al., 2006b, pp. 186-187). Elsewhere, a school in the Northern Territory from an urban centre that is geographically remote and has 66% of students with an Indigenous background did likewise (Munns et al., 2006b, pp. 210-223). Neither case study school presented research to support any of the positive outcomes claimed.

The World Health Organisation considers it a priority for health services and Non-Government Organisations to develop programs for and with adolescent males, especially relating to the prevention of aggression and violence (Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development, 2000a, 2000b), however, as Hartman states ‘many programs are introduced and run in schools, until one day, someone asks the question: Does this program work? Or how do we know this works?’ (2006, p. 9).
While there are numerous small-scale evaluations to support the immediate positive effects on students of the RWP, Hartman identifies the need for larger evaluations (2006, p. 12). Raymond (2005) has reported positive results from the implementation of the RWP in an Australian residential care facility for youth; however, the study was limited to ten participants. Evaluation studies included on the Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle website for the RWP by Langhorn (n.d.) and Raymond and Simpson (2007) similarly demonstrate promising results; however, both have small participant numbers (12 and 10 respectively). The publication ‘Bringing it together’ includes 22 case studies of the RWP in practice in a variety of settings. Results from these case studies are again positive, however, fail to present research findings to support their claims. In the words of Hartman:

Who will put their money where their mouth is? Who will fund or conduct an evaluation study that can draw out the necessary pre-conditions for successful implementation and rigorously investigate the potential of this program (the RWP) to make a difference in the lives of our students? I hope together we can find the answer to this question’ (Hartman, 2006, p. 13).

The available evaluations for the RWP are presented in a summary format in Table 2.1.
Table 2.1: Rock and Water Program evaluations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Location</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Age /year of participants</th>
<th>Reported results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Vale Rock &amp; Water Program.</td>
<td>Brenton, T., Cenuich, A., &amp; Raymond, I. (2009).</td>
<td>90 boys &amp; girls (breakdown not specified)</td>
<td>Years 3 - 7</td>
<td>Teachers views were evaluated regarding their own and their student’s involvement in the RWP via Likert scale responses to a questionnaire: Overall the responses provided by teachers/counsellors were very positive. All the responses were at the positive end of the Likert scales, or at worst, were ‘unsure’ responses. The comments provided via the open-ended questions were also extremely complimentary. This evaluation suggests that the RWP, when delivered in the manner and style indicated in this report, has the potential to have a significant positive impact on children and young people from new arrival backgrounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murraylands Rock and Water Program.</td>
<td>Raymond, I. (2008).</td>
<td>20 boys &amp; 21 girls</td>
<td>11-16 years of age.</td>
<td>At the conclusion of the girls’ program, all participants completed an anonymous questionnaire that examined aspects of the program. The questionnaire was not completed by the male cohort due to low literacy rates. Participants and staff that attended the RWP reported overwhelmingly positive feedback. The RWP showed the potential to engage young people in a manner and style that was conducive to the achievement of a range of positive outcomes including, improved staff client relationships, increased engagement with service providers as well as enhanced social emotional skill development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Families and Communities, South Australia</td>
<td>Raymond, I., &amp; Simpson, C. (2007).</td>
<td>10 boys</td>
<td>11-15 years of age.</td>
<td>Overall, participants rated the RWP as a fun, positive and worthwhile experience via an anonymous questionnaire completed at the end of the RWP. 100% of participants supported the item: The last RWP has been one of the best experiences of my life. Youth worker reports of participants post program identified improved personal growth, skill development and improved relationships with peers and adults. The quantitative results remained inconclusive, and the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Authors were unable to indicate to what degree program outcomes led to long-term behavioural changes, or, were generalisable to other settings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Outcome/Methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richmond River High School</td>
<td>Tolley, A. (2006).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bullying behaviour declined dramatically at the school following implementation of the RWP (some basic school statistics provided to support this).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coolum High School</td>
<td>Manuel, P. (2006).</td>
<td></td>
<td>The RWP was included in a 3 day wilderness trek experience. The Social Outcomes Survey was utilized as an evaluation tool. 47.3% of test group showed improvement in behaviour compared to 20% of the control group post intervention as per school behaviour data. Improvements were noted to interest in learning, relating to others, optimism for future and overall social outcomes indicator for the test group with no noted changes to control group in these categories via the Social Outcomes Survey.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Patrick’s Catholic Primary School, Sydney</td>
<td>Hirsch, S. (2005).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improvements to pre and post ‘Attitudes Survey’ in categories: Confidence standing up to bullies, how happy you are with yourself, confidence in preventing or resolving fights and how often do you feel confident and good about yourself at school. Positive written comments from the boys were included.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koonawarra Public School, Woolongong</td>
<td>McCluskey, L. (2005).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Questionnaire used not identified: 91.8% enjoyed the program 2% enjoyed it sometimes 0% did not enjoy at all 64% of children had used the skills learned during RWP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglicare. Sydney</td>
<td>Webster, C. (2005).</td>
<td></td>
<td>Only participated in last 3 sessions of RWP. All participants identified gains from program (no indication of what gains were). A self-assessment rating scale developed by the facilitator was used as the evaluation tool. 75% of participants used skills at home or school that they...</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
learned during RWP. Boys enjoyed physical activities but not discussions and girls enjoyed discussions but not physical activities. Participants identified improved use of non-physical conflict resolution skills and demonstrated increased concentration and focus in class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Gender/Year</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Evaluation Tool</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gladstone High School, South Australia</td>
<td>Zajac, E.</td>
<td>90 boys</td>
<td>Years 8-11 Mid-north region</td>
<td>A self-assessment questionnaire developed by the facilitator was used as the evaluation tool. 82% of participants enjoyed taking part in the RWP. 70% felt more confident after participating. 71% described improved self-control. 57% stated that they would like to participate in more lessons.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Specified</td>
<td>Langhorn, K.</td>
<td>12 boys</td>
<td>Year 7</td>
<td>This study found that many students’ psycho-social skills were positively influenced after Participating in the RWP. On the Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA) 75% of the students scored less social problems after the RWP and over half of the participants self-reported less social problems post intervention. Over half of participants reported increased confidence, self-respect and self-control post intervention.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Youth and Family Services, South Australia</td>
<td>Raymond, I.</td>
<td>10 boys</td>
<td>From 9-17 years of age</td>
<td>A self-assessment questionnaire developed by the facilitator was used as the evaluation tool. 70% strongly agreed that they enjoyed the program. 50% strongly agreed that the RWP had taught them a lot about themselves. 30% strongly agreed that the RWP had helped them deal with peers better. 100% strongly agreed that they had enjoyed the program with other young men. 60% strongly agreed that they were more confident after participating in the RWP. A high rate of program completion and attendance was referred to as another positive program outcome.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft Rock and Water Report (2003-2004)</td>
<td>Hartman, D.</td>
<td>154 boys &amp; girls (77 who completed the program)</td>
<td>Year 5 and 6 students Year 7-10</td>
<td>Analysis of the evaluation data suggests that the RWP has contributed to the achievement of intended outcomes (increased self control, self confidence, improved social skills, greater awareness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study A</td>
<td>Draft Rock and Water Report (2003-2004)</td>
<td>Hartman, D. (2004).</td>
<td>Boys (number not specified)</td>
<td>Year 8</td>
<td>A group of Year 8 boys, some of which were amongst the most difficult and disengaged boys in the school, underwent a semester of work that combined the RWP and the RAP (Resilient Adolescent Program) with some Global Classroom lessons. Evaluations were completed by the boys following the program with the following observations of the boys made: “Our boys have become more focused and aware of their responsibilities and learning potentials. They are more settled and able to concentrate more fully on their classroom tasks leading to a considerable decline in Semester 2 midterm assessments of showing concern” (Hartman, 2004).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Study B</td>
<td>Stromlo High School in the ACT</td>
<td>Addison, M. (2004).</td>
<td>92 boys &amp; girls (breakdown not specified)</td>
<td>Year 7</td>
<td>Questionnaire asked participants how useful they found the RWP? Participants rated their answer on a sliding scale from one (1) to seven (7) where one was not useful and seven very useful. Average response from boys was 5.52 and the girls 5.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samaritans Foundation. Lower Hunter, NSW.</td>
<td>Lee, L. (n.d).</td>
<td>6 boys</td>
<td>Years 6 and 7</td>
<td>Tools used included: The Child Behaviour Checklist – Teacher Form (CBCL-TRF) and Life in School Checklist – Bullying Inventory. Quantitative findings did not support that the RWP reduced aggressive behaviour in participants. Qualitative results identified that 75% of students reported that the RWP helped them to control their temper</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
and 50% of participants stated that it helped them to get to get on better with others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Author &amp; Year</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Program Duration</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cetracare School Student and Family Program. Wollongong.</td>
<td>Gray, L. (n.d.)</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>Years 3-6</td>
<td>Incidents of conflict and bullying dropped in the playground and classroom. Children more skilled in sorting out their own problems. Targeted students began contributing positively at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parade College. Melbourne.</td>
<td>Jennings, B. (2003)</td>
<td>19 boys</td>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>Questionnaire with rating scale where 5 = most useful and 0 = Not at all useful. How would you rate the RWP? 3.8 / 5 The ideas of Rock and Water? 3.3 /5 A number of positive participant comments were included for example: “Overall the Rock and Water program for me was a great experience”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maitland High School</td>
<td>Cowley, M., &amp; Addison, M. (2003)</td>
<td>73 boys &amp; girls (41 boys and 32 girls)</td>
<td>Year 7</td>
<td>On a sliding scale of one (1) to seven (7) where one is not useful and seven is very useful the total group rated 5.9 in regards to meeting the aims and objectives of the RWP (Boys average rating was 5.5 and the girls average rating was 6.3). A number of positive responses from participants were included to questions such as: What did you like about the course?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurri High School</td>
<td>Not specified (2002)</td>
<td>20 girls</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>On a sliding scale of one (1) to seven (7) where one is not useful, and seven is very useful, we assessed that the group ranked 6 in regard to meeting the aims and objectives of the Rock &amp; Water Programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caboolture High School</td>
<td>Baker, J. (2000)</td>
<td>11 boys</td>
<td>Year 10</td>
<td>Some students improved their average academic results. Most students improved their classroom attitude. The most amazing result occurred in the improvement of attendance figures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each evaluation claims positive results such as: reduced suspensions and bullying behaviour, increased participant confidence and self-control, increased participant confidence standing up to bullies, improved personal growth, skill development and improved relationships with peers and adults, to name but a few. This being said there is a great variation in how the RWP was implemented, for example Manuel (2006) utilised the RWP as a component of a three day wilderness camp, Webster (2005) only utilised the last three sessions of the RWP with young African new arrivals to Australia, Hartman (2003-2004) reported on an unspecified number of year 8 boys where the RWP was utilised along with the Resilient Adolescent Program (RAP) and global classroom lessons, Jennings (2003) utilised the RWP as a component of a father and son camp that included other activities and Raymond and Simpson (2007) delivered the RWP as a component of a residential day program over a reduced time-frame. No RWP session plans were provided for any of the evaluations and so determining how closely each facilitator followed the RWP manual was not possible.

No evaluations detail the sampling procedures and many of the evaluations utilised a self-formulated Likert scale questionnaires based on the RWP objectives. There were limited details provided regarding how these questionnaires were administered with no discussion regarding the possible impact of participants wanting to please the facilitator with their post-program comments. Six evaluations reported on sample sizes less than 20 participants with another four evaluations not specifying the sample size. Programs were delivered to single sex groups and combined sex groups (five evaluations with the breakdown of the sexes not specified) and to a range of ages from children in kindergarten through to young people in year 11 (Table 2.1).
Out of the twenty-one evaluations six involved the RWP being delivered to boys in years 7, 8, 9 and 10. Of these studies Manuel (2006) reported on 100 boys (50 doing the RWP and 50 engaged in another activity as a control group), however, the RWP boys participated in a wilderness experience where aspects of the RWP were incorporated. Jennings (2003) reported on 19 boys from year 10, however, the boys were participating in a father and son camp where various activities were utilised along with the RWP. Langhorn (2005) reported on 12 boys in year 7 who demonstrated a 75% reduction in social problems as per the Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA) post RWP while participant self-reports identified improved confidence, self-respect and self-control. Zajac (2005) used a facilitator developed self-assessment questionnaire to report on 90 boys from years 8, 9, 10 and 11. Zajac identified that participants reported improved confidence and self-control while enjoying the experience, however, despite these positive outcomes claimed only 57% of participants identified that they would like to participate in more RWP and so it would have been informative to hear from the 43% that did not (2005). Baker (2000) reported on 11 boys from year 10 and identified improved academic results, classroom attitude and attendance post RWP, however, no data validating these statements was presented.

The many positive participant comments provided in the evaluations are extremely encouraging, however, the percentage of comments provided was not identified and so it could not be determined if all participant comments had been provided or only a selection of the comments (the positive ones). The sheer popularity of the RWP and the growing anecdotal evidence however cannot be ignored. It is worth noting that at the Australian national RWP conference (2012) Freerk Ykema informed attendees that a large-scale research project had been commenced by the Dutch government.
The relationship between anger and youth violence is still a poorly understood phenomenon and while behaviours and cognitions have been studied more extensively than emotions, the research on anger has lagged behind (Carlozzi et al., 2009, p. 446). Emotions are conceptualised as an interactional process embedded in a particular cultural context that shapes meaning and experience. There is a need to develop culturally informed and sensitive interventions for anger management in youth (Raval et al., 2012, pp. 320-321).

Despite the limited evidence for the effectiveness of anger management programs with young men a number of studies clearly present effective strategies for working with, and teaching, adolescent males. Due to much research staying within its disciplinary boundaries the educational research relating to adolescent males has rarely been referred to by the mental health or criminal justice literature and visa versa. While examining how educational researchers have approached working with young men in the school context there are great insights that can be transferred into group programs for boys in other contexts.

A variety of literature proposes that young men respond to highly structured programs where there are clear step-by-step instructions and each session has simple, clear objectives (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003; Hemphill & Smith, 2010; Rowe, 2002; West, 2002). They respond to challenges and frequent changes of activity (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003; Rowe, 2002; West, 2002), action-oriented activities, physical interaction, learning by doing, hands on experiences and sport (Commonwealth of
According to Lingard et al. (2002) in a number of Australian schools sport is often linked to boys’ sense of gender and identity and teachers, especially male teachers, often utilise sporting culture to engage male students. The advantages of such practices are that boys throughout their case study schools displayed a preference for sport over other activities and seemed to socialise more in certain contexts, such as sport (Lingard et al., 2002, pp. 37-38). However, possible disadvantages are that:

- Boys who are not interested in sports may be neglected, and
- These practices can reinforce rather than challenge dominant practices of masculinity (Lingard et al., 2002, pp. 76-77).

Despite these limitations boys should be encouraged to represent their inner experience through hands-on activities that can create spaces for dialogue (Currie, 2004; Emunah, 1990; Smith, 2004). Dialogue should utilise minimal words (with more strategic discussion of topics that connect with boys’ real world experiences), minimal writing tasks and an exploration of issues related to masculinity, particularly self-reflection on stereotypes and their impact (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003; Lingard et al., 2002; Rowe, 2002; West, 2002). Boys do respond to praise; however, the praise should be matter of fact, in the moment and realistic or else boys can be embarrassed in front of peers or misinterpret the praise as not genuine (Lingard et al., 2002; Rowe, 2002; West, 2002).
The fact that the concept of anger has remained elusive for so long seems to have contributed to difficulty within the research literature for demonstrating programs that lead to long term reduction in anger levels and aggressive behaviour. Traditional boys programs that have focused on aggressors has tended to ignore the environment in which the problem anger and aggressive behaviour has occurred and therefore an understanding of anger may be primary to further explorations of management and containment strategies.

**Anger: An emotion to be understood**

To date anger has been discussed from the historical perspective of rationality or reason versus the passions or the beastly nature. An emphasis has been placed upon the destructive nature of anger and whether or not this can be managed or controlled for positive purposes, such as to right an injustice, via the use of reason. Roffman refers to this long cultural tradition in the western world of separating cognition and emotion suggesting, ‘rationality was enthroned as godlike and passion was regarded as animal-like, and people were enjoined to control their animal natures by reason’ (2004, p. 264).

Emotions have been understood in terms of being primitive whereas cognition is the more advanced aspect of self. ‘If anger is one of the primitive, irrational beasts within, then it would naturally follow that individuals would want to tame or at least contain it’ (Roffman, 2004, p. 165). He explains that when anger is framed as the ‘beast within’ an approach to anger becomes one of need for control and mastery. If unmanaged the beast can wreak havoc, if tamed it can serve its master and become an asset (pp. 165-166).
Novaco, a prolific author on the subject of anger, describes anger as a normal emotion that serves many adaptive functions. He points out that this aspect of normality associated with anger has meant that there has been an absence of any theoretical base from which to view it, suggesting that even strong anger is not in and of itself dysfunctional but rather can mobilise people to action and can promote their self-assertive qualities (1994, p. 21). Further, Aslan and Togan-Sevincler (2009) come to the almost intuitive conclusion that the management of anger has significant implications for healthy social relationships. According to Wilkowski and Robinson, it was Freud who earlier identified chronic anger as negatively impacting one’s interpersonal relationships and subsequent social standing (2010, p. 10).

Social stresses have been demonstrated to contribute to the inclination towards anger and aggression (Berkowitz & Harmon-Jones, 2004). For example when economic hardships were created in the south of the United States due to sudden drops in the market value of cotton there was a subsequent significant increase in the number of black people lynched in that part of the country (Berkowitz & Harmon-Jones, 2004). These researchers found that this displacement of anger and aggression due to the economic troubles was only possible due to widespread cultural attitudes and values in the south that defined black people as dangerous, which thereby reinforced the brutality (Berkowitz & Harmon-Jones, 2004, p. 118).

Recently Koveceses, while referring to a late 1980s study by Lutz of a Micronesian tribe called the Ifaluk, describes the Ifaluk concept of anger as emphasising the social, moral and ideological aspects as opposed to the more anti-social, individualistic and physical
aspects that are more of a western focus. ‘For the Ifaluk anger is a much more social business’ (2010, p. 172). Eatough and Smith also describe the experience of anger as needing to be community-focused as opposed to self-focused (2006, p. 484).

To explore the role of anger in relation to social communication and relationships the theorists Potegal and Novaco trace the projection of anger onto animistic ghosts, spirits and demons or the gods of the pantheon (2010). The gods were believed to be angry and totally responsible for the misfortunes experienced in the natural world. The gods (and by extension chiefs and parents, et cetera) were seen as authority figures. Authority figures expressed anger at perceived disloyalty or disobedience and leaders in society were considered the only members justified to express anger at others. Anger therefore was acceptable for the gods, or their human representatives, however unacceptable for ordinary people (Potegal & Novaco, 2010, pp. 9-12). They also point to the “frequent expression of anger by members of the empowered elite and the seemingly natural suppression of anger and resignation toward those of higher status” as systematically functioning to maintain class-based dominance and control (Potegal & Novaco, 2010, p. 21). They provide an example where the Airo-Pai, an Amazonian group, discourages their children from expressing anger overtly via stories that teach how angry shouting attracts spirit monsters who feed on human souls. This tribal group experiences overt displays of anger as a sign of aggression against the whole community and believes that the angry person has lost all morality and therefore is no longer human and is treating the community as prey (pp. 10-13).
Anger in these contexts seems to reinforce a social hierarchy where the expression of anger is promoted against social subordinates, master to slave, aristocrat to house servant, chief to villager, worker to apprentice and parent to child. Angry people are able to approach and confront subordinates and yet retreat and avoid superiors which would suggest that anger is managed through obedience to authority as opposed to attempting self-control over the beast within (Potegal & Novaco, 2010, p. 20). In contrast certain warrior cultures wanted to cultivate this beastly aspect of anger and therefore deliberately facilitated anger in the form of trance-like states that were often enhanced by ingesting mushrooms or other hallucinogenics that would create indifference to wounds, making their warriors fearless (Potegal & Novaco, 2010, p. 14). The Viking Norseman known as ‘Berserkers’ provide a classic example of warriors known for their ‘rabid-like’ fury, which created a strong deterrent against retribution from victims and other groups (Kemp & Strongman, 1995).

Kovecses provides a similar example of the Illongot, a former head hunting tribe from northern Luzon in the Philippines, who conceptualised anger as a state of high agitation, and a potent source of energy that assisted them to accomplish their head hunting raids, which were positively associated with youthful prowess (2010, p. 171). This view of anger as integral to manhood was subsequently reinforced in these particular cultures, demonstrating how ‘violent behaviour is more common in societies where violence is endorsed as an accepted method to resolve conflicts and where young people are taught norms and values supporting the use of violent behaviour’ (Hemphill & Smith, 2010, p. 14). Believing that the use of aggression is acceptable predicts aggressive behaviour in adolescents (Calvete & Orue, 2012, p. 106).
In many of these cultures anger was reinforced as the beast within that could be unleashed with destructive consequences for their enemies while promoting their own cause (Potegal & Novaco, 2010, pp. 14-15). As Powlison (1995) asserts, if we are to understand anger we first have to understand how different people think about anger. Eatough and Smith similarly claim that emotional experiences are embedded in a person’s narrative and in order to understand an emotional experience we need to hear from the perspective of the person who is having that emotion. They propose that emotions only become intelligible when considered from the personal perspective (2006, pp. 483-485). Sharkin states plainly ‘perhaps even the meaning of anger is different for people of different backgrounds’ (1996, p. 168).

Roffman then asks the question, is anger a thing to be managed? He states that ‘anger is multiply defined and multi-referential’ (Roffman, 2004, p. 162). Without getting into a postmodern debate about concepts of meaning, Roffman raises the legitimate point that clinicians should not assume they know how another person experiences and defines anger, even when similar cultural backgrounds allow for certain assumptions.

Finally, Roffman suggests that anger needs to be seen as an ‘in relation to phenomenon’ – describing anger in terms of being a complex social interaction rather than something to be managed. Within this framework it is not the anger that is managed but rather the ‘complexity of the moment’ (Roffman, 2004, p. 167). Earlier, Sharkin had similarly asserted that research into anger has neglected the socio-cultural context and advocates for research into the influence of cultural heritage and world view in order to understand
anger as a function of culture, stating, ‘we need to examine anger through the specific cultural lens through which people view the world’ (Sharkin, 1996, p. 168).

A need to understand anger from the adolescent male perspective

Kermode and Keil make the point that ‘80% of the children with learning problems are boys and 90% of the children with behavioural problems at school are also boys’ (2003, p. 23). Rowe (2002) similarly describes how an inability to cope with operational literacy, which refers to verbal reasoning and written communication skills, often manifests in boys having difficulty sustaining attention and ‘acting out’ in the school environment. Impulsive adolescents have extreme difficulty regulating behaviours resulting from their anger; they also have difficulty reflecting on consequences and therefore don’t seem to learn from their experiences (Colder & Stice, 1998, pp. 268-269). However, they are at an age “when major changes in brain development provide a potent opportunity for effective early intervention” (Williams et al., 2009, p. IV). Adolescence is a time of life when immense opportunities for growth, development and positive change occur (Currie, 2004; Rutter, 1987).

Adolescents’ capacity for cognitive self-regulation and memory storage are primed and so engagement in a learning process centred on these activities becomes essential (Currie, 2004, p. 279). Furthermore, they are striving for self-identity, individuating from their families and experiencing change to cognitive processes that increase their ability to problem solve, self-reflect and consider more abstract concepts (Lerner & Galambos, 1998).
As they enter early adolescence boys experience the growth of secondary sexual characteristics and are typically egocentric, present-oriented, self-preoccupied and focus on fantasy and imaginary play (Marcell & Monasterio, 2003). Concrete or black and white type thinking dominates, which limits their ability to reflect upon the possible future consequences of actions. It is during this stage of development that adolescent males begin to think more abstractly and can perceive longer range implications of their actions, however, they may not yet incorporate this into their decision-making process and under stress can revert to being introspective and concrete in their thinking style (Marcell & Monasterio, 2003).

Impulsive adolescents have extreme difficulty regulating their behaviour when angry and rarely reflect on the consequences of their actions (Colder & Stice, 1998). Graham (2001) asserts that youth with problematic anger need to be taught body awareness, which in turn helps them to recognise their physical arousal cues or warning signs. He further identifies these skills as imperative if further preventative strategies are to be explored and taken on board by youth struggling with problematic anger. One of the developmental tasks of adolescence is learning how to manage/regulate emotions, including the experience and expression of anger (Carlozzi et al., 2009, p. 446).

Adolescent males strongly identify with, and attempt to emulate, behaviours associated with traditional masculine stereotypes, and increasingly seek validation from same-sex peers for these behaviours (Steinberg, 1993). There can be perceived threats to self-esteem during this time due to the radical changes in body development and body image that boys experience, which can lead to seeming displays of arrogance and attempts to assert
superiority over male peers (Hendel, 2006). Very little is actually known about these issues from the perspective of adolescent males with few qualitative studies involving young men 15 years of age or under (Singleton, 2007; Smith, Guthrie, & Oakley, 2005).

Emunah (1990) points out adolescents are often self-obsessed and have difficulty articulating their inner world and feelings. Adolescent males are seeking a sense of identity, searching for who they are in the world, trying to ascertain where they fit in and therefore any attack to self-esteem at this stage of development can facilitate a tendency for males to be vulnerable to peer pressure as a way of fitting in and gaining respect and acceptance (Hendel, 2006).

Many boys and young men fall victim to peer pressure in that they feel it is weak to express emotions other than anger; peer pressure can lead to drug and alcohol use and physical aggression, as anger and rage are perceived to be acceptable emotions that are more masculine (Hendel, 2006; Watts & Borders, 2005).

Prevention is about trying to stop something problematic from happening or at the very least attempting to reduce the subsequent damage by intervening early enough to facilitate positive change (NSW Department of Health, 2001, p. 16). Eckersley, who writes from a population health perspective, asks the following question, ‘are troubled youth an island of misery in an ocean of happiness, or the tip of an iceberg of suffering?’ (2011, p. 2). Are the young men who exhibit problem anger and aggression an ‘at risk’ cohort of wider society requiring intervention or is there a broader societal issue that is being drawn to our
attention via our adolescent males’ aggressive behaviour? When looking at the rates of aggression among Indigenous Australian youth the impact of intergenerational trauma and the transmission of anger and aggression scripts across generations highlight the role of anger as a self-protective function where aggression becomes a culturally endorsed means of protecting personal boundaries (Day et al., 2006).

Are anger and aggression specific problems among our adolescent males or do they simply manifest a culturally endorsed method of self-assertion to protect personal boundaries at a developmental stage when these maladaptive coping skills are magnified? A report from Access Economics (2009) proposes that when studying the health or wellbeing of any group within society it is imperative to examine both ‘proximal’ and ‘distal’ risk factors. Proximal risk factors are identified as being ‘close to the individual or close in time to the onset of the disease or condition, typically providing the strongest correlations’, whereas, distal risk factors are ‘typically distant from the individual, for example social or cultural factors or factors occurring earlier in time before the disease or condition (2009, p. 3).

A whole population approach is needed to explore the cultural intangibles that have been neglected within the literature rather than an illness focus based on the marginalised and at-risk (Eckersley et al., 2006, pp. 7-12). Understanding who we are as individuals and exactly how we fit into the society around us is a fundamental developmental task. Children and adolescents view themselves in terms of their family and peer group affiliations and yet quite often it is the broader socio-cultural environment that exerts a powerful influence on identity construction. Individuals construct their identities via the use of narratives, learned scripts or stories, which are utilised to negotiate chaos, hardship
and crisis periods in their lives. These stories are a component of the social conversation, bathed in shared social experiences but only accessible via trusted relationships (Eckersley et al., 2006, pp. 26-27).

Eckersley et al. claim that in order to understand how these stories are transmitted across generations and incorporated into group identities we need to understand how information is filtered via definitions of ‘self’ and ‘other’ concluding that culture provides the building blocks for young people to construct their personal narratives and therefore it is important to examine how these central ideas of culture are carried between generations through the stories that they tell (2006, pp. 29-30).

A need for the perspective of Australian rural adolescent males

Adolescent males are very difficult to engage in any form of counselling, group work or mental health service provision (Booth et al. 2002; Jorm & Butterworth, 2006; NSW Centre for Advancement of Adolescent Health, 2002, 2005; Smith, 2004; Stavropoulos, 2008). Rural youth, particularly adolescent males, are extremely reluctant to admit problems with their mental health (Booth et al., 2002; NSW Centre for Advancement of Adolescent Health, 2002, 2005; J. Smith, 2004) due to social stigma, fears about confidentiality and a culture of self-reliance and stoic attitudes in rural males that equate mental health issues with insanity (Boyd, Aisbett, Francis, Kelly, & Newnham, 2006, pp. 3-4). To many rural adolescent males an admission of experiencing problems is associated with being weak or a failure.
Denner (2009) identifies a code of ‘suffering in silence’ among Australian rural males, describing a reluctance to talk about health issues, particularly mental health issues, which directly relates to the social stigma attached to both seeking help and mental health problems. For rural adolescent males who have limited access to educational, employment and recreational opportunities, this social stigma can contribute to further experiences of alienation and increased incidents of high risk behaviours such as binge drinking, aggressive behaviour and suicide (Quine et al., 2003).

Adolescent males desire a voice in order to be acknowledged in the classroom and society, however it has been engaging with adolescent males to hear their voice that remains problematic (Singleton, 2007; Smith, Guthrie, & Oakley, 2005). Martin (2003) and Munns (1998) assert that adolescent male students in Australia respond to a relationship where teachers convey respect, humour and a genuine interest in them as people. Darling-Hammond (1997) states ‘Relationships matter for learning’ (p. 134). Mills and Keddie similarly state that, in their experience, it was in the classrooms where there were high levels of support that students, both boys and girls, were most engaged. They suggest that in attempting to create a supportive environment it is important for students to be given a voice in the classroom relating to the direction that activities take within various units of work (2005a, pp. 5-6).

Many disengaged boys feel angry at the system and the formal structures of school and often feel like they have no voice, that they are punished unfairly with no one in the school caring about them (Hargreaves, 2003; Mills & Keddie, 2005a; Munns et al., 2006a). They crave interaction and it is during social interaction that they attempt to establish trusting
relationships. Australia adolescent males historically fight against a cult of etiquette where they are expected to restrain emotion and sit quietly and passively.

Authors such as Munns et al. (2006a) and Davies (1993) suggest we need to hear from our young men in order to understand why certain aggressive masculine concepts are incorporated into their personal discourses while others are discarded. It is difficult to understand the role of anger and aggression in our adolescent males unless we can begin to understand the stories that they tell others about the kind of person that they would like to become (Eckersley et al., 2006, p. 28). In other words, ‘the specific social context of the individual is crucial to understanding how different groups of men attempt to negotiate, reconcile or oppose the masculine ideal, in light of the actual resources at their disposal’ (White, 2007, p. 41).

More research is needed to understand the factors that influence the experience and expression of anger in early adolescence given the lack of knowledge in this area and its relevance to aggression (Carlozzi et al., 2009, p. 446). As Trusty asserts, any research project must be connected to the larger knowledge base and therefore researchers need to become intensely knowledgeable about the literature in the specific research area, as this will ‘inform the researcher of important knowledge gaps’ (2011, p. 266).

The literature review offered here has clearly highlighted that few studies deal with adolescent anger and aggression, nor have these studies attempted to gain the perspective of adolescent males (Blake & Hamrin, 2007; Carlozzi et al., 2009; Jackson et al., 2011;
Kerr & Sneider, 2008; Raval, Raval & Becker, 2012). These concerns remain current with researchers such as Singleton (2007), Kulig, Hall and Kalischuk (2006), Boyd et al. (2006), Powers and Tiffany (2006) and Smith, Guthrie and Oakley (2005) similarly asserting that the perspective of rural adolescent males has not been sought and that few qualitative studies exist for this age group.

Researchers such as Muir, et al. (2009), Cashmore and Townsend (2006) and Lamb, Dwyer and Wyn (2000) similarly point out that rural Australian adolescents face major educational disadvantage when compared to their urban counterparts. Collins, Kenway and McLeod (2000) and the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training (2002) link these poor education opportunities for rural adolescents with poor adaptability to broader social and economic changes. Suicide rates for adolescent males living in rural NSW have consistently been higher than for those living in urban areas (Centre for Mental Health, 2000).

A study by Raval et al., (2012) highlighted the importance of obtaining the perspective of adolescent males in relation to their beliefs about the appropriateness of certain emotions, where and how these emotions should be communicated and the consequences of controlling and communicating these emotions. They identify the need for research into adolescent male perspectives of anger and highlight their lack of voice regarding their views regarding anger management strategies. Raval et al., continue by asserting that cultures vary in their beliefs about the appropriateness of particular emotions, whether or how emotions should be communicated and the consequences of controlling and communicating emotions. Despite this recognition of the role of culture, few studies have
explored anger in varying cultural contexts. The literature is particularly scarce concerning the study of emotion-related beliefs in youth (2012, pp. 220-221).

Youth research has recognised problematic anger as a potentially debilitating mental health issue with strong links to depression, anxiety, aggression, suicide and self-harm. Problematic anger is often the outward manifestation and expression of deeper mental health issues in young men and therefore an understanding of anger from their perspective may be a key in accessing their deeper needs (Richardson & Halliwell, 2008). There is a great need to seek the perspective of rural Australian youth as they have no voice in the research literature (Boyd et al., 2006, pp. 3-7).

**Conclusion**

Problem anger is linked to mental health problems and increasing high-risk behaviours, aggression and suicide in adolescent males and therefore learning to manage problem anger has been identified as a means of promoting the mental health of youth. Within the literature anger and aggression are often treated as overlapping constructs and there is limited qualitative research into the experience of anger as an emotion.

An historical examination of anger revealed that anger was usually portrayed as a beastly passion, a type of madness and a source of courage or pseudo-courage that could be utilised to promote and protect one’s own cause, particularly where this was endorsed by the person’s culture. The role that anger played within a society was directly linked to the broader socio-cultural views governing whether or not anger and its most destructive
display, aggression, was acceptable or not. Therefore, the meaning of anger was different for different people and needed to be understood from a personal perspective as a function of an individual’s culture.

While more research into anger management programs is required there is a greater need to first understand exactly how anger is perceived and experienced and how it specifically leads to aggressive behaviour. Rural adolescent males in Australia have been identified as an at-risk group that wants to be heard. To date they have not been given a voice within the research literature, a neglected step that must be addressed prior to evaluating whether or not certain interventions lead to reduced levels of problem anger and aggression within this group.

Aims

As a result of the literature review the following research aims were decided upon:

1. Identify how rural adolescent male participants (aged 12-17 years of age) experience and express their anger,
2. Identify why rural adolescent male participants (aged 12-17 years of age) act aggressively,
3. Collaborate with rural adolescent male participants in the evaluation and improvement of the RWP for more appropriate use in the context of the North Coast of NSW.
Research Questions

The following research questions were generated from the research aims:

1. What do participants think about the RWP?

2. How would participants change the RWP to improve it?

3. How do adolescent male participants recognise anger in themselves and others?

4. Under what circumstances would adolescent male participants become aggressive?

5. Where do adolescent male participants learn skills to deal with aggressive incidents?
Chapter 3: Research Design

Introduction

This chapter presents a research methodology that is sympathetic to the literature review of the previous chapter. The methodological paradigm has been decided upon after exploring both quantitative and qualitative frameworks. Both strengths and weaknesses of the specific methods chosen are explored, identified and described. The chapter also details the study purposeful sampling, recruitment, data collection and analysis along with ethical considerations.

The quantitative – qualitative debate

Quantitative and qualitative research methods are founded on very different philosophical perspectives, positivistic and naturalistic, and therefore work from a different set of philosophical assumptions (Castellan, 2010; Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002; Newman & Benz, 1998). Quantitative researchers tend to assume that there is a common reality that people can agree upon whereas qualitative researchers assume that multiple realities exist and different individual interpretations are equally valid (Ashworth, 2003; Fossey et al., 2002; Newman & Benz, 1998).

From a quantitative or positivist position researchers assume a common, objective reality across individuals and believe that through scientific investigation this truth can be progressively exposed until objective reality emerges. The quantitative researcher is an
objective, detached third party looking in at society from the outside and research participants are blind to the experimental hypotheses whereas the qualitative researcher is interactive in the process while including and fully informing research participants (Ashworth, 2003; Castellan, 2010).

Quantitative research frames physical and social reality as being independent of those that observe it and therefore focuses on discovering aspects of objective reality with the researcher being independent of the research subject. This means that the researcher, as an outside observer, remains detached, uninvolved and distant in order to examine any relationships between the observable features of the subject being studied (Castellan, 2010). Quantitative, or positivist, approaches rely on deductive logic which is “combined with observation and experiment in the empirical world, to refute propositions and confirm probabilistic causal laws, which are used to make generalizations about the nature of a phenomena” (Fossey et al., 2002, p. 718). This approach is reductionist in that phenomena are studied as component parts in order to describe, explain and make predictions regarding how, when and where these parts function. Quantitative studies also provide quantification where observations are transformed into numerical data (Fossey et al., 2002, p. 718).

The quantitative approach is most appropriate when the researcher begins with a theory or hypothesis, and wants to test this hypothesis in order to confirm or disconfirm its claims. This involves empirical or statistical studies with control of variables, randomization, along with valid and reliable measures in order to generalize results from the sample to the wider population (Newman & Benz, 1998, pp. 3-10). The goal is to collect facts relating to
human behaviour that will add to current knowledge and hopefully verify the researcher’s hypothesis allowing for predictions to be made regarding aspects of human behaviour (Castellan, 2010, p. 5).

Qualitative research, in contrast, claims that social reality is perceived differently by each individual and is therefore in a dynamic state that is being continuously constructed in a variety of localized situations (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1999). Qualitative researchers are interested in these individual, subjective truths and the localized perspectives whereas the quantitative paradigm seeks an objective or single truth. The qualitative, naturalistic approach is used when observing and interpreting reality with the aim of developing a theory that will explain what has been observed (Castellan, 2010, p. 5; Fossey et al., 2002, p. 718; Newman & Benz, 1998).

There are different types of qualitative research such as phenomenology, grounded theory and ethnography (Beck, 2009). Qualitative studies attempt to fully understand the essence of phenomena by providing elaborate descriptions of the ‘meaning’ of the phenomena for the people or culture under examination, as well as, the way they construct that meaning (Castellan, 2010, p. 5; Newman & Benz, 1998, pp. 3-9). While exploring the phenomena the researcher becomes involved and close to participants as they attempt to make sense of the circumstances they are both experiencing and creating (Castellan, 2010, p. 6). As Ashworth (2003) claims, quantitative research asks what are the facts and what are the answers, where qualitative research asks what are the assumptions and what are the questions?
The debate between these two methodologies relates directly to their underlying assumptions regarding the nature of reality, how this reality can be known and which method, subjective or objective, is the more accurate way to understand and interpret reality (Castellan, 2010). Newman and Benz refer to four dimensions, adapted from Firestone, to differentiate qualitative from quantitative research. The dimensions include: assumptions, purpose, approach and research role (1998, pp. 2-3). They refer to specific questions utilized by Firestone (1987) including:

- Is your assumption that objective reality is sought through facts or is reality socially constructed?
- Do you desire to establish causes or understanding from the research?
- What approach are you using, experimental/correlational or a form of ethnography? and finally,
- Is the best approach for the researcher to be detached from or immersed in the setting?

Fossey et al. (2002) assert that ‘restricting oneself to any single paradigm or way of knowing can result in a limitation to the range of knowledge that can be applied to a given problem situation’ (2002, p. 717). They in addition claim that research needs to draw on different perspectives, methodologies and techniques to generate breadth of knowledge and depth of understanding.

**A qualitative paradigm**

This research process had been birthed by a growing level of concern within NSW mental health services that problematic anger and aggression among adolescent males needed
evidence based interventions. As a component of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health State-wide Network (CAMHS-Net) initiative both the State Director and State-wide Nurse Manager had supported this research project with the broad initial focus of ‘working with angry young men’. As a result of the literature review a research gap was identified where the perspective of Australian rural adolescent males regarding their experience and expression of anger was needed.

Recently, Trusty suggests that when commencing the research process the researcher has to clearly define the area to be researched. He claims two main parameters require defining (2011, p. 261):

1. What will be researched, and

2. Who will be the target population?

The purpose of the research and target population for the project had been established after a comprehensive review of the literature and so a return to the questions by Firestone (see Newman & Benz, 1998, p. 3) was carried out to confirm which research paradigm was going to respond most effectively to the research deficit identified.

- Is your assumption that objective reality is sought through facts or is reality socially constructed? The research was calling for the perspective of adolescent males in relation to their experiences of anger and aggression.
- Do you desire to establish causes or understanding from the research? The research aimed to obtain an understanding from participant perspectives as opposed to establishing causal factors for anger and aggression.
• What approach are you using, experimental/correlational or a form of ethnography? The paradigm needed to allow for participant interviews in order to establish the meaning that they placed on the role of anger and aggression in their lives.

• And finally, is the best approach for the researcher to be detached from or immersed in the setting? In order to hear directly from the participants it was important that the researcher was immersed in the setting so that the participant voices had a context beyond written words on a page.

The research aims and subsequent research questions would be best served by a qualitative paradigm. It was the perspective of adolescent males that was the missing gap in research relating to ‘angry young men’. The choice to do a qualitative study was reinforced by the NSW Commission for Children and Young People (Fattore & Malins, 2005), which has produced a number of resources that strongly advocate the need for collaborative, participatory and inclusive research with children and adolescents. They point out that research regarding children and adolescents has tended to be based on adult observation and interpretations, whereas young people need to be more actively involved in order to give voice to their unique perspective, experiences, skills and abilities. Pinheiro also states in his report to the United Nations General Assembly, that ‘children have the right to express their views and to have these views taken into account in the implementation of policies and programs’ (2006, p. 32).

Within a qualitative paradigm a method was required that would allow the researcher to engage in discussion with rural adolescent males. A focus group format was explored to determine whether or not this would be appropriate.
Focus Groups

Focus groups are organised discussions with a selected group of individuals where their views and subjective experiences are sought in relation to predetermined questions (Gibbs, 1997). ‘The focus group is one of the methodologies used in qualitative research, when what you are principally interested in is the range of opinion’ (Hawe, Degeling, & Hall, 1990, pp. 174-175). Focus groups aim to enrich and extend what is known about a concept, and they facilitate participant discussion regarding the meaning of a construct from the perspective of the specific population under study (Vogt, King, & King, 2004, p. 233).

Focus groups are ideal for exploring an issue where there is limited previous research and where a range of ideas is being sought from a particular group of people. Focus groups allow the researcher to explore the why behind behaviours and attitudes and are a relatively economical method for collecting verbal data. Focus groups facilitate in-depth discussion of specific concepts while allowing for clarification of, or probing for additional information (Morgan, 1997, pp. 10-14).

According to the Australian Health Informatics Council (2005), focus group discussions facilitate ‘interaction within a group’ while allowing for participant attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions to become accessible. However, as Braun and Clarke (2006) point out, it can be extremely naïve to think that within a qualitative framework the researcher can simply ‘give voice’ to the participants as the researcher is inevitably responsible for selecting evidence from within the narratives, as well as editing and
interpreting the data set. With this acknowledged, Lewis (2000) suggests that focus groups are particularly useful when the researcher is interested in the culture and everyday use of language of a particular group. Similarly, Kress and Shoffner (2007) suggest that focus groups promote cultural sensitivity, and focus group interactions include everyday language, storytelling, jokes, arguing, teasing, challenging and disagreements. This explicit use of group interaction ‘produces data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group’ (Morgan, 1988, p. 12).

Focus group formats also encourage interaction between participants, which is facilitated by the researcher in their attempt to engage the group in open dialogue where world views, language used and beliefs related to the research questions are explored (Race, Hotch, & Parker, 1994). Focus groups provide an opportunity for content validation where the population under study is acknowledged as experts within specific aspects of their lived experience. They are therefore called upon, as experts, to comment regarding the identification and specification of key constructs (Vogt et al., 2004, pp. 232-233). However, researchers rarely follow this advice, which often results in the unconscious misinterpretation of the experiences of other cultural groups (Vogt et al., 2004). When culture is misinterpreted through one’s own cultural lenses we see ethnocentric assumptions that are inaccurate and incomplete. Perceptions need to be discovered and not imposed.

Focus groups vary, however, can be broadly defined as a technique where a group of individuals discuss a particular topic of interest during specified periods of time under the direction of a facilitator (Kress & Shoffner, 2007, p. 190). The facilitator aims to promote
interaction while probing for details and keeping the discussion focused on the specific topic. Participants are encouraged to discuss the topic in depth and ‘although much of what goes on during a focus group may appear to be discussion it is in fact facilitated and purposeful data collection’ (Kress & Shoffner, 2007, p. 191). Typically pre-established, structured questions are developed and utilised with a focus on open-ended questions. The number of questions is dependent upon the age and maturity of participants (Kress & Shoffner, 2007, p. 191).

The strengths and weaknesses of focus groups flow directly from their two defining features, ‘reliance on the researcher’s focus and the group interaction’ (Morgan, 1997, p. 13). The strength of focus groups relates to the fact that the information generated by participants can be concentrated and directly target the researcher’s topic of interest. Morgan (1997) claims that focus groups allow for a wide range of participant insight to be explored and opinion expressed that could be missed or inaccessible to more observational or quantitative studies. Focus groups also allow participants to respond to each other with questions or explanations that can serve as a clarifying and policing mechanism against misleading content (Vogt et al., 2004, p. 234). Focus groups provide access to a large amount of, and diversity of, opinion that could take a long time to generate from individual interviews (Kress & Shoffner, 2007; Morgan, 1997).

The weakness of focus groups relates to the fact that the process is driven by the researcher’s interests as it is the researcher who both creates and directs the group process (Morgan, 1997). As Morgan states, this can lead to a residual uncertainty about participant responses as the researcher could have influenced group interactions via heightened...
visibility in conducting the interviews (1997, pp. 13-14). Other researchers raise similar concerns regarding possible researcher bias via the overuse of leading questions and the process of the researcher assigning meaning to the data. They suggest that data needs to be documented for analysis in a way that allows others to provide validation of the interpretations (Kress & Shoffner, 2007; Vogt et al., 2004).

Other concerns regarding focus groups relate to the fact that they are not good for eliciting sensitive information or facilitating certain personal sharing (Kress & Shoffner, 2007; Vogt et al., 2004). Focus group participants are not representative of the wider population and so results cannot be generalised beyond the research cohort and the opinions expressed can be influenced by others in the group, especially if certain participants dominate discussions or any participant lacks confidence or is inarticulate (Morgan, 1997; Vogt et al., 2004). Ethical considerations regarding focus groups can be problematic due to confidentiality issues, particularly regarding what is shared in the group and who has access to any recordings or transcripts from the sessions (Morgan, 1997, p. 14).

According to Kress and Shoffner (2007) a successful focus group facilitator needs to be flexible and able to adapt to situations as they arise, and should know how to actively listen, when to use probing or reflective comments, when to paraphrase and how to observe non-verbal behaviour while exploring participant comments. As a Clinical Nurse Consultant a large component of the researcher’s role related to interviewing and counselling young people and their families while also facilitating a range of group programs, thus the researcher felt that he had the skills to use this technique successfully.
Morgan states that ‘the simplest test of whether focus groups are appropriate for a research project is to ask how actively and easily the participants would discuss the topic of interest’ (Morgan, 1997, p. 17). There was a possible barrier to conducting focus groups with rural adolescent males, as the literature review established: that they are reluctant to engage in support and to talk about certain issues. However, the literature had also established that they wanted to be heard and to have agency within processes that impacted their lives.

**Dominant voices and groupthink within a focus group format**

Hoglund and Oberg point out that there is a risk within some focus groups that one or two participants may dominate the conversations by tending to always speak first and vehemently so, they can end up pushing the conversation in one particular direction (2011, p. 163). To allow dominant voices to direct the discussions is highly problematic if what you really want to know is what each person in the group is thinking. Dominant voices can be allowed to emerge if the researcher is interested in group dynamics as opposed to the range of opinions present (David & Sutton, 2011, p. 135).

David and Sutton warn against focus groups where participants are familiar with each other or belong to a particular group, although this has the advantage of the group being comfortable making discussion easier, there is the danger that they take each other for granted and so many opinions may not be expressed. There is also the risk that individuals within the group are more likely to conform to stereotypical characteristics associated with the group and may tend towards pleasing the facilitator in their discussions (pp. 135-136).
Barbour similarly points out that gender plays an important role in determining dominant voices, especially in children and young people, and therefore asserts that most researchers advocate holding single-sex groups to guard against the tendency of boys to talk more, more loudly and their tendency to determine the conversation topics (2007, p. 97).

A number of strategies are identified as useful when facilitating focus groups. If the researcher spends extended time with the group and can identify the dominant voices then they can direct questions to others in the group first and can bring the need for diverse opinion to the group’s attention (Hoglund & Oberg, 2011, p. 163). Seale similarly identifies how researchers require skills in facilitating interaction and discussion while enabling space for different group members to make their views known (2012, p. 240). Dealing with dominant or inappropriate voices can be handled with humour while setting the ground rules for focus group discussion (David & Sutton, 2011; Hoglund & Oberg, 2011; Seale, 2012).

Another concept worth noting is that of ‘groupthink’, which has been based on the human social behaviour theory posited by Irving Jarvis (1972). Jarvis (as cited by Remengi, 2007) defines groupthink as “a mode of thinking of people when they are deeply involved in a cohesive group. When the members striving for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternate courses of action” (p. 96). Groupthink is a type of thought exhibited by group members who try to minimise conflict and reach consensus without critically testing, analysing and evaluating ideas. It can cause groups to make hasty, irrational decisions, where individual doubts are set aside, for fear of upsetting the groups balance. Groups can be especially vulnerable when members are from similar
backgrounds or where they are insulated from outside opinions (Bray & Kehle, 2011; Remengi, 2007).

The researcher’s experience in facilitating groups of young people and the awareness of potential problems in the delivery of focus groups provided a high level of confidence that a focus group format would allow for the appropriate gathering of data to inform the research questions. The fact that the researcher spent 11.25 hours with each group meant that dominant voices could be identified, and strategies put in place to facilitate wider group discussion and diverse opinions. The time spent with each group should have minimised the hasty and irrational responses that can result from groupthink as the researcher constantly emphasised the need for honest feedback. However, there remains a chance that participant responses were aimed at pleasing the researcher and providing the responses they thought he wanted to hear.

Given one of the study aims was to explore adolescent male perceptions of the RWP questions had to be responsive over time to participant comments. The research framework needed to provide the flexibility to explore participants’ responses based on where their answers led as opposed to being confined to a prescribed format with no room for adapting to the moment. An Action Research (AR) framework was proposed as allowing for progressive adaptation of the focus group questions.
Action Research

NSW Department of Health (2002) has increasingly emphasised the process of Clinical Practice Improvement, which aims to ensure that clinical care and the services provided are safe, effective, appropriate, consumer focused, accessible and efficient. The Clinical Practice Improvement Model with its cyclic phases of Plan, Do, Study and Act provide a very similar process to the concepts of Action Research (AR), with its cyclic or spiral approach of planning, acting, observing and reflecting (see Figure 1.1) and so provides a framework for clear dialogue and critique within the healthcare setting (Marrow, 1998).

Similarly, the nursing process, which is described as ‘an organised, systematic and deliberate approach to nursing with the aim of improving standards in nursing care’ takes place in partnership with the client and their appropriate family and support network (Rush, Fergy, & Wells, 1996, p. 1).

This process involves:

- Assessment of a client’s needs,
- Diagnosis of client’s needs,
- Planning client care,
- Implementation of that care, and
- Evaluation of any positive or negative impact of care.
The nursing process is also cyclical with the evaluation phase leading to further assessment, diagnosis and implementation of a revised plan of care. Action Research (AR) involves ‘learning by doing’ (O’Brien, 1998, p. 3). It also aims to facilitate both change (via action) and understanding (via research) (Dick, 2000). Further, it ‘goes to the site of the concern or practice and works with people as co-researchers, to generate solutions to the problems with which they are keen to deal’ (Taylor, Edwards, Holroyd, Unwin, & Rowley, 2005, p. 8). Waterman et al. state ‘while implementing change AR generates knowledge’ (1995, p. 779), and later, Waterman, Tillen, Dickson and DeKoning (2001, p.11) describe “a period of inquiry that describes, interprets and explains social situations”.

Minichiello et al. (2004) propose that AR is a particularly relevant methodology when the researcher wants to give a voice to tacit knowledge. It requires the researcher to enter the social situation in order to attempt change while monitoring the results (Karim, 2001). The researcher becomes actively involved in the research experience and values subjectivity by
interacting with research participants in a spirit of collaboration as opposed to simply
doing research on participants (Marrow, 1998). As Taylor et al. state, AR ‘works towards
solutions to problems of a technical, practical or emancipatory nature’ (2005, p. 8). Also,
AR stresses the importance of co-learning between the researcher and participants as a
vital aspect of the research process (O’Brien, 1998).

This cyclic approach to research provides the researcher an opportunity to learn from
experience, while also allowing reflection upon the process and outcomes, both intended
and unexpected (Dick, 2010). It is possible that many nurses think of research as being
removed from the practical day-to-day aspects of clinical practice. However, Karim (2001)
promotes AR as a methodology that can allow research findings to be more easily
incorporated into clinical care.

As a word of caution Karim (2001) does point out that AR has limitations in regards to the
relationship between the researcher and research participants, which can be criticised as
being ‘too close’, and critics go so far as saying that the collaboration in AR actually
masks a subtle exploitation of participants (Badger, 2000). Karim (2001) suggests that the
rigour of its methodology, generalisability to other contexts, and the fact that there are
many systematic restraints involved in the implementation of any resulting change are also
problematic for AR.

Parkin (2009) highlights some limitations of AR as including a lack of definition over its
nature and a difficulty with measuring any claimed change, which can lead to poor theory
development. Dick (2010) states that within the academic community some examiners can’t discriminate between good action research and action research that is merely competent.

Dick (2010) asserts that it is extremely difficult to find a conventional format to write up AR effectively and that it is much harder to justify your overall approach. Koshby (2005) goes further to point out that representations of the AR process have been accused of being confusing as opposed to enlightening, however, proponents of AR claim that flawed or not the process provides the most reliable access to the real world context of practice (Koshy, 2005).

Researchers such as Dick (2010), Marshall et al. (2010) and Wicks and Reason (2009) claim that examiners may disagree with an AR approach, however, should be able to identify the rationale by a clear explanation of the reasons for using AR and the specific data collection and analysis methods used. They similarly point out that in order to engage in cycles of action and reflection the researcher needs to establish relations with and access to the community the research is concerned about.

With these limitations in mind this aspect of ‘reflection in action’ was considered best in order to support adolescent males to have their say. Successful prevention programs are the ones that have taken the time to understand the culture and learning styles of participants (Gosin, Dustman, Drapeau, & Harthun, 2003). Gosin et al. (2003) claim that AR can bridge cultural gaps by engaging with local knowledge and the lived experiences of participants. ‘Engaging youth in research and evaluation not only generates useful
knowledge for communities and individuals but also provides opportunities for the
development and empowerment of youth participants, leading to benefits for young
people, organisations, the broader community, and the research process’ (Powers &
Tiffany, 2006, p. 79).

Although a focus group format was the primary qualitative method used (Appendix B) to
achieve the research aims, an AR framework allowed feedback from participants to be
broadened, clarified and integrated back into the research process, which promoted a
dynamic and responsive focus group format while maintaining the overall research
questions as the foundation.

**Participating schools and research context**

Toormina High School (THS), which has 1064 students, is situated eight kilometres south
of Coffs Harbour. It is a comprehensive co-educational school co-located with a Learning
Support faculty. Dorrigo High School (DHS) has 234 students and is located in the rural
town of Dorrigo on the eastern edge of the New England plateau. The high school draws
from the township itself, surrounding farmlands and small villages such as Dundurrabin,
Hernani and Ebor.

Bellingen High School (BHS) has 662 students, is located in the Bellingen Valley and
draws students from a number of small, scattered and diverse rural communities. A
significant number of students are from self-contained multiple occupancy communities.
Woolgoolga High School (WHS) is a comprehensive, co-educational school with 1085 students. It is located 2 km north of the township of Woolgoolga.

Participating schools were all located in the North Coast region of NSW, and were chosen due to their proximity to the Coffs Harbour Health Campus to reduce travel time when conducting the RWP and focus groups. Each group of participants spent 11.25 hours over 9 weeks (75 minutes/week) with the researcher while participating in the RWP.

**Student sample**

The two basic types of sampling are probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling allows the researcher to generalise results of the study from the sample to the population from which it was drawn, however, since generalisation in a statistical sense is not the goal of qualitative research, probability sampling is not necessary or justifiable in much qualitative research (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). Non-probability sampling is the method of choice for the majority of qualitative research and relates to researchers not being interested in questions like ‘how much’ or ‘how often’ but rather they are wanting to solve qualitative problems such as discovering what occurs and the relationships linking occurrences. The most common form of non-probabilistic sampling is purposeful or purposive (Merriam, 2009, p. 77).

Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the researcher wants to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore a sample must be selected from which the most can be learned. Researchers might decide purposely to select subjects who are judged to be
typical of the population or because they have particular knowledge, or expertise about the issue under study (Beck, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Polit & Beck, 2008). Purposeful sampling involves the researcher’s intentional choice of individuals or groups of people who will help the study (Hall & Rousell, 2013, p. 26). Polit and Beck highlight that many qualitative studies evolve to a purposive (or purposeful) sampling strategy in which the researcher deliberately chooses the type of cases that will best contribute to the study and that can best enhance the researcher’s understanding of the phenomenon. They continue that qualitative researchers often strive to select sample members purposefully based on the intentional needs that emerge from early findings (2013, p. 285).

Polit and Beck further claim that some qualitative researchers call their sample purposive simply because they purposively selected people who experienced the phenomenon of interest. They go onto assert that exposure to the phenomenon is, however, an eligible criterion (2013, p. 285).

**Sample criteria and recruitment**

A purposive sample of 187 rural adolescent males was recruited from four local high schools. These participants were considered to be experts regarding their own experience of anger and what leads them to act aggressively. Sample inclusion criteria follow:

- Male students from Years 7-10 (between 12 years of age and 17 years of age inclusive),
- Attending one of the four high schools involved in the research project,
- Parental consent to attend the RWP,
- Parental consent to participate in digitally recorded focus groups as part of the research process,
- Willingness to reflect on anger and aggression and share their knowledge and experiences.

Male students from the four high schools were invited to participate in the RWP and qualitative research via a note to parents explaining the program and the research project (appendix D). Each school (Principal or Principals delegate) decided upon which school year (Years 7, 8, 9 or 10) would participate and the first students to return their permission notes (Appendix D) were accepted into the program up until the maximum of 20 participants for each cycle. During discussions with the Principals delegate at the different schools it became evident that after the initial research cycle schools also selected a purposive sample based on the students they thought might benefit from participation in the RWP and subsequent focus group discussions. As well as the above mentioned sample criteria the delegates included:

- Male students (from years 7-10, between 12 years of age and 17 years of age inclusive) who experienced problem anger episodes,
- Male students (from years 7-10) involved in aggressive incidents on school grounds,
- Male students (from years 7-10) who had experienced bullying on school grounds.

All students followed the same recruitment process, via an initial written invitation, and the Principal’s delegate from each location confirmed that no pressure had been placed on any students or their parents for them to attend.
Exclusion criteria

- Male students from participating schools who were 11 years of age or younger and 18 years of age or older,
- Participants who decided to stop participating in the research project or RWP due to any reason (as per Appendix D),
- Participants who did not participate in at least one of the two focus group sessions (weeks 5 and 9).
- Participants who did not attend at least five RWP sessions (and were not excluded due to any of the above issues).

Sample size

Qualitative samples must be large enough to assure that most of the perceptions from the particular research cohort are uncovered; however, as qualitative research can be very labour-intensive and time-consuming, due to the analysis of large sample sizes, practicality is a real consideration (Mason, 2010). Sample size in qualitative research relates directly to the concept of saturation, which is the point within data collection where the researcher is no longer hearing or seeing new information. If a sample is too large the data becomes repetitive and eventually above and beyond what is required (Mason, 2010).

Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) state that ‘the idea of saturation is helpful at the conceptual level, however, provides little practical guidance for estimating sample sizes for robust research prior to data collection’ (p. 59). They continue that data saturation in qualitative interviews occurs at a very early stage, particularly among populations that
exhibit a high level of homogeneity, which means that meaningful themes and useful interpretations can result from minimal interviews (p. 78).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) propose that one of the most asked questions in research involving qualitative interviews is: How many interviews or observations are enough? And when do I stop gathering data? (p. 292). They suggest that the answer to these questions relate to when saturation is achieved, however, acknowledge that issues such as time restrictions, researcher energy, university requirements and availability of participants are very real constraints that must be considered while not dictating sample size.

Mason (2010) carried out a content analysis of 532,646 abstracts of PhD studies to find those that used qualitative interviews as the method of data collection. From this they identified 560 studies that demonstrated the number of participants ranged between one and 95. They identified that the most common sample sizes were 20 and 30. A similar study by Carlsten and Glenton (2011), which examined sample sizes in focus group reporting, found that out of 220 papers from 117 journals sample sizes varied between one and 96. Within all qualitative research Guest et al., (2006) assert that the minimum sample size is 15 participants.

Many aspects of the sample size for this qualitative research were determined by outside factors. As a component of working with the local schools three terms were available as many students are not accessible in term four. This influenced the decision to do three AR
cycles. Ykema (2006) suggests that each RWP group contain no more than 20 participants and so the overall sample size was determined by the number of AR cycles that fitted into the school timetable, the numbers needed to conduct the RWP effectively in each location, and the number of students who returned the parental consent forms. PhD studies often use large numbers for their interviews as researchers feel this conveys defensibility of their data, and many studies also utilise larger sample sizes than necessary for saturation ‘just to be on the safe side’ (Mason, 2010).

While the large sample size (187 participants) in this qualitative study created issues, for example, the extra time and energy required to examine the multitude of transcripts, saturation was reached during data collection and the resulting themes and subsequent discussions accurately portray participant perceptions regarding the research questions. The results have not been compromised by the sample size.

**Describing the boys**

Having decided upon a qualitative research paradigm that would focus on obtaining and evaluating the perspectives of participants it was considered important to include some basic demographic and descriptive data of the boys involved. Beck (2008) in her ‘guide to an overall critique of a qualitative research project’ asserts that the group or population of interest needs to be adequately described (p. 546). The aim in collecting basic demographic and descriptive data from participants was to provide this adequate description and a context for their responses. This is not meant to distract from the qualitative paradigm from which the research project was grounded and has only been
Self-Report Questionnaire Development

The quantitative data, included in appendices F - J, consists of both demographic and descriptive data that were based on a questionnaire utilised in the Australian study by Grunseit et al. (2005), which was funded by the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) and the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) (2005). The quantitative component of the BOCSAR study into school violence surveyed 2,616 Year 8 and 9 students generated by a stratified randomly selected cluster sample: ‘The survey instrument was an anonymous, self-completion questionnaire covering student demographic characteristics, family background, student perceptions of their school’s rules, classroom and school climate and, of course, details of their experience of physical violence at school’ (Grunseit et al., 2005, p. vii).

Grunseit et al. conducted an extensive literature review in order to establish conditions within the Australian school environment that fostered or inhibited student violence. They determined a number of individual-level, family-level, community-level and school-level correlates that contributed to the formulation of their research questionnaire (2005, pp. 1-9). The subsequent sampling of schools was conducted using a four-step procedure:

School districts were stratified by geographical region into Urban, Minor Urban and Rural. Secondly, school districts within each region were classified in terms of the number of short suspensions for school violence and a random sample of 15 districts was chosen. Thirdly, schools within each chosen district were stratified into ‘low’,
‘medium’ and ‘high’ violence categories, again on the basis of the number of short suspensions for school violence (Grunseit et al., 2005, p. 10).

The study continued with a random selection subject to the following two criteria:

1. Wherever possible, at least one school from each violence category within a district was included within the sample and

2. The number of schools chosen from each geographical region was approximately proportionate to its share of short suspensions for school violence across the State (Grunseit et al., 2005, p. 10).

Grunseit et al. then pilot-tested the questionnaire prior to the main survey. Participants who completed the questionnaire engaged with the principal researcher in discussions related to their perception of the questionnaire length, relevance and clarity, which led the researchers to make a number of improvements (2005). Following the improvements two schools were taken through the entire study procedure, in a second phase of testing, where 86 surveys were completed and subsequently examined for any missing data or signs of students not understanding the questions or process. Feedback was obtained from the questionnaire administrators in the selected schools and it was decided that both the questionnaire and administration procedure were appropriate (Grunseit et al., 2005, pp. 10-11).
Adaptation of original questionnaire with inclusion of extra questions

Fourteen questions were included that directly related to the BOCSAR questionnaire (questions 1-11, 15, 21 & 24). Along with mother’s age and language spoken at home, which was included in the BOCSAR questions, the father’s age and parents’ country of origin were included. The key dependent variable in the BOCSAR study was ‘the probability of having assaulted another student on school grounds in the preceding 12-month period’ (Grunseit et al., 2005, p. 9). With this in mind two questions were included that asked participants about their involvement in physical fights at school (Baker, 1998; Bor, 2004; Grunseit et al., 2005; Hemphill & Smith, 2010; Prior, Sanson, Smart, & Oberklaid, 2000; Rigby, 1998), and whether or not they had been the victim of bullying at school (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2009; Bottroff & Slee, 2008; Muir et al., 2009; UNICEF, 2007).

The literature review clearly demonstrated that anger and aggression are major social issues linked to increasing rates of anxiety, depression, suicide, self-harm, crime, poor school engagement and performance, bullying and schoolyard assaults. Nine questions were included that asked about:

1. Anger (Richardson & Halliwell, 2008),
2. mood (Bernard, Mangum, & Urbachi, 2010; Eckersley, 2011).
3. mental health diagnosis (Bor, 2004; Grunseit et al., 2005; NSW Department of Health, 2008a; Richardson & Halliwell, 2008),
4. confidence level (Shanahan & Elliot, 2009),
5. ability to make friends (Currie et al., 2004; Eckersley et al., 2006; Muir et al., 2009; Sankey & Lawrence, 2003; UNICEF, 2007),

6. perceived spirituality (Eckersley & Reeder, 2008; Frankl, 1984; Tacey, 2003),


8. connection to teachers (Lingard et al., 2002; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003; Mills & Keddie, 2005a; Munns & Martin, 2005), and

9. school environment (Brookmeyer, Fanti, & Henrich, 2006; Collins et al., 2000; Connell, 2005; Eckersley et al., 2006; Lingard et al., 2002; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003; Mills & Keddie, 2005a; Munns & Martin, 2005; West, 2002).

**Questionnaire distribution**

The questionnaire was completed by each participant at the commencement of the RWP. Time was set aside at the beginning of the first session to go through the questionnaire. Participants found a space in the room, so that they were assured privacy of response, and could ask for assistance if any clarification was required. The questionnaire is included in its entirety (Appendix E), however, a sample question is: ‘Do you ever feel unsafe at your school?’ and the response options included: Never, Sometimes, Often, or Very Often.

Descriptive statistics were collated on the demographic variables and raw data on the remaining variables are presented in appendices H-K.
Overall Data Collection Process

Phase 1

Self-report questionnaires were administered during the first session. Participants completed a number of demographic and descriptive data questions displayed in 4-point ‘Likert scale’ format. At the end of sessions five and nine of the RWP a focus group (n = 2 occasions of focus groups) was held to review the content of the program with participants, and to elicit their views on the research questions from the broader research project. The focus groups were digitally audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis. During week nine, participants were provided feedback from their week five comments for review and verification.

Revised Plan

The RWP was to be revised incorporating any changes identified by participants during focus group discussions from the previous AR cycle. Thematic concerns identified by participants from the previous group were utilised to refine the focus group questions in the subsequent cycle of the action research process. There were four separate groups of participants engaging in a nine week RWP (average of 16 participants per group) and the action research cycle was followed consistently for each separate group.

Phase 2

Repeat of above cycle at the same four schools with different groups of participants.
Phase 3

Repeat of above cycle at the same four schools with different group of participants.

Qualitative data analysis: Thematic analysis of focus group data set

The next phase of the research process was deciding how to analyse the focus group data. Vogt et al. suggest three main questions for the researcher to ask when conducting a focus group analysis (2004, p. 235):

- How will the data set, focus group discussions, be acquired?
- At what level will the results be reported? and
- Will the data be analysed by hand or computer?

Thematic Analysis (TA) is a method that may be used within different theoretical frameworks; it can be a ‘realist or essentialist method of reporting the experiences, meanings and reality of participants, or can be a more constructionist method examining how experiences, meanings and realities are impacted by underlying societal discourses’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 9). Others suggest that TA allows the researcher to become totally immersed in the data set (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The researcher begins by reading and re-reading the data, becoming more and more familiar with the words, phrases and patterns of the data set. As the process continues these patterns start to develop into themes in relation to the research questions that ultimately become the categories for analysis.
Thematic Analysis is a ‘qualitative analytic method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). The role of the researcher in utilising TA relates to becoming immersed in the data set and seeking to recognise words, phrases and patterns as important moments (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006), as something significant to the data set which the researcher then encodes and utilises to ‘capture the qualitative richness of the phenomenon’ (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 1). The encoding process allows data extracts to be identified, organised and utilised for the development of themes where a theme is defined as ‘a pattern in the information that at minimum describes and organises the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon’ (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 161).

Many authors identify TA as a much used method of data analysis, however, argue that it is poorly defined with researchers using a wide range of approaches that differ in terminology and format (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Buetow, 2010; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Howitt & Cramer, 2008; Marks & Yardley, 2004). Marks and Yardley (2004) state ‘although conducting content analysis is well established there is surprisingly few published guides concerning how to carry out TA and it is often used in published studies without clear reporting of the specific techniques that were employed’ (2004, p. 58). Elsewhere, Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight ‘the absence of a paper which adequately outlines the theory, application and evaluation of thematic analysis’ (2006, p. 4).
Here, they have attempted to address this gap by providing a comprehensive discussion of TA while also providing clear guidelines for researchers wanting to increase its rigour and validity (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Other authors consider that this framework from Braun & Clarke (2006) has set the benchmark for how to conduct TA and support the claim that it provides a methodology of analytical rigour in qualitative data analysis (Fielden, Sillence, & Little, 2011; Jenkins, Winefield, & Sarris, 2011; Rapport et al., 2010).

In answering the questions posed by Vogt et al. (2004, p. 235):

- How will the data set, focus group discussions, be acquired?

Via TA where focus group discussions are digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim.

- At what level will the results be reported?

The data set will be analysed via TA following the step by step method established by Braun and Clarke (2006). Reporting of results will include thematic content of focus group discussions as per code manual definitions and include actual quotes from participants to verify descriptions.

- Will the data be analysed by hand or computer?

The data will be analysed by hand so that the researcher is fully immersed in the data set.
Table 3.1 Focus group data analysis step by step description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Description of Process</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Familiarise yourself with your data</td>
<td>Transcribe the data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generating initial codes</td>
<td>Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Searching for themes</td>
<td>Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviewing themes</td>
<td>Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), generating a thematic map of the analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining and naming themes.</td>
<td>Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producing the report</td>
<td>The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(from Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87).

**Familiarise yourself with the data**

Transcripts were provided a simple key as follows:

P: For participant response.

P’s: For multiple participants answering at the same time.

IV: For the interviewer (researcher).

(Inaudible): Where the response was indecipherable.
(Laugh): Descriptive comments like ‘laugh’ or ‘extended pause’ were also utilised to provide the context and mood of the specific dialogue.

For ease of transcription (keeping track of focus group discussions) and for referral purposes regular time marks were also included, for example 25:31, which referred to the response occurring 25 minutes and 31 seconds into the focus group on that particular recording. After the transcriptions were completed they were read in conjunction with the recordings. If there was any doubt regarding a word or phrase that could not be identified with certainty the word/s were removed and the term ‘inaudible’ documented in the transcript.

**Generating initial codes**

In order to generate the initial codes the data from each of the four focus group sessions were cut and pasted together under the specific research question that participants were responding to. Every interviewer prompt that had been utilised to facilitate participant responses was collated and recorded for consideration and possible refining in the next AR cycle. The interviewer questions, prompts and comments were then removed from the data so that only participant responses from the four schools were left under the specific research question.

As Braun and Clarke report, ‘codes identify a feature of the data that appears interesting to the analyst and refer to the most basic element of the raw data’ (2006, p. 88). While reading through the participant responses interesting aspects of the data were underlined
and after re-reading the transcripts and making sure that no relevant responses had been missed or prematurely excluded, a code manual was commenced. The code manual had four simple headings (see Table 3.2 below for example): the code number, the code, a brief description of the code and an example of the code in the form of a direct quote from the participant responses (transcripts).

Table 3.2 Example of Coding Manual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code #</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description of Code</th>
<th>Example (Direct quote)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The code manual was kept simple and wherever possible utilised participants’ own words in the actual code title. The code descriptions were read and re-read to reflect upon their accuracy in conveying the meaning directly from the participant responses. With each subsequent focus group, throughout the remaining AR cycles, this process was followed with a growing code manual relating to each research question.

**Searching for themes**

The next step involved taking the code manual and putting it into a format that would allow the data on each specific research question to be examined further for possible emerging themes. The code descriptions, from the code manual, were strung together in the form of a commentary that subsequently reflected participant responses to each
research question. Direct quotes (examples from the code manual) were inserted strategically to provide validation for each specific code description.

The only items eliminated from the code manual, and therefore from the commentary, were one-off responses that were either an obvious joke from the participant with no relevance to the research question or where the code had been generated from an obscure response that was not consistent in any way with the other responses throughout the three AR cycles and twenty-four focus group sessions.

Finally, the authors note that ‘this phase, which refocuses the analysis at the broader level of themes, rather than codes, involves sorting the different codes into potential themes and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89).
Example 1: What do AR participants think about the RWP?

Reviewing themes

The authors note that the process, ‘begins when you have devised a set of candidate themes and it involves the refinement of those themes’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). This phase involved reflection upon the identified themes and deciding whether or not enough data supported them. This decision allowed for themes to be kept, discarded, divided into more nuanced themes, or collapsed into a broader theme. As Braun & Clarke assert ‘data within themes should cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). Within the focus groups participants were asked under what circumstances they would become
aggressive. A number of themes were identified; however, a broader theme of ‘Stereotyped Masculinity’ began to emerge and subsequent to further research and literature review was linked to the concept of ‘larrikinism’ in the Australian context. It was becoming apparent that along with a rich description of the meaning, experiences and realities of participants, there was an underlying social discourse that had directly impacted participant views.

![Diagram of themes](image)

Figure 3.2 Reviewing themes

**Defining and naming themes**

This phase begins ‘when you have a satisfactory thematic map of your data after defining and further refining the themes that you will present for your analysis’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92). By defining and refining they mean ‘identifying the “essence” of what each theme is about and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92). From this point a literature review was conducted to explore the essence of each theme examining the relationship between the themes and research questions.
Producing the report

This process ‘begins when you have a set of fully worked out themes and involves the final analysis and write up of the report’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93).

Figure 3.3 Working out final themes

A combination of characters belonging to the composite order of things

Mark Twain [pseudonym of Samuel Clemens], in his introduction to Tom Sawyer writes ‘most of the adventures recorded in this book really occurred; one or two were experiences of my own, the rest those of boys who were school mates of mine. Huck Finn was drawn from life; Tom Sawyer also, but not from an individual – he is a combination of the characteristics of three boys whom I knew, and therefore belongs to the composite order of architecture’ (Twain, 1876). He goes on to state that his plan for writing the book was ‘to try to pleasantly remind adults of what they once were themselves and of how they felt
and thought and talked, and what queer enterprises they sometimes engaged in’ (Twain, 1876).

Mark Twain has eloquently highlighted what the researcher hopes to achieve via a qualitative paradigm. The ‘participant responses’ actually occurred in a real life context and convey something of the participants’ personalities. The focus group data has been drawn from the real life experiences of rural adolescent males and therefore presents a ‘composite order of architecture’ of these 187 rural adolescents. It is also the case that in choosing a qualitative approach there had been a deliberate attempt to give our rural adolescent males a voice and in doing so hopefully reminds us, as adults, of the things we once thought, felt and talked about and what, if anything, has changed to impact this growing societal concern regarding problematic anger and aggression.

**Ethical Considerations**

Approval was sought from the Department of Education and Training to conduct research in a number of local high schools, and was endorsed (SERAP approval number 05225). Ethical clearance was also sought and granted by the Department of Education Research Ethics Committee prior to the commencement of the project. The research complies with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Human Research Ethics Handbook (2005) and the NHMRC guide lines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research (2003).
Research participants and their parent/guardian consented to participate in the RWP and the qualitative research. They were offered the right to refuse participation, or to withdraw at any time, without penalty or coercion of any kind. Parents and/or guardians were provided explanations in writing of what the research involved, the aims and the processes of the research, potential benefits and risks along with participant rights associated with the project (Appendix D).

The Plain Language Statement and the Consent Form (Appendix D) was written simply but comprehensively and participants and their parent/guardian were encouraged to ask questions, make comments or voice any concerns about the project before they consented to participate.

Privacy and confidentiality measures were explained in writing, instituted and maintained. Focus group discussions did not include names, circumstances or descriptions that could identify participants, their relatives or friends. Pseudonyms were used and any identifying material omitted or renamed to protect the identity of focus group participants. Reports and published material describe the participants and their comments according to the issues they raised and any improvements that eventuated, rather than identifying specific people, places and situations. All data collected in the course of the research was secured in a locked filing cabinet and kept for 5 years as per NHMRC (2005) guidelines.

With respect to risks associated with emotional catharsis or any child protection issues that may have been expressed by participants during the research process, the research was
bound by mandatory reporting legislation and any such information would have been reported to the Department of Community Services Helpline. The child at risk would have been offered referral options through the school counsellor, for added support if any issues had arisen. No such incidents occurred during the entire research process.

The risk management plan for conducting the RWP referred to the Guidelines for the Safe Conduct of Sport and Physical Activity in Schools (2003), the memorandum, Welfare of Students While Engaged in Activities Conducted Under the Auspices of the School (97/138) and Workcover NSW documents, Risk Management at Work (2001) and HAZPAK making your workplace safer: A practical guide to basic risk management (2005).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has presented a qualitative research design that is sympathetic to the literature review of the previous chapter. Focus groups were identified as the method of data collection and thematic analysis as the means by which the focus group data set has been structured and analyzed. Strengths and weaknesses of these specific methods were explored, identified and described before being confirmed within the overall paradigm. An action research framework of three cycles (phases) was incorporated to enhance the focus group structure in allowing the researcher to be responsive to participant feedback.
Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The following chapter presents the findings from the analysis of the data collected as described in the previous research design chapter. The analysis of the data will be divided into five sections: Section 1 describes the three AR phases (cycles) in relation to participants evaluating the RWP. Section 2 presents the final list of interview questions and prompts utilised throughout the AR cycles. Section 3 presents an example of the coding manual utilised to draw out codes, code descriptions and direct quotes from the verbatim transcripts that lead to thematic development. A comprehensive commentary of participant responses to each research question, generated directly from the code manual, will be presented in Section 4 and Section 5 presents examples of the thematic maps that emerged from the analysis of the data. Specific themes were identified for discussion in relation to the broader research and historical literature based directly on codes generated by participant responses to the focus group questions.

Section 1 – Action research cycles

This section will present the challenges faced when implementing the action research cycles while engaging participants in the evaluation of the RWP for possible improvement (the third research aim). The subsequent action taken to address these issues is also presented. This section also demonstrates how the AR cycles allowed for the focus group questions to be broadened for further clarity while and exploring participant perceptions relating to anger and aggression (the first and second research aims).
Aspects of the AR cycles did not proceed to plan, however, the three AR cycles did provide an opportunity to reflect upon, evaluate and adapt the focus group questions and prompts to facilitate the participants’ responses. Demonstrating transformational change in the group relating to improving the RWP was not possible due to lack of feedback from participants that could lead to change. The majority of participants identified the RWP as ‘good as it is with no need for change’ and what few changes were suggested were not actionable or could be responded to within the flexible delivery mode of the existing RWP session plans.

Phasing of focus groups over three cycles did however allow for the area of inquiry to be broadened with more clarity in data collection enabled. Walsh et al. (2008) points out that because of the inconsistent definitions of AR many authors focus on evaluating their AR against key principles or characteristics. From this perspective the fact that transformational change did not occur for one of the research aims does not mean that the AR cycles were not successful. Walsh et al. (2008) propose that what need to be evaluated are aspects such as:

- Did collaboration between researcher and participants take place?
- Were there solutions generated to the practical problems identified?
- Was the process educational for the researcher and participants?
- Did the action take place in an open ‘critical community’ and
- Do results contribute to possible practice change? (p. 132).

These questions will be utilised in the concluding discussion of the thesis when discussing the possible limitations of the AR method used within the qualitative study. Following is a summary of how each cycle of the AR occurred.
Prior to first Action Research cycle

Reflect and Plan –

Research concern identified and literature review attended. Research questions formulated. The following focus group questions and their prompts were directly formulated from the research questions:

1. What do participants think about the RWP?
   - Has it been what you expected?
   - Do you think any differently about it now you have attended five sessions?

2. How would participants change the RWP to improve it?
   - What exercises / activities would you keep or change and why?
   - Can anyone discuss an example of where or how they used a skill learned in the RWP so far?
   - Do the physical exercises help to reinforce learning the skills taught in the RWP?

3. How do male participants recognise anger in themselves and others?
   - Do you know when you are getting angry? If so how?
   - Physical signs, thoughts, behaviour/actions?
   - What would you notice in someone else getting angry?

4. Under what circumstances would adolescent male participants become aggressive?
   - Do you know what your triggers are?
   - What really annoys you?
• What is worth fighting for?

5. Where do adolescent male participants learn skills to deal with aggressive incidents?

• Do you know how to deal with someone who is aggressive?

• Who is someone you think could deal effectively with an aggressive incident (no names)? Why?

**Action Research: First cycle**

Act –

Initial research questions and their prompts asked during focus group discussions (session 5 of RWP).

Observe –

Focus group discussions digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim with brief contextual comments added to transcript.

Reflect –

Transcripts read and re-read with thematic code manual commenced so as to reflect upon participant responses to research questions. Any extra questions and/or prompts utilised in focus group discussions recorded. In week 9 the second focus group was conducted and transcripts were read to participants for review and validation. Participants stated that they were an accurate reflection of the focus group discussions.
It was hoped that the AR cycles would allow for responsiveness to participant suggestions for changes to the RWP. Participants in the first cycle stated that they would like to have more RWP sessions per week and that each session should be longer (current sessions were 75 minutes in duration). A number of participants wanted a bigger venue and/or to conduct some sessions outdoors. Participants stated that more students should be encouraged to be involved in the RWP and especially thought that girls should be included as they also had trouble with violence. These suggested changes were recorded and acknowledged with participants, however, were not within the scope of the research project to respond to. Many participants stated that they liked the RWP as it was and didn’t want it changed.

Revise Plan –

In listening to the recordings and transcribing the focus group discussions a number of questions were asked that complimented the initial questions and their prompts as the interviewer facilitated the discussion (after the initial questions and their prompts asked). Any extra questions and/or prompts that facilitated discussion were recorded for use in the next focus group. For example extra questions asked during AR phase 1 for research question 1 included:

- If you had to describe the Rock and Water program to someone what would you say?
- What has the Rock and Water program been like? and
- What sort of things have you learned?
Action Research: Second cycle

Act –

The initial focus group questions and their prompts were asked (in session 5) followed by the extra questions and prompts identified during the first AR cycle of focus groups.

Observe –

Focus group discussions digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim with brief contextual comments added to transcript.

Reflect –

Transcripts read and re-read with thematic code manual continued so as to reflect upon participant responses to research questions. Any extra questions and/or prompts utilised that facilitated focus group discussions were recorded. In week 9 the second focus group was conducted and transcripts read to participants for review and validation. Participants stated that they were an accurate reflection of the focus group discussions. Possible codes, for example in relation to the RWP included:

- learning by doing,
- different than we thought
- anger management

These possible codes were presented to group for review and validation. Participants liked that the codes were identified directly from their quotes.

It was hoped that in cycle 2 of the AR participant suggestions for change to the RWP could be responded to. Participants again wanted more sessions of longer duration, a larger
venue and girls included. Many wanted to fund raise so that more students could do the RWP and some said that there was still too much sitting down. Many participants stated that the RWP was good as it was and did not require change. A few participants suggested that schools needed a place where boys could come to fight fairly, where a teacher would be present and where they could put on protective gear to get their anger out without getting hurt. These suggestions were acknowledged and recorded however were beyond what could be responded to or actioned within the scope of the research project. The issue of sitting down less was responded to within the flexible delivery of the RWP and so was not an overall change to the RWP session plans.

Revised Plan –

In listening to the recordings and transcribing the focus group discussions a number of questions were asked that complemented the initial questions and their prompts. Any extra questions and/or prompts utilised in focus group discussions were recorded. For example the third research question asked: How do adolescent male participants recognise anger in themselves and others? Extra questions asked during this AR cycle included:

- What is anger?
- So what role does anger play in violence?
- What are the differences between anger and aggression?

Due to the large participant numbers in each research cycle and the amount of extra questions being generated during focus group discussions it became problematic to record all extra questions for each individual cycle as many questions were being recorded multiple times.
Authors like Walsh et al. (2008) similarly identified difficulty reporting AR and link this to ambiguous definitions of AR and its processes (p. 130). Rather than specifying the questions asked in each AR cycle (beyond the initial research questions and prompts asked) the researcher decided that an overall list of questions asked throughout the entire process would be formulated, a summary format as supported by Riel (2010), which is included in results section two. Since one of the goals of the AR cycles was to broaden and clarify the inquiry all questions asked throughout the focus groups could be critiqued and compared via a summary format. Researchers such as Dold and Chapman (2012) and Moghaddam (2007) acknowledge the difficulty in documenting the AR process due to the uniqueness of each project and unexpected aspects of participant responses that could not be foreseen prior to the research process progressing. They similarly argue for flexibility in the criteria when documenting the AR process.

It was disappointing that the AR cycles were not proceeding to plan, however, this was only related to one of the research aims and was simply how the research process played out in the real world context. Demonstrating transformational change in the group was not possible due to lack of feedback from participants that could be responded to. The majority of participants identified the RWP as ‘good as it is with no need for change’ and what few changes were suggested could be actioned within the current RWP session plans. Despite these difficulties collaboration between researcher and participants was occurring with answers to the research questions, as generated by participants, providing a rich source of information.
The participant responses may have related to participants not wanting to cause conflict within the group, a reluctance to dissent against more dominant voices or possibly not wanting to disappoint the researcher, however, the positive comments expressed and minimal request for improvements to the program does support the available anecdotal evidence referred to in the thesis literature review and will be expanded upon in the thesis conclusion. The phasing of the focus groups over three cycles did allow for the area of inquiry (the full list of research questions) to be broadened with more clarity in data collection enabled.

**Action Research: Third cycle**

Act –
The initial focus group questions and their prompts were asked followed by the extra questions and prompts identified as helpful in facilitating discussions during the first and second cycles of focus groups.

Observe –

Focus group discussions digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim with brief contextual notes added to transcript.

Reflect –

Transcripts read and re-read with thematic code manual continued so as to reflect upon participant responses to research questions. Any extra questions and/or prompts utilised in focus group discussions were considered and recorded, for example research question four asks: Under what circumstances would adolescent male participants become aggressive? Extra questions asked included:
- Could you tell me (interviewer) when it would be OK to be aggressive?
- Where do you come across aggression?
- So where do you guys see violence?

In week 9 the second focus group was conducted and transcripts read to participants for review and validation. Participants stated that they were an accurate reflection of the focus group discussions. Possible codes were also presented to group for review and validation, for example:

- Homophobia,
- Racism,
- Media impact.

It was hoped that in the third cycle of the AR participant suggestions for change to the RWP could be responded to, however, they again repeated the changes suggested by earlier focus groups ie. Wanting more sessions of longer duration. Some of the changes requested like doing more of certain RWP activities (ie. Chinese boxing) were easily incorporated into the flexible delivery of RWP sessions without having to make changes to the actual RWP session plans.

Revised Plan –

A final list of questions was generated from the transcripts, a summary format as supported by Riel (2010), so that every question and prompt asked outside of the original questions was identified (the list is presented in section 2). The lack of change to the RWP was an accurate reflection of the participant responses and data saturation was achieved. Whether or not this project truly incorporated AR and the subsequent limitations will be discussed in the conclusion of the thesis.
Section 2: Final list of focus group questions and prompts

This section presents the total list of questions asked throughout the three AR cycles and demonstrates how AR was used to broaden and clarify the research questions (in order to address the first, second and third research aims). The original research questions and subsequent prompts were asked during each focus group of the three AR cycles, however, the different groups lead to different questions and prompts being included. Riel (2010) states that AR takes place in cycles. Each cycle is a discrete experiment – taking action as a way of studying change. Riel asserts that when reporting AR researchers need to include either a detailed report for each cycle or a report of the cycles in a more summary format (2010). The following questions have been documented within a summary format.

Following is a full list of the extra questions asked (outside of the research questions and prompts) during each AR cycle as taken directly from the transcripts.

Final focus group questions and prompts

The three AR cycles provided an opportunity to reflect upon, evaluate and adapt the focus group questions and prompts to facilitate participants’ responses. The complete list of questions and prompts utilised throughout the twenty-four focus group sessions and three AR cycles is presented below and incorporated:

- Thirty questions related to the RWP,
- Seventeen questions related to anger,
- Thirteen questions related to aggression and
• Thirteen questions related to violence (which was the term participants often used when discussing the issues of anger and aggression).

Questions relating to the RWP

• What do you think about the RWP?
• Has it been what you expected?
• Do you think any differently about it now you have attended five sessions?
• How would you change the RWP to improve it?
• What exercises/activities would you keep or change and why?
• Can anyone discuss an example of where or how they used a skill learned in the RWP so far?
• Do the physical exercises help to reinforce learning the skills taught in the RWP?
• If you had to describe the Rock and Water program to someone what would you say?
• What has the Rock and Water program been like?
• What sort of things have you learned?
• Can you describe what changes you would make to the RWP to make it better?
• How can I make the program better?
• What did you think the Rock and Water Program would be about when you first started?
• So how has it been different than what you initially thought?
• So who else thought it was going to be about anger, anger management?
• What sort of anger management programs have you done in the past?
• I’m just wondering why people feel negatively about an anger management program?
- Is the Rock and Water program any different to what you thought it was going to be like when you first started?
- What else did people think the RWP was going to be about?
- If you had to pick one thing that you learnt from the RWP what would it be?
- How would I know that the RWP has been something that you guys have got something really positive out of, like what changes would happen in your life?
- Do you think that during the RWP you’ve learnt some skills to deal with aggressive incidents?
- Which session has been most helpful so far?
- How can a program like the RWP help you to deal with these types of issues (anger/aggression/violence)?
- Is something like the RWP worth doing with young guys in schools? Why?
- What changes would happen in your life if this program has been really good / successful?
- What else could we include in the RWP if it was this amazing program?
- Why do you think schools like yours are doing programs like the RWP with guys?
- So has the RWP been something that is worthwhile so far?
- What sorts of things have been helpful in what we have done during the RWP?

**Questions related to anger**

- What is anger?
- So what role does anger play in violence?
- What are the differences between anger and aggression?
- How do you recognise anger in yourself and others?
• Do you know when you are getting angry? If so how?
• What Physical signs, thoughts, behaviour or actions do you notice?
• How do you recognise anger in yourself?
• What does this emotion of anger do in your life?
• So can you tell me about some of the problems that you’ve had with anger?
• How do you express your anger?
• What’s a positive way of using your anger?
• What sort of things have you learned so far to manage emotions like anger?
• So how do you cope with your anger?
• What would you notice in someone else who’s getting angry?
• What sort of behaviour do you think could lead someone, in school grounds to get really angry?
• When might anger lead to violence?
• What role does anger have in violence?

**Questions related to aggression**

• Under what circumstances would you become aggressive?
• Do you know what your triggers are?
• What really annoys you?
• What is worth fighting for?
• Where do you learn skills to deal with aggressive incidents?
• Do you know how to deal with someone who is aggressive?
• Who is someone you think could deal effectively with an aggressive incident (no names)? Why?
• Can you tell me when it would be OK to be aggressive?
• Describe how you would deal with someone who was being aggressive towards you.
• Where do you learn skills to deal with people who are aggressive?
• How do you know if someone’s got a rock attitude?
• How do you let someone know if they’re invading your personal space?
• Where would you come across aggression?

Questions related to violence

• What is violence?
• So where do you guys see violence?
• Is violence a problem with young guys?
• Are there any other sorts of violence?
• What sort of violence would you guys come across in day to day life?
• What would you do if you wanted to decrease the level of violence amongst young guys?
• How can we stop violence happening at school?
• What do you think would stop the violence between young guys?
• What is the best way of stopping violence in our society?
• What about sports? Is there much violence when it comes to playing sports?
• Is sexual violence a big issue at school?
• Do you think there is much racism in Australia and what forms does it take?
• What about racial violence, is that a problem?
The three AR cycles allowed for the area of inquiry to be broadened with more clarity in data collection enabled. The cycles successfully assisted in the development and implementation of focus group questions that explored participant insights regarding the specific research questions. The initial research questions were deliberately simple, open ended and broad so that participant responses could guide the direction of focus group discussions. The combination of focus groups run in a cyclical AR format allowed the questions and prompts used in the focus groups to be modified over time with successful questions re-used to gain a fuller response from participants.

The other aspect of the AR aimed to allow for participants to provide suggestions for changing the RWP. It was hoped that as changes were suggested they could be reflected upon by the researcher and the participants in subsequent cycles with agreed upon changes incorporated into the RWP for further review and adaptation by participants. This did not occur for the reasons stated, however, participants described the RWP as a great learning experience with action oriented teaching strategies that they endorsed and promoted. The following section provides an example of how the transcripts of participant responses to these questions were placed into a thematic code manual.

Section 3 – Coding Manual

This section presents examples from the thematic code manual. Focus group discussions were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. The coding manual was utilized to record codes from the dataset (transcripts) by reading and re-reading the data and noting down initial ideas. A code was identified along with a description of the code with
verbatim quotes included as examples of the code identified. Following is an example of the code manual where the ten codes of being lectured, fun learning experience, anger management, negative stigma, learning by doing, can’t think, explosive outbursts, increased heat, alcohol and fighting over boundaries were identified.

Table 4.1 Examples from Coding Manual

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code #</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description of Code</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 1.     | Being Lectured            | Participants initially felt they were going to be talked at for extended periods where they would be passive recipients of information. | “I thought it was going to be all writing and teachers giving us all lectures and stuff”.
<p>|        |                           |                                                                                        | “I thought it was going to be more like a lecture”.                     |
| 2.     | Fun learning experience   | Participants perceived the RWP to be a fun learning experience.                        | “It’s not just learning but you have a good time too”.                  |
|        |                           |                                                                                        | “It’s fun, it’s great to learn and you have fun in it”.                  |
|        |                           |                                                                                        | “a fun and enjoyable learning experience”.                              |
|        |                           |                                                                                        | “I don’t learn cause I’m bored so like here we’re actually having fun so it helps you take it in”. |
| 3.     | Anger Management          | Participants initial perceived the RWP as an anger management program based on peer comments. | “I actually thought it was going to be anger management”.               |
|        |                           |                                                                                        | “Everyone out on the oval and that were like it’s a big anger program”.  |
| 4.     | Negative stigma           | Participants were initially sceptical of the invitation to participate in the RWP due to a negative stigma associated with boys programs. | “Some teacher told my friend that Rock and Water is for retards”.       |
|        |                           |                                                                                        | “It’s like are you the dumb kids or something”                           |
| 5.     | Learning by doing         | Participants described learning via physical activities as fun and as a successful way to practically apply their learning to see if it actually worked. | “And it’s not just talking about it; it’s actually doing it and having fun with it”. |
|        |                           |                                                                                        | “Cause the stuff that you say doesn’t sound like it’s going to work but when you do it, it works”.  |
|        |                           |                                                                                        | “It’s practical learning”.                                             |
| 6.     | Can’t think               | Participants described how they can’t seem to think when they become angry.          | “You lose control of all thought”.                                     |
|        |                           |                                                                                        | “Some people just don’t think”.                                       |
|        |                           |                                                                                        | “You do something before you stop and think”.                          |</p>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Explosive outbursts</td>
<td>Participants identified anger as having negative implications where it leads them to explosive outbursts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“You can’t think of words”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“You want to really smash something”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“You get angry and kick stuff”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“I hit the wall”.</td>
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<td>“I punch things like doors and stuff”.</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Increased heat</td>
<td>Participants described feeling increasing heat when angry.</td>
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<td>“You feel a bit hotter”.</td>
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<td>“You get real hot”.</td>
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<td>“You burn up”.</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>Alcohol was identified as a major contributor to aggressive incidents that participants had witnessed.</td>
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<td>“They just want to start fights” (referring to people under the influence of alcohol at parties).</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Fighting over boundaries</td>
<td>A major source of aggressive incidents identified by participants related to territory disputes and fighting over boundaries.</td>
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<td>“It’s about territory and stuff”.</td>
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<td>“If a Coffs person (from Coffs Harbour) comes to the beach up here they’ll probably get bashed”.</td>
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<td>“Just like the west and like the east (referring to gangs in Los Angeles), they live in that part and they live in that part and they come over and like start a fight..”</td>
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The thematic analysis code manual provided a structured way of understanding participant responses to the focus group questions. The code manual was a useful tool where emerging codes could be constantly checked and re-checked against the code description and direct quotes from participants. With a detailed list of codes in a manual format the next step of looking for any emerging themes became a natural progression in the research process that incorporated searching the literature.
Section 4 - Participant Responses to Research Questions

Following is a composite order of architecture generated from the responses of 187 rural adolescent males engaged in focus group discussion while participating in a nine-week version of the RWP. The dialogue has been generated from the thematic code manual where codes, the code descriptions and direct quotes from participants have been linked to give this cohort of adolescent males a voice. What follows is a transparent commentary from focus group participants describing how they felt, thought and talked, and what queer enterprises they sometimes engaged in. The participant responses occurred in a real life context and convey something of the participants’ personalities while drawing on their real life experiences. The participants provide insightful comments regarding each of the five research questions that are examined in the discussion chapter in relation to the wider literature.

Research Question 1: What do participants think about the RWP?

After engaging in the RWP participants overwhelmingly described it in positive terms such as “It’s fun, it’s great to learn and you have a lot of fun in it”, “That it’s a great program”, “I say it’s an excellent experience”. Participants also utilized single word responses such as “fun”, “good”, “exciting”, “excellent”, “fantastic”, “cool”, “great”, “helpful” and “educational” and stated that they would highly recommend the program to others. They also described the RWP as “a fun and enjoyable learning experience” that was seen as a break away from the usual classroom routine. Participants liked the fact that the program was so physically oriented and that they were not sure what would happen
from week to week which they felt created a positive anticipation prior to each RWP session.

Participants described liking the RWP because it was different to what they had initially expected and enjoyed the fact that it involved learning through doing and not just writing down facts about something, “Yeah, I didn’t think we were going to play games”, “you don’t have to write stuff down in a book all the time”, “You’re talking about it (participant talking to me), you’re actually, like, showing it instead of wanting somebody to sit here writing into a book”, “A lot more fun than I thought”, “It’s practical learning”, “And it’s not just talking about it, it’s actually doing it and having fun with it”, “It’s not just learning but you have a good time too”.

Some participants had heard that the program was about martial arts and that it was an anger management program for students who had been in trouble at school, “I actually thought it was going to be anger management”, “Everyone out on the oval and that were like it’s a big anger program”. Students had a negative view of anger management programs as they perceived that they involved someone lecturing them (with no dialogue) about needing to behave better at school, “I thought it was going to be all writing and teachers giving us all lectures and stuff”, “I thought it was going to be more like a lecture”. Some participants thought they were being tricked into participating in an anger management program, “We thought we were in trouble and that’s why we came”.
Participants initially thought the RWP would be “boring” and “not fun” as they felt they would have little involvement, “I thought it would be just sitting around and writing stuff”. Stigma was an issue at the beginning and participants stated that others, including teachers, had said the RWP was only for low achieving students who struggle academically and behaviourally, this exposed the negative self-concepts that some participants had regarding how they were viewed as students, “Cause we’re dumb”, “Some teacher told my friend that Rock and Water was for retards”, “Some people think it’s for retards”, “Yeah it’s like are you the dumb kids or something?”, “Someone was telling me it was for people who got bullied”, “We all get in trouble”, “Cause we’re bad”, “The teachers know us”, “They don’t like us”.

Participants spoke positively about the RWP as a learning experience, “I don’t learn cause I’m bored so like here we’re actually having fun so it helps you take it in”, “Like if you do it physically you know what it will feel like and not only what it will look like”, “Than you do it in an activity, it helps you to learn when to do it and when not to do it”, “Cause the stuff that you say (talking to the researcher) doesn’t sound like it’s going to work but when you do it, it works”.

Participants liked how the physical activities were utilized to promote discussion and self-reflection. Physical activities were seen as allowing for a physical outlet during the sessions and participants described this as a good teaching technique that they felt enhanced both the program and their ability to learn. The use of games and competitions as a major component of the wider teaching strategy was also seen as a major strength by participants.
Participants gave specific examples of situations where they practised skills learned in the RWP, “I got hit in the face yesterday and I just kept eye contact and walked away”, “It teaches you to like calm down instead of getting agro (aggressive) if...or something, just to ignore it and walk away”.

Despite the negative perceptions of ‘anger management’ participants were proud of skills they were learning in the RWP, “Teaches us like how to help ourselves and control our anger”, “Learning not to react”, “It helped me control my anger”, “Yeah it teaches you like, learn to stand up for yourself when you’re in class or anything”, “How to be flexible and strong at the same time”, “Teach people how to like defend themselves so that they don’t have to go to violence”, “to teach students how to control their anger” and “how to avoid physical fights”.

Participants stated that if the RWP was successful there could be, “more tolerance, less verbal and physical confrontations and less fights at school”, “When you go out into the big world there won’t be as many fights or raping and stuff”, “So they can develop into just doing responsible stuff. So they can develop into responsible people”. Participants felt the realisation that violence doesn’t solve anything and that they have the choice of walking away from verbal or physical confrontations could lead to more friendships at school and that programs like the RWP are worth doing in school with young men.
Research Question 2: How would participants change the RWP to improve it?

Participants stated that they would like to have more RWP sessions per week and that each session should be longer (current sessions were 75 minutes in duration), “I reckon that we should make it like more than one period a week”, “Longer, we should be going for longer”.

Participants requested more physical activities like push-ups, games, competitions, boxing and wrestling activities along with a desire to explore further ways to manage their anger, “Heaps of games, like more games to sap your energy”, “Like stuff to test our strength and stuff like bench press”, “The touch boxing and Chinese boxing (RWP exercises) and stuff, I think they’re really cool and we should do more of them”.

A number of participants wanted a bigger location and/or to conduct some sessions outdoors. Participants wanted more self-defence skills, including communication skills in order to avoid violence. Participants stated that more students should be encouraged to be involved in the RWP and especially thought that girls should be included as they also had a lot of trouble with violence, “I reckon you should get girls in to do this ‘rock and water’ because they end up getting into as much fights as we do”.

Participants identified that more incentives like music and food (for example pizza and chocolate) should be used to positively reinforce involvement and that more resources, such as weights and boxing pads, would help by enabling more physical activities to be
included in the sessions. They stated that a barbecue would be a good way to end the program and even suggested fund raising options to further resource the program in schools, “If you got a donation more people would be able to do it and it would stop more fights at school and everything”, “Get people to donate to it so to get more padding and things like that”.

Some participants felt there was still too much sitting down in the program sessions, for example between activities, and that a softer floor was needed (the majority of locations were on wooden floors). Many participants stated that the RWP was good as it was and did not require change. A few participants suggested that schools needed a place where boys could come to fight fairly, where a teacher would be present and where they could put on protective gear to get their anger out without getting too hurt.

**Research Question 3: How do you recognise anger in yourself and others?**

Participants described anger as “a feeling”, “an emotion”, as “a natural reaction that occurs in certain situations” and as “stress”. Many participants identified anger as being “the same as violence”, “physical violence” and “aggression”. Participants described how they seemed to stop thinking clearly or rationally when they become angry and linked this to an experience of losing control and a desire to act out aggressively against objects or people, “You lose control of all thought”, “Some people just don’t think”, “You do something before you stop and think”, “Not thinking of the consequences”, “Start making stupid decisions”, “You can’t think of words”, “I don’t know it makes you irrational”, “Want to hit them to feel better”.
Participants perceived that anger can have serious negative implications for their life and linked the emotion of anger to acts of aggression using terms such as, “to go off”, “go psycho”, “get fired up” and “spak out”, to convey when they or someone else had lost control due to anger, “You can’t do anything to stop it”, “He goes off when he gets angry”, “They go running at you chucking a spak”, “Going psycho on them”. Participants identified that when they lost the ability to think clearly they were more likely to be involved in physical aggression or property damage, “Punch some walls”, “You get angry and kick stuff”, “I usually throw something”, “I hit the wall”, “You want to really smash something”, “Punch things like doors and stuff”, “Destroying stuff”, “It’s different, like a way to get stuff out of your head”, “When you get heaps emotional when you get angry it sort of gets it out or talking about it or something”.

Participants identified the need for a physical outlet when they were angry and felt that their current strategies just led to trouble with teachers. “Some dudes throw punches”, “Someone gonna get hurt”, “You start to swing and things like that”, “You push them around ...punch them out or something”, “umm you want to kill them”, “You start to want to fight people”, “Lose control and want to punch them”, “Feel like swearing at them and hitting them”, “Because it comes out and we take it out on innocent people”, “Well when we do get angry the only thing we do think about is actually hitting them or like”.

Participants identified how if they perceived that someone was insulting them or verbally threatening them they would become very angry. In these instances anger was described as a desire to hit out at someone or something. Participants felt that anger played a significant role in contributing to violence and that anger was a motivator and energiser so that they
could fight better in a physical confrontation. “When you get heaps pissed off at someone cause they paid out on ya”, “You get, like you get annoyed when someone says something”, “Yeah if you say your mum’s fat or something then you get real pissed off”.

Many participants felt that anger and aggression were different and yet could not articulate the differences. Other participants explained the difference between anger and aggression similar to the following example, “Anger is like a feeling, aggression ...Aggression is ...it’s part of your personality. With being aggressive then that’s part of the way you are but if you’re angry then something happened to make you feel that way”. Many participants linked anger with negative outcomes like getting into trouble and described not being aware of when they started to become angry, “It stuffs you up”, “It can get you into trouble”, “It can lead to stupidity”, “I have a problem, I don’t know when my anger’s starting”.

Participants identified a number alternatives to acting out violently towards others when they expressed their anger including: “sitting down and watching TV”, “screaming”, or “sitting down to have a break”, “shouting and yelling”, “going somewhere to be alone”, “squeezing something really hard”, “stamping around”, “biting your arm to feel pain”, and being verbally or physically violent to younger siblings. One participant said that when playing rugby league he just tried to tackle the person really hard who had made him angry.
Many participants didn’t know how they expressed their anger. Participants stated that hitting a punching bag to get rid of the build-up of energy was a positive way of using their anger. Other comments included trying to “take some deep breaths”, “sit down and try to relax” maybe even “having something to eat”. Some participants emphasised that they did not allow themselves to act out violently, or hurt anyone, as a result of anger, “I just hold it in, I don’t want to hurt anyone”, “I hold in my feelings”, “Yeah I’m just trying to hold it in”. Other strategies included trying not to worry about it and not doing anything, “I don’t know, I just don’t let it worry me”, “I just let it be, I like don’t do anything. I just leave and like who cares what they said and stuff, so I just don’t do anything”. Others utilised distraction techniques like “listening to music” or “going for a bike ride”.

When participants were asked to explain how they recognised anger in themselves and others they almost exclusively utilized terms from the RWP sessions. Participants described things like: noticing a change in their heart rate, “My heart speeds up”, “Your heart starts beating faster”, “You get more adrenaline”; and muscle tension as a sign of escalating anger, “Your muscles all tense up”, “They take that rock stance thing” (tense stance used in RWP and referred to as ‘rock’ stance), “They tense up like when you watch them they tense up”, changes to breathing were also mentioned, “Your breath lifts”, “Loud breathing”, “They start breathing heavy”, “You start to like breathe quicker”, “You tire quicker”.

When recognizing anger in themselves and / or others participants also identified feeling hotter and noticing that the person getting angry quite often was red in the face. “You feel
“a bit hotter”, “You burn up”, “Your face turns red”, “You get real hot”, “Their face goes all red”. The eyes were also identified, “Your eyes get watery”, “The look in their face”, “You can see that you don’t want to mess with them”, “Their eyes”, “Facial expression”, “Their eyes pop out of their head”.

Participants also identified aspects of body language relating to a person’s stance and walk as well as clenching their fists, “Act tough”, “They’re all hard”, “They tense up”, “They get all worked up”, “They pump their chest out”, “The way they stand”, “Well they’re kind of walking all tall and everything and um chest out kind of”. “Clench their fists”, “They curl their hands up ... and they walk all funny”, “Like the way they act and walk and that”. They further stated that someone who was angry quite often initiated physical contact to try and get a reaction from people, “The way they walk”, “Like if they're walking down the street they’ll just barge into you”, “Walk into people”.

Another important characteristic identified by participants was that a person’s voice changed when they were angry. Participants stated that a person’s voice could get louder, angrier and that they start to use swear words and insulting language, also that someone could stop communicating, “Their language changes”, “The way they speak”, “Louder and angrier”, “Swearing”, “If you like annoy them or something they just won’t talk to you for the rest of the day or something”, “They don’t communicate”, “Don’t take any like answers just go for it, just go fight”, “They stop talking”.
Research Question 4: Under what circumstances would adolescent male participants become aggressive?

Participants identified any teasing or perceived ridicule from others, which they felt was meant as a threat or a challenge, could lead them to become aggressive. It could be as simple as, “Someone says something wrong to ya”. A number of participants described getting really angry if they were the target of racist comments or threats, especially if the comments were being said in an angry tone, being yelled or coupled with swearing.

When participants expanded on the type of comments that would lead to an aggressive response they identified racial or cultural comments of a derogatory nature and swearing, “Someone says something about your culture”, “Just because you’re black”, ”swearing”, “Swearing at you”, derogatory comments about a person’s family or specific family members, “Someone mentioned something personal, like your family”, “Someone says something about my mum”, teasing because of a disability, ”Some people tease me because of my disability”, laughing behind someone’s back or teasing people about their lack of intelligence or their weight, “Someone repeatedly calls you fat”, “People laughing behind your back”, “When you say something and everybody stares like you’re dumb or something...and they’re laughing and it really gets on your nerves”.

Participants identified the violation of their personal space in any way or someone physically touching them without permission as possible instigators of an aggressive response, “They throw stuff at you”, “Someone flicks you and keeps doing it”, “They’re in
your face”, “Don't give you your personal space”, “Pushing you”, “Someone poking you”, “People pushing you around”, “People touching you hair”, “Someone hits you”.

If participants were being bullied or physically intimidated and couldn’t find a way to leave safely, “If someone's trying to fight you and they won't back off”, “When you get bullied and then you go ‘smack’ if they go too far”, “Or if you're getting bullied and you’ve had enough and...much like that”. They would be aggressive if their beliefs, dignity, principles or freedom were threatened and added that if their friends or family were in danger from someone it was OK to become aggressive, “What you believe or your religion or something”, “Yeah, your principles”, “Your dignity”, “What you believe in”, “Freedom”.

If participants perceived someone as being overly noisy or if a person continued talking when others were not interested in what they were saying this was also identified as a trigger for aggression, “A crazy person goes on our bus and is really loud and never shuts up”, “Persistently annoying and loud”, “Won’t shut up”.

Participants surprisingly stated that it was OK to be aggressive at school if they were in trouble from a teacher, “When you get in trouble off a teacher”, “At a teacher in your classroom”, “You get in trouble for something you didn’t do and then you say you didn’t do it and then you get in even more trouble and then they (teacher) yell at ya”. Participants described how anger might lead to violence or aggression when a teacher unjustly criticises them or when parents don’t allow them to do things that they feel they
are old enough to do, “I hit something else”, “This morning I just punched a hole through my friggin bedroom door,... it helped”. Participants felt that anger plays a major role in aggression and violence and that aggression was a way to express their anger, letting it out at someone or something.

Participants highlighted that they were more likely to act out aggressively in a pressure situation (for example near the end of a rugby league game), “When you’re put under pressure”, “When you get really frustrated”, “Frustrated in a game (rugby league) and there’s not long to go”, “Like in football (rugby league) when there’s not long to go and a fight happens”, and that there were a range of precipitating factors that could contribute to someone acting aggressively, such as a mental health condition like ADHD, a death in the family or a pre-existing mood like anger or sadness, “You’re angry or you’re sad”, “You’re A.D.D or something”, “Someone close to you has died and I didn’t want to talk to anyone and was just really angry”.

When asked where they came across aggression participants identified “ Mostly at home”, “At school” and “Just in everyday life”. When asked why they thought anger and aggression was a problem in society participants stated that anger and aggression was all around them and that the news was a constant reminder of just how violent society is. “Yeah it’s always just being put in your face (violence and aggression) about people dying in wars”, “Yeah and they complain about video games, you turn on the news”, “Like you can’t watch the news every, what, 4 or 5 months and some school has been taken over by terrorists, it’s like...”, “…on the radio and on TV and newspapers and stuff there’s always someone killing someone and then there’s wars”, “Yeah there’s always killing and wars".
Participants stated that movies were a big contributor to societal violence particularly because of the increasing pornography and violence being shown. It was interesting that 83% of participants were aged 12, 13 or 14 years of age and yet expressed concerns about young children being influenced by the content of movies and videogames. Participants felt very strongly that video games were contributing to aggression in society.

The majority of participants stated that video games were a negative influence on younger children and that the content was extremely violent, aggressive and derogatory to women, “Yeah, especially ones about gangsters”, “You shoot people and have sex (referring to one game)”, “The one about a guy just got out of jail”, “He’s trying to get revenge because his mother got run over by a car”, “And then you get a girl and a car”, “Like your stealing cars”, “Your stealing cars and killing people”, “Run around killing people and stealing money”, “When they have sex and stuff”, “Like there’s a game called playboy mansion where they just (inaudible) and take pictures of naked people”, “If young kids play it they want to do it or something”, “Cause it’s such a fun game they (younger children) think they’ll do it too and have fun doing it”, “It influences you”, “It’s saying you can get away but in real life you really can’t”, “Teaches you to do bad stuff, like shooting people and taking drugs”, “Yeah it makes it seem OK when it really isn’t”, “Like when you’re driving you can jump on peoples cars and stuff”.

Participants identified some music like gangster rap as contributing to aggression, “If you felt angry to start with and you started listening to that (gangster rap) it sort of eggs you on a bit”, “It makes you wanna be a gangster”, “Cause they think they’re better or cool,
“Yeah cause there is a lot about shooting people and rolling on peoples turf”, “Stealing stuff”, “Yeah, Yeah they dress up like pimps, call women whores”.

Parties were seen as a major contributor to aggression especially when alcohol was present and people were getting drunk, “Parties is a big one”, “Once they get a bunch of drinks in them they think they’re macho”, “They just want to start fights (referring to people under the influence of alcohol at parties)”, “Last party I went to in the holidays at K...(small town) (inaudible) there was like four, four fights eh, it was pretty bad”, “It’s the alcohol (referring to what causes the aggression at parties)”, “There’s always peer pressure, that’s what it is (referring to the fighting and drinking alcohol at parties)”, “It’s the alcohol and testosterone, they just think that they’re so good”, “Young kids are starting to go to a party and get drunk”.

Participants added to this concept of alcohol contributing to violence by stating that they never witnessed a fight that seemed even and they speculated that certain people deliberately challenged smaller people to fight so that they could look tough in front of a crowd, “It all depends, if you’re not pissed (intoxicated with alcohol) and you’re not like at a party and you’re at like somewhere else you’d see an even fight but at a party it’s different cause everyone’s full of piss and you never see an even fight”, “Everyone’s pissed”, “There will never be an even fight (at a party), it will always be one person a bit bigger and stuff”, “Like there’s never an even fight, there’s always a big person bullying on a little one, no one ever goes for (stands up for) the little one”.
Participants were asked how does alcohol contribute to violence and aggression. They stated that there was a direct link to the effect that alcohol has on your ability to think clearly, “You get drunk”, “You don’t know what you’re doing”, “It’s a drug”, “Cause you take it and get off your head”, “Depends how much you have (amount of alcohol)”, “Sometimes you go crazy”, “You bash people”. Participants identified pubs, parties, rugby league matches, local hothouse parties and the local carols by candlelight event as places that they regularly witness aggressive incidents, “Brawls outside pubs”, “Yeah carols by candlelight”, “Because the hothouses have been called off because of all the fights”, “Like at football the adults are drinking alcohol and getting flagons (large bottles of inexpensive wine) and stuff and the kids are watching and it’s sort of a bad influence”.

Participants stated that the town or even the suburb that you come from could be the source of aggressive incidents with young people from other towns etc and that this was very evident at rugby league both on and off the field with rivalries being a major source of aggression, “And like footy, in footy”, “Footy’s (rugby league) a big one”. The following is an example of responses from one group of participants when asked about the causes of inter-town rivalries and subsequent aggression:

P: “It’s about territory and stuff”.

P: “People like to think they’re better than others, we like to think so, we’re males”.

P: “And they come over to our, pretty much our side and if you’re being a smart arse you’re obviously going to get your head flogged (punched)”.

P: “Just like the west and like the east side (referring to gangs in Los Angeles), they live in that part and they live in that part and they come over and like start a fight...”
P: “Start punching and stuff and say oh we’re heaps cool we bashed this Woopie lad and that Woopie lad and they go to Coffs and start braggin and stuff”.

P: “Oh they’d probably say they’re all fags”.

P: “And people got around writing on roads (with spray paint) like in Coffs, 2452 (postcode) and that”.

P: “Coffs sucks and that” (writing with spray paint on signs etc).

P: “If a Coffs person comes to the beach up here they’ll probably get bashed”.

Girls were also seen as a major source of aggressive incidents and this was linked with both parties and the territory disputes. An example of participant responses follows:

P: “It’s mainly chicks (girls). It’s all over chicks pretty much”.

P: “Like when you go into Coffs there’s all these chicks there and when you do something to them all Coffs just seem to like hate ya”.

P: “Yeah like (girls name), there’s this chick went out with a Woopie person now the Coffs ‘P Plate’ patrol are looking out for her and the dude”.

Something that came up time and time again was the perceived negative action of disclosing to an authority figure when someone had done something wrong. “Something else is pretty bad is when you snitch”, “Snitching’s pretty bad”, “I don’t know, just dobbin”. This was referred to by participants as “snitching”, “dobbing” or “being a dog”, which was seen as a type of aggression and as having huge potential for aggressive retaliation from the person/s that you had provided information against. Participants
overwhelmingly felt that these sorts of issues should be dealt with by the people involved and that bringing in authority figures was not the way to deal with the situation.

When asked what factors were contributing to aggression among young men they stated that people were more likely to stand up for themselves physically because no-one would tell the teacher a fight was planned and there was a lot of peer pressure to go through with a fight, “People starting to stand up for themselves”, “No one goes and tells the teacher now”, “They just try and fight em”, “They want to look tough”, “Because they’ll get called pussy”, “Yeah they get paid out”, “People push you like into fights, like you don’t want to fight like someone…everyone’s telling you to... provoking you”. There was also the feeling that there was no real consequences for fighting as, “If they get suspended it’s like a holiday”.

The majority of participants perceived any attempt to stop violence and aggression as an impossible task, “You can’t, we can’t”, “You can’t do it”. Participants overwhelmingly expressed pessimism in the ability to stop aggression at school, they just did not think it was possible, “You can’t stop it, you can make it less”, “You can’t stop violence at school”, “You just can’t stop it, impossible”, “Hey, impossible to stop”. Participants felt that any attempts to bring two people who dislike each other together to resolve a conflict would only risk escalating aggression, “You can’t get two people who hate each other to come together and listen to you”, “No one will listen to reason”, “The more you kinda like punish them and stuff to try and get out of it the more they’ll like hate em”, “The more anger”, “More violence”, “They hate you more”, “Like a prisoner he’s sitting there like
(inaudible) he’s like I wonder what I’m going to do when I get out of this place, get a judge blow him away”.

Strategies that were suggested to at least reduce aggression and/or violence included, “By closing the school”, “The only way you’d be able to stop violence if you expel every kid”, “Yeah just get all the big people and put them into like somewhere else and just leave all the little kids over here”. One participant suggested that education may work to decrease violence at school. Despite these answers participants overwhelmingly identified the RWP as definitely worth doing in schools.

Participants were divided regarding whether or not sexual violence was an issue at school with many stating yes, sexual violence was an issue at school while a number of participants felt it wasn’t an issue at all. Participants identified verbal abuse like “calling a girl a slut” or just “saying stupid stuff to her” and physical harassment like “copping a feel” as examples of the forms that aggression manifested at school towards girls.

When the issue of homosexuality was raised during group discussions all groups (without exception) became very animated and had a lot to say. Following are two examples of participant responses to the question how would you treat a friend if you found out that they were a homosexual:

P’s: “Oh no (many participants laughing and using body language to convey disgust, miming to vomit etc.)”.
P: “He’d ask you to sleep over (laughing)”. 

P: “Kick him out of the group (out of the peer group)”. 

P: “I don’t mind (many participants laughing at this statement and physically pushing the participant who made the statement)”. 

P: “It isn’t normal”. 

P: “Yeah but what’s normal” (Many participants ridiculing this comment). 

P: “Depends what he tries”. 

P: “Yeah if he doesn’t try and crack onto you (try to gain romantic attention) or nothing”. 

P: “Just say nah I don’t feel the same way buddy”. 

P: “But you do bro (group laughter)”. 

Another group responded as follows: 

P: (group laughter) “We’ll smash him”. 

P: “I’d walk away so I don’t have him hit on me (try to gain romantic attention) (laugh)”. 

P: “Cause it’s not normal”. 

P: “Cause they’re different”. 

P: “They might be looking at you when you’re playing footy (suggested that the person could be attracted to them and looking at other males in a lustful way) (laugh)”. 
P: (inaudible) ...“Cause he hooked up with another kid at the clubhouse”.

P: “He moved (had to leave town)”.

P: “Hey,.. I’d be running for the hills (if a male was attracted to him)”.

When asked what is violence? Participants tended to provide one word descriptions such as: “Racial”, “Sexual”, “Army”, “Aggression” and “Mental”. When asked to expand they described violence as “a way to get what you want if other methods have failed” and “It depends what you’re brought up like, cause if you’re brought up racist...”. Religion was also seen as something that led to aggression, “Yeah I don’t know, stop the religion, religions what starts all the wars”, “But a lot of the Muslims in Australia kind of shove their beliefs down everyone's throats”. Participants felt that society was full of, “people fighting for no reason”.

Even though the majority of participants were extremely pessimistic about how to decrease aggression within society and at school, some participants suggested needing more tolerance and less ignorance, “I reckon everyone just needs to be more tolerant, more calm”, “Yeah, teach them more tolerance”, “I reckon stop ignorance and saying that all Muslims are terrorists...like the extremists. I hate them. I don’t hate all Muslims”, teaching programs like the Rock and Water Program, “Teach them Rock and Water”, “More programs like this”. Other participants recognized the longer-term needs for positive societal change, “Need to be imposed on parents, like ...brought up to be that way like you’re not going to change because someone said to calm down”, “Stay, like stay away from friends that do that stuff”, “Tougher laws on assault and abuse”.
Research Question 5: Where do adolescent male participants learn skills to deal with aggressive incidents?

Overwhelmingly participants identified the RWP as the place where they had learned skills to deal with aggressive incidents, “Here, here, places like Rock and Water”, “Here” (the RWP), “Yeah, I haven’t learnt anything except for here” (the RWP). A number of participants identified that they learned skills to deal with aggressive incidents at home or from family members, “At home, at home”, “My cousin”, “My brother”, “Step-dad”, “My dad”, however, when clarifying it was usually because they had a family member who they perceived was a good fighter or had done some form of martial arts or boxing training, “My uncle is a cage fighter (engages in martial arts competition)”, “My family takes care of it for me (inferring that his family would hurt anyone who hurt him), “My cousin, he’s a boxer”, “My granddad, he bashes people”, “My mum, well she usually comes up with something smart and if they really get aggressive she just drop kicks them, she kicks them in the teeth”, “My mum and my next door neighbour, well my next door neighbour is a boxer and my mum is a kick-boxer. She’ll kick your ass”.

A few participants, who also identified family or adults as the place they learn skills to deal with aggressive incidents, referred to the adults in their lives as role models or they felt their parents had skills from their career or life experience that they could pass on, “My parents, cause they are a nurse and they help disabled people and psychos and stuff”, “My parents they’re just used to it, when they were young they got picked on a bit and now they’re just used to it”, “My brother, yeah, because he’s done Rock and Water (the RWP)”, “Being around adults because when you get angry they calm you down and not like when you are with your friends and they, well it depends
School was mentioned by participants usually in a negative way in that they received punishment following aggressive incidents that were seen by teachers or the Principal. A number mentioned anger management, which as stated previously had a very negative connotation for participants, “Teachers”, “School”, “We talk about it in P.E. but it’s not much, just got anger management”, “The Principal’s office”, “Some people go to anger management (at school)”, “Nobody learns at school, they don’t teach us that cause they don’t think it’s school teaching”.

Participants stated that they could talk about these issues to a counsellor in person or even a telephone counsellor and that they may be able to help them learn how to calm down, “Get help from counsellors”, “Kids Help-line”, “School counsellor”. The only other options mentioned by a few participants where they could learn skills to deal with aggressive incidents were; “the police”, “the army”, “self-defence or martial arts class” and at “football” (rugby league).

**Conclusion**

Focus group participants have provided clear responses to each of the research questions and in so doing have been given a voice in the literature for the first time relating to many of the issues discussed. Participants were clear about what they liked and disliked in relation to being involved in school programs, providing valuable insight for further
exploration into the issue of engaging and disengaging adolescent males. Participants wanted to talk about anger and were passionate in identifying the specific circumstances where they would become aggressive. Participant responses provided a commentary where strong codes contributed to emerging themes relating to the endorsement of the RWP, how they recognised anger in themselves and others, under what circumstances they would become aggressive and where they learned skills to deal with aggressive incidents.

Section 5 – Thematic Map

The following section presents examples of the codes and themes that emerged from the participant responses and thematic code manual. Interesting features of the data set were coded in a systematic fashion across the entire data set that allowed for a format where codes were collated into potential themes. Any data relevant to the potential theme could be examined, kept or discarded as the theme was clarified. A thematic map slowly emerged with each theme defined and named while a constant checking and re-checking of themes in relation to the coded extracts and the participants themselves assisted to refine the specifics of each code and subsequent theme. The final opportunity for analysis required the selection of vivid and compelling extract examples while relating the emerging themes from focus group transcripts to the broader literature.

Searching for themes

The first research question is presented as an example of how themes were generated via participant responses to the question and subsequent prompts within the focus group format. A number of codes were generated directly from the transcripts of participants’
conversations and these codes were validated with participants throughout the action research cycles. As the codes were examined against the literature the concept of ‘engagement’ began to emerge as an accurate theme that encapsulated what was being communicated by the various codes. Following is an example, Figure 4.1, of how specific codes were collated into a potential theme based on participant responses to what they thought about the RWP.

Research question 1: What do participants think about the RWP?

Figure 4.1 Example of searching for themes.
Raval et al. (2012), in a similar study to this research project, explored the perceptions of anger in Indian adolescents. They describe having to derive a coding system based on a review of the literature and review of responses to each interview question as there was a lack of available literature concerning emotion expression in adolescent male offenders in India. Raval et al. derived a coding system based on the responses of their participants (2012). Due to the lack of literature available exploring the perceptions of Australian rural adolescent males a similar process was utilised for this study where participant responses were used within the specified TA framework to develop codes. These codes were examined and contrasted against the literature to identify themes that emerged from and accurately reflected these codes.

**Reviewing themes**

When participants were asked about aggression in their lives a number of codes began to emerge from the focus group transcripts. These codes highlighted, for the first time, specific influences that a cohort of rural adolescent males has identified as contributing to their beliefs and attitudes that preceded or contributed to acts of aggression. As the codes were examined in relation to the broader literature they communicated specific ‘primes for aggressive behaviour’, which the literature helped separate into both personological and situational primes.

Priming for aggression seemed the natural overarching theme that accurately captured what participants were describing. As themes were reviewed in relation to the broader literature, a further theme of larrikinism emerged. Larrikinism has been discussed in the literature from a narrow perspective in relation to Australian theatre audiences and aspects of developing Australian journalism, however, what became evident was that the historical
literature provided a rich source of commentary regarding the attitudes and beliefs of adolescent Australians known as larrikins. These attitudes and beliefs were uncovered via the research process and seem to have been culturally endorsed, directly influencing this cohort of rural adolescent males in relation to what would lead to them becoming aggressive.

Following in Figure 4.2 is a diagrammatic representation of the determinants of aggression (personological and situational primes) as identified by focus group participants’. The link to larrikinism is included as it emerged via reviewing codes and the initial themes with the broader historical-cultural literature.

![Diagram of determinants of aggression](image)

Figure 4.2 Example of determinants of aggression among focus group participants.
Defining and naming themes and producing the report

This phase began with the formation of a thematic map (Figure 4.3) to summarise and convey the codes and subsequent themes emerging from the focus group transcripts (dataset). Transcripts had been read and re-read, codes were decided upon and defined with the refining of themes presented for the final analysis’. The researcher and participants had agreed that each code and theme identified the essence of what their responses had conveyed. From this point a literature review was conducted to explore the essence of each individual theme identified and wherever possible the actual codes preceding the themes development was also contrasted and discussed in relation to the literature. This provided the context and format for examining the relationship between the emergent themes and research questions, which presents as the final analysis and write up of the thesis discussion chapter.

Following in figure 4.3 is a diagrammatic representation of the final codes and subsequent themes (themes bolded).
### Folk Theory of Anger

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personological Factors</th>
<th>Situational Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racism</td>
<td>Alcohol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homophobia</td>
<td>Fighting over boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family influence</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Models</td>
<td>Peer pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>Saving face</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Anger Management (Disengagement)

- Negative Stigma
- Being Lectured / No input
- Not Voice
- Too much sitting / Not enough action

### Conclusion

Examples of the codes and subsequent themes that emerged from the participant responses and thematic code manual have been presented to illustrate how the research process followed the steps described in the research design chapter of this thesis. The final
thematic map for all focus group questions has been provided as a clear sign post for progression into the discussion chapter. A scholarly report linking the thematic analysis with a discussion of the literature appears in the discussion chapter that follows.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The preceding chapter presented the results of the data analysis. This chapter will focus directly on discussing the implications of these findings in relation to the overall research questions. Section 1 will examine the role of engagement in relation to participants’ experience and endorsement of the RWP. Section 2 will look at issues emerging from the data regarding how participants recognise anger in themselves and others while also exploring the genesis of some of these issues in a historical cultural discourse. Section 3 examines how participants identified specific primes for aggressive behaviour along with the role that observational learning and aggressive role models play in the transmission of aggressive scripts that have endorsed aggression in certain contexts. Throughout the discussion participant responses will be linked to an Australian historical commentary on larrikinism as a means of demonstrating that the construction of a distinctive Australian masculinity has endorsed and perpetuated many of the themes emerging from participant responses.

Section 1 - Engaging participants in the Rock and Water Program

Section one presents a discussion of the theme of engagement, which has been identified as a result of a number of codes generated by participant responses to the first two research questions: What do participants think about the RWP? And how would participants change the RWP to improve it? The codes included: action oriented, learning by doing, using games and competitions to teach, connected to the real world, different to initially thought and fun learning experience. These codes summed up why participants
spoke positively about their experience of the RWP and so seemed to evidence their engagement in the program. Participants also identified a negative stigma against anger management programs, which is what they admitted thinking the RWP was going to be about. In doing so they clearly identified aspects of boys’ programs that they felt would be boring and the reasons why they felt boys were asked to participate in programs like the RWP.

**Different to initially thought**

Focus group participants had no hesitation endorsing the RWP, describing it as a fun and enjoyable learning experience. Many of the participants had initially expected the RWP to be about anger management; they thought the program would involve being forced to sit down for long periods while they listened to lectures and had to write down the things they were told. Participants exposed a negative stigma attached to ‘anger management’, stating that peers and even teachers had talked openly about the RWP being either for the bad male students or the dumb male students, despite not really knowing what the program involved. As a result students were highly suspicious of their invitation to participate in the RWP and thought it related to their reputation as trouble-makers or because of certain incidents that they had been involved in.

This negative stigma highlighted characteristics that potentially disengage this cohort of adolescent males from certain learning activities. Martin (2010) asserts that students who ‘inherit’ a negative perception of a learning task, either from their own negative self-beliefs, a lack of value for education, a past history of failure with other learning tasks or
an uncertainty of the activity process can display a failure avoidance and self-handicapping behaviours that increase the risk of them disengaging from the learning activity.

When trying to teach young men anything it is important that they are confident in or at least curious about the learning process and have experienced some form of success in previous tasks (Martin, 2012). The initial negative stigma had created a very real risk that participants would disengage before the RWP even began. The fact that focus group participant attitudes changed so dramatically toward the RWP demonstrated that it had been different to their initial expectations enough to override their level of uncertainty. Topics covered were perceived as important and relevant to their everyday lives and the structure was different to their initial expectations.

**Learning by doing**

Participants praised the action-oriented and physical nature of the RWP, calling for more sessions per week of longer duration. They enjoyed learning by doing activities and wanted even more physical challenges and competitions included. Despite the initial negative stigma associated with anger management programs it became apparent that participants were keen to learn skills directly associated with anger management. This highlighted how certain teaching methods previously employed had failed to engage participants whereas the topic of learning skills to manage their anger did interest them. The physical, action oriented nature of the RWP was experienced by participants as a fun learning experience where games and competitions were actually used to teach specific
skills. It was the physical, learning by doing aspect of the RWP that was different to how participants had viewed boys programs in general and anger management programs specifically.

**Engaging boys with physical activity, games and competitions**

Plato states ‘you can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation’ (Plato, 1952). Teachers and adults working with young men need to learn how to harness and utilise boys’ restless masculine energy (West, 2002). However, certain boys’ programs that focus on a more ‘boy friendly’ approach, involving structured activities and competitive tasks, are accused of reinforcing a stereotypical version of masculinity that fails to account for the full diversity existing among boys as learners and human beings (Martino, 2005).

In a number of Australian schools, sport is often linked to boys’ sense of gender and identity, which teachers, especially male teachers, often utilise to engage male students. The advantages of such practices are that boys display a preference for sport over other activities and seemed to socialise more in certain contexts, such as sport (Lingard et al., 2002, pp. 37-38). Two possible disadvantages to this approach at engaging male students are that certain boys who are not interested in sports may be neglected, or that these practices can reinforce rather than challenge dominant practices of masculinity (Lingard et al., 2002, pp. 76-77).
While acknowledging these possible limitations the fact remains that “boys’ interest in sport is a useful way to engage them in wider learning activities” (Quebec Ministry of Education, 2004). Recent studies by Burt (2012), Ziaee et al. (2012) and Tremlow, Sacco and Fonagy (2008) assert that aggressive adolescents are notoriously resistant to talk therapies. They claim that physical movement and activities, such as taught in martial arts, when integrated with therapeutic principles provide a social context where aggressive youth can socialise with others in non-confrontational and positive interactions that establish a foundation for socially acceptable behaviours. Currie (2004) likewise points out that physically interactive programs may help reduce physical/verbal interaction deprivation in adolescent males who struggle with anger and aggression, therefore utilising action-oriented activities to represent their inner experiences is vital.

Classroom-based activities benefit boys when they promote active and purposeful learning that includes various physical or ‘hands-on’ activities with choices, challenges and above all, opportunities for success (Lingard et al., 2002; Martin, 2010). Burt (2012) in addition states that interventions for aggressive youth must be concrete, hands-on, be able to capture their attention quickly and to sustain their attention once the novelty wears off. Boys, across the board, respond positively to practical aspects of their education, particularly learning through doing (Lingard et al., 2002; Vallance, 2002; Ykema, 2000).

**Connected to real world**

Over the last decade researchers have attempted to identify evidence-based guidelines for both the classroom setting and group programs for boys. Interest and subsequent
motivation is invoked and engagement facilitated where learning is enjoyable and is perceived as connecting to students’ real life experiences (Alloway, Freebody, Gilbert, & Muspratt, 2002; Education Queensland, 2001; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003; Mills & Keddie, 2005b; Munns et al., 2006b; Scherer, 2002). Many authors such as Burt, Lewis and Patel (2010), Hemphill and Smith (2010), Richardson and Halliwell (2008), Bor (2004), Rowe (2002), Scherer (2002), West (2002), Bennett and Offord (2001) and Lerner and Galambos (1998) similarly propose that adolescent males need activities that are relevant to their real life experiences and interests. They continue that boys require highly structured lessons with step by step instructions and that there should be less lecture formats, less writing tasks, more action-oriented activities, challenges, competitions and frequent changes of activity. These researchers similarly identify the importance of experienced adult supervision, from both males and females, adults who will actively listen to the boys that they are working with.

Researchers Burt et al. (2010) and Burt et al. (2013) found that participant engagement in anger management groups was increased when the program promoted leadership skills, when participants had to apply in order to participate in the program and when participant opinions were an important and valued feedback mechanism to guide progress. The fact that throughout this process the RWP was utilised within a qualitative research framework may have influenced participants’ positive experiences of the program. Participants were provided detailed information about the program and they had to return parental consent forms prior to commencing. Participants were repeatedly told that they would be evaluating the RWP and that the program would be adjusted based on their comments. The digital recording of focus groups provided overt evidence that participants were being listened to and that their responses would be considered.
Boys are reluctant to attempt new tasks if they are not sure about their ability to succeed or if they have not succeeded at the task previously (Martin, 2010; Ludowyke & Scanlon, 1997). O’Doherty traces much of boys’ motivational problems regarding learning to “frustration and feelings of inadequacy in attempting to live up to what they believe their peers and society generally expect of them as males” (1994, p. 22). When boys are successful at a task it increases their self-confidence in that specific task and can make them willing to attempt other tasks. Martin and Marsh (2003) therefore propose that it is important to utilise tasks that will maximise opportunities for success. Martin describes ‘chunking’ as a specific way to promote success because it “involves breaking tasks down into bite-sized pieces and seeing the completion of each piece as a success” (2010, p. 4).

The structure of the RWP allowed for participants to engage in a range of action-oriented activities with competitions and challenges that are frequently changed and constantly related to the learning objective for that session. The participant feedback demonstrated that they had moved beyond simply complying with group rules to an active participation in the learning experience. Within the individual RWP sessions each activity is broken down to step-by-step components and demonstrated physically by the facilitator prior to any participant attempting the activity. This contributed to participants being able to experience success with tasks that increased their confidence and added to their willingness to attempt more of the activities. Where improvements are required it is important to provide specific instructions, making it very clear exactly how the adolescent can make that improvement (Martin, 2010, 2013; Martin, Marsh, & Debus, 2003).
A priming sheet was used in each session where the name of activities to be covered were visible to all participants, however, no description of the activity was provided until immediately before engaging in the activity. Use of the priming sheet elicited curiosity from participants as they would be asking: What is Chinese boxing? or, what is rooster fighting?

The activities within the RWP required participants to constantly change partner, which facilitated communication between all group members. This process allowed for leadership skills to be promoted and encouraged as certain participants took on the role of assisting partners who struggled with an activity or skill. The participants became a resource for each other and provided physical demonstrations for others who needed further explanation. Rather than participants being teased for any difficulty they experienced an opportunity was provided for social connection between diverse boys as they assisted each other, the one happy to demonstrate his ‘expertise’ and the other being encouraged that mastery was within his capability. Clear boundaries and behavioural expectations were communicated and reinforced via specific group rules with regular opportunities for participants to release their built-up energy safely.

Focus group participants demonstrated a desire for hands-on learning. They craved physical activity and enjoyed the competitive nature of the RWP activities. Participants included a range of boys, some of whom were quite athletic while others struggled with co-ordination and physical strength. Despite these differences participants, across the board, endorsed the action-oriented nature of the RWP and identified that the skills they were learning during the RWP were relevant to their everyday lived experiences.
The role of motivation and engagement in learning new skills

Adolescent male students respond to a relationship where adults actively listen, convey respect, use humour and show a genuine interest in them as people (Martin, 2010). For those students from backgrounds that historically underachieve at school, motivation and engagement can become critical educational outcomes in themselves (Munns et al., 2006b).

Martin’s work conceptualises motivation as the energy and drive to learn that allows young people to achieve their potential (Martin, 2003, 2005, 2010). He differentiates this from engagement, which is defined as a flow-on effect of motivation. While implementing the RWP as a component of the overall research process participants demonstrated how their motivation was a key component of whether or not they thought the RWP was worth doing.

Learning is stimulated by curiosity and therefore the role of adults working with adolescents is to actively listen to them while attempting to identify material and strategies that will allow them to explore their curiosity (Education Queensland, 2000; Hunter & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; Scherer, 2002). When someone is attempting to learn a task that might involve complex skills their ability to focus and persist is paramount. Ascertaining how important they perceive the specific skill to their everyday lived experience directly determines their level of motivation and ‘staying power’ (Hunter & Csikszentmihalyi, 2003).
According to Hunter and Csikszentmihalyi, when someone is interested they are calmer, less impulsive, experience a drop in heart rate and are more open to receive and respond to information. This is contrasted with boredom, which represents disengagement in an activity and a negative influence on psychological growth. Interest is evidence of an individual’s drive to learn and grow (2003, pp. 27-29). As Zuckerman (1979) points out, adolescents who are prone to boredom tend to experience higher rates of depression and substance abuse. He also links boredom to extreme sensation seeking, high-risk behaviours and engagement in anti-social and aggressive behaviour. Despite the interest that participants ended up showing in the topics related to anger management it is evident that if the format had included a more passive learning environment participants would have become bored, disinterested and disengaged. Martin (2012) argues for the inclusion of disengagement in addition to engagement in future research discourse.

Walter asserts that “engagement appears to be the key to unearthing the full potential of our students” (Walter, 2006, p. 2). Educational researchers have identified the concept of a small ‘e’ and big ‘E’ engagement. Small ‘e’ engagement, or ‘e’ngagement, is defined as “substantive engagement with the learning processes at hand, as distinct from merely complying with teachers’ wishes and instructions” (Munns et al., 2006b, p. 10). This level of engagement is more than students just following rules, it relates to an active participation where students have positive feelings and are interested in the task they are doing, seeing value in the activity (Munns et al., 2006b, pp. 10-11). The concept of big ‘E’ engagement or ‘E’ngagement, in contrast, is a longer and more enduring relationship and commitment with schooling and education. This is where students can look beyond the immediate task at hand and have a longer term commitment to the education process itself.
They perceive that the wider education process is working for them and will be beneficial to their broader life plans (Munns et al., 2006b, p. 11).

A cursory read of participant responses demonstrates that they achieved ‘e’ngagement with the RWP, they were actively involved, expressed positive feelings and identified the topics covered as interesting and relevant to their lives. Positive learning experiences like this present the opportunity to help young men see a wider value in learning and could be a key to progressing them to ‘E’ngagement or a more enduring commitment to the broader education process (Martin, 2010). Martin (2012) claims that positive learning experiences also increase a young person’s ability to deal with setbacks, learning challenges and school pressures, a concept he relates to their ‘academic buoyancy’. Students who achieve in new and challenging settings demonstrate more positive achievement trajectories and a reduced fear of failure in the school setting (Martin, 2010).

Many disengaged boys feel angry at the system and formal structures of school because there is no opportunity for their voice to be heard, they feel that they have no agency and are punished unfairly and that no one in the school cares about them (Mills & Keddie, 2005a; Munns et al., 2006b; Slade & Trent, 2000). Mills and Keddie found that ‘boys programs’ were perceived by adolescent male students as attempting to extend more influence and control over their lives as opposed to being an expression of genuine interest in their wellbeing. The students also commented that too many teachers ‘don’t ask’, ‘don’t listen’, ‘don’t care’ and are not ‘culturally up to date’, which contributed to some boys perceiving school work as boring, repetitive, irrelevant and out of touch with the real world (2005a).
A very similar attitude was evidenced by focus group participants in their initial descriptions of what they perceived the RWP would entail. They discussed a very real stigma attached to engaging in a ‘boys program’ that was automatically perceived as anger management and therefore as boring, controlling and confining for male students struggling academically and behaviourally. They expressed this as clear evidence that they were not liked by teachers and perceived being labelled as dumb and bad as the motivation behind the invitation for them to participate in the RWP. This dialogue provided evidence from participants that identified wider peer and teacher attitudes regarding ‘anger management’ that were quite negative. These negative perceptions were directly related to the type of program that had been experienced in the past by participants and identified aspects of the school environment and teaching approaches that failed to engage this cohort of adolescent males and had negative implications for their academic buoyancy and educational identity.

When discussing a young person’s experience in the school setting the concept of their ‘educational identity’ is paramount. The educational identity can be described as a student’s perception of themselves as a learner and relates to their perception of how and where they fit into the school context (Munns et al., 2006b, p. 10). Negative perceptions regarding this educational identity can be challenged and rejected, however, teachers must play a vital role in encouraging young men to ‘reconceptualise themselves in terms of pro-social masculinities’ (Rowan, Knobel, Bigium, & Lankshear, 2002, p. 151).

The fact remains that Australian schools identify an over-representation of boys receiving disciplinary measures for such things as aggression, sexual harassment and bullying
These aggressive behavioural problems in our Australian adolescent males have been directly linked to disengagement with the school system and have negative implications for both young men and women (Grunseit et al., 2005; Keddie & Churchill, 2003; Kermode & Keil, 2003; Mills, 2000; Mills & Keddie, 2005b; Munns et al., 2006b; Rowe, 2002; West, 2002). Chronic underachievement at school is directly related to difficulties with teachers, poor mental and physical health, misbehaviour in the classroom, drop-out, truancy, disengagement and affiliation with negative peers (Martin, 2010).

An historical perspective of disengagement: Book learning and confinement to a desk

Late nineteenth century Australian society was pessimistic about the education system’s ability to engage with certain young men. The school system was criticised for failing to teach boys self-control and moral conduct (Bellanta, 2012). Boys’ attendance at school was sporadic, despite primary school now being compulsory, and their classroom experiences seemed totally removed from their real-world needs (Mawson, 2009; Vine, 2009). For many boys from working class backgrounds secondary school was not an option (Bellanta, 2012). To this day many Australian rural boys fail to connect the school learning environment with their real-world experiences or needs. They lack a future direction, which contributes to their sense of alienation and disengagement from the school setting (Lingard et al., 2002; Roderick, 2003).

An interesting historical insight is provided by an article from the Perth Inquirer (1887a), identifying a growing community problem in which boys between the ages of 12-14 years were truanting from school and engaging in anti-social behaviours. A major reason for this
disengagement was identified as the boys’ hatred for the ‘dull monotony’ of ‘book learning’, which they experienced as ‘confinement to a desk’. This description from 1887 could have been taken directly from focus group participant statements and endorses historical views like those of philosopher William James (1910) who warned against trying to confine young men to a desk for large periods of time, which he described as being against their natural inclination.

This belief that boys need to be physically active has deep roots in Australian culture and directly relates to what Vine (2009) describes as Australians having a romantic attachment to their working class origins where physical prowess was highly valued. To be in fulltime work required a man to be physically fit. Competition for jobs often related to physical prowess, work was also exhausting and therefore did not allow the innate human drives toward aggression or sexual pleasure to be gratified (Vine, 2009).

If young men were not working the predominant view was that their basic instincts or drives would surely divert them away from the primary task of contributing to society (Smith, 2008). The South Australian Register (1896) captured the sentiment of the times stating “it should never be forgotten that boys usually lapse into mischief simply for want of something better to do” (p. 4). An emphasis on book learning where boys were sitting for extended periods was seen as a recipe for disaster by much of the Australian working class.
For working class Australians real life started for their boys when they entered employment, which is where they learned a trade and worked closely with other males who imparted a work ethic and moral values (Smith, 2008; Vine, 2009). This mindset is vividly portrayed in the Australian story ‘Songs of a Sentimental Bloke’ by C.J. Dennis where the main character Bill looks down at his new-born son and then looking at his own hands makes the vow, “they’re all that stands ‘twixt this ‘ard world an’ them I calls me own, an’ fer their sakes I’ll work ‘em to the bone” (Boyd, 1998, p. 12). Bill had thereby completing his transformation from a self-focused and rowdy adolescent to being a family man and upstanding member of society.

Despite changes to labour market needs, many working class Australians continue to value physical prowess over book learning. To this day Australian fathers will attend their sons’ sporting events while avoiding school functions, sending the unspoken message to boys that physical prowess is valued more than mental prowess (Slocumb, 2004; Smith, 2008). For many adolescent males school is still experienced as an unnecessary waste of time where they are confined to the classroom and dull monotony of book learning with no outlet for their restless energy or meaningful connection to their real-world needs. The tragedy is that we now live in a world where an inability to read becomes an inability to earn (Von Drehle, 2007).

Adolescence: A critical time for facilitating change in young men

When attempting to facilitate positive educational, behavioural or therapeutic change among adolescent males it is important to consider that adolescence has been identified as a critical period of life when real change or turning points can occur and therefore
engaging adolescent males in this stage of development is critical. Adolescents are striving for self-identity and are often re-establishing identity with respect to body changes and family dynamics as they attempt to individuate and gain more autonomy (Hair, Jager, & Garrett, 2002; Lerner & Galambos, 1998; Rutter, 1987; Weiten, 1995). It is during this stage of development that adolescent males have proven extremely difficult to engage in counselling, programs or mental health support services (Boyd et al., 2006; Jorm & Butterworth, 2006; NSW Centre for Advancement of Adolescent Health, 2005; Smith, 2004; Stavropolis, 2008).

During this stage adolescents are typically self-absorbed, egocentric and present-oriented with a strong need to communicate their inner world and to conform with traditional masculine stereotypes while seeking acceptance by same sex peers (Emunah, 1990; Marcell & Monasterio, 2003; Rutter, 1987; Steinberg, 1993). A major task of adolescence is to achieve a secure sense of self; identity diffusion is a failure to develop a cohesive self or self-awareness (Sadock & Sadock, 2003, p. 37).

Adolescence is a relatively recent concept that came into our dialogue after the American psychologist G. Stanley Hall (1904) published a two-volume work with that name. Hall not only popularised the use of the term, he also promoted the idea that adolescence was a period of ‘storm and stress’ in a young person’s life (Bellanta, 2012). Prior to this time adolescence was not treated as a distinct period of life and so when young men were behaving in anti-social ways via drunkenness, aggression or sexual promiscuity, Australian society at large perceived this lack of self-control as a serious threat. Many of these young men were called larrikins in the Australian media, a term used for aggressive
boys and young men, and dealing with their behaviour was left to the police and criminal justice system (Bellanta, 2012).

Larrikinism became a term used in the Australian media, prior to Hall’s concept of adolescence, which attempted to describe the behaviour of boys in this middle ground between childhood and adulthood, young ruffians trying to ‘big note’ themselves (an Australian expression where people try to appear more important than they are). Bellanta (2012) asks: were Australians dealing with something new among young men or was it simply a new way of talking about them? Were these actual changes taking place or only the way that police and journalists chose to represent them? Vine (2009) claims that many aspects of behaviour identified with larrikin masculinity act as a mask for adolescent uncertainties and a confused sense of self. She goes on to state “larrikinism is above all defiant and this defiance is not silent, it is overt and more often than not aggressive” (Vine, 2009, p. 129).

Hall advocated for adolescents, claiming that they required careful guidance to negotiate this difficult period of life. The result of Hall’s theory was that a range of organisations formed to champion the cause of adolescents. They claimed that these poor dear boys needed understanding and not punishment. This passionate advocacy promoted public acceptance of the idea that allowances should be made for these male Australian youths and that certain behaviours associated with their ‘storm and stress’ should be tolerated (Bellanta, 2012). Australian society witnessed an attitudinal shift from viewing larrikinism, anti-social adolescent male behaviour, as criminal behaviour to be punished to
being more about helping these “youth bubbling over with unchecked energy” (Bellanta, 2012, p. 142).

In many cultures around the world adolescence has been treated as a time of life when boys become men, take on adult responsibility and exercise self-control while contributing to the welfare of their wider society. It was recognised that a healthy community needed healthy men and not just overgrown boys (Rubinstein, 2007). In contrast Australia, like other western countries, has been influenced by the concept of adolescence to the point that certain acts of aggression and anti-social behaviour, for example drunken behaviour at parties or sporting events, have been excused as a normal and acceptable component of young men’s growth and development - the boys-will-be-boys mentality.

Adolescence presents a powerful developmental stage when young men can learn skills vital to exercising self-control, frustration tolerance and the ability to resolve conflicts in non-aggressive ways, however, as a concept it has been used as an excuse for certain behaviour. Engaging young men in this stage of their life is important if adults are to guide them into positive change, however, engaging adolescent males in any activity is easier said than done.

The RWP has provided a method for engaging this cohort of rural adolescent males. It has engaged participants by being different to their initial expectation of what an anger management program would be about, via a learning experience that was action oriented, where they enjoyed learning by doing, where games, competitions and physical activities
were the teaching methods used to connect issues of masculinity, anger and aggression to their real world experiences. Participants had a dislike for programs where they had to sit for long periods, be lectured and write down information that they felt was not relevant to them, which they identify as being more about adults exercising control as opposed to care.

Section 2 - Participants’ description of their experience and expression of anger

This section presents how focus group participants answered the third research question: How do adolescent male participants recognise anger in themselves and others? This question relates to the first research aim: Identifying how adolescent male participants experience and express their anger. A folk theory of anger is presented as this directly relates to how focus group participants talked about their experience and expression of anger. The use of metaphor to describe anger is proposed to have potentially discounted the roll of certain skill deficits, thereby being used as an excuse for destructive outbursts as opposed to an explanation that could be used to understand why and when destructive outbursts result from anger.

Participants described anger as a feeling, as stress, violence and aggression. They stated that there was a difference between anger and aggression and yet could not clarify what these differences were. At first it seemed like participants did not have much to say about anger, however, as the researcher explored the metaphorical language used by participants when discussing anger it became apparent that despite difficulty articulating what anger
was their use of metaphor had provided a rich source of descriptive terms portraying their experience.

Participants described their experience of anger in four specific ways:

1. They described anger in terms of its physiological effects and talked about feeling an increase in heart rate, respiratory rate, bodily tension and an experience of feeling hotter, of burning up and of their face turning red,

2. Secondly they described the negative impact on their ability to think clearly where they stated that anger caused them to stop thinking, to lose control of their thoughts, to act out physically before thinking, to become irrational, to fail to think about the consequences of their actions, make stupid decisions and be unable to think of words to use in certain situations,

3. Thirdly they identified the physical consequences of their anger in terms of wanting to punch, kick, throw, hit, smash, destroy, push, fight and swear,

4. Fourthly, participants utilised metaphor to convey their conception of anger. They talked about anger in terms of going off, going psycho, getting fired up, spaking out, being pissed off or pissed, getting stuff out of their head and as being stuffed up.

Anger was experienced as something that seemed separate to the self, as something that negatively impacted their cognitive ability, decreased their control over bodily reactions and as contributing to explosive outbursts. Anger was perceived to be directly linked to aggression, with anger also being identified as an energiser that could help participants to get what they want in certain situations.
The following table (5.1) summarises how participants conceptualise anger based upon their use of metaphor (source domain) to describe their experience of anger (target domain). The participants own words are used to describe anger. For example, “go psycho”, is included as a direct quote along with the source of the term ie. Source = ‘psycho’ derived from the word ‘psychotic’. A simple definition of this term (the target domain) is then provided. Psychotic = a loss of contact with reality as a result of irrational, distorted thinking. The definition of the metaphor provides a description of the anger via accessing the intent behind the metaphor ie. Anger leads to a loss of contact with reality as a result of irrational, distorted thinking.

Table 5.1 Participant conceptualisations of anger

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant expression</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Go psycho”</td>
<td>Psychotic</td>
<td>Anger leads to a loss of contact with reality as a result of irrational, distorted thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Spak out”</td>
<td>Spasticity</td>
<td>Anger leads to unusual muscle tightness and involuntary muscle movements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Go off”</td>
<td>Explosion / Release</td>
<td>Anger leads to a build up of pressure and inner tension that if not released will cause an explosion of destructive behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Get fired up”</td>
<td>Set on fire / Increase heat</td>
<td>Anger is like having a fire started within you that results in increasing heat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Pissed off”</td>
<td>Release of urine build up</td>
<td>Anger is like a build up of urine (fluid) in the bladder (container) that needs to be released to restore physical comfort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Pissed”</td>
<td>Intoxicated with alcohol</td>
<td>Anger leads to irrational thinking, impaired judgment and reduced physical co-ordination.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Stuffs you up” Forces a substance into a limited space Anger is like a substance that is forced into the body until the body is full.

A folk theory of anger

Garrett (2004) states that folk theories exist in a culture prior to anyone deliberately creating a theory and that they relate to specialist theories as folk music relates to jazz. Folk theories exist in a culture prior to anyone deliberately creating a theory. A folk theory is a general assumption made by non-professionals or non-experts of a particular culture. “Folk theories are often the raw material from which philosophical, ethical, theological and scientific theories are created” (Garrett, 2004, p. 1).

Lakoff and Koveceses pose the question: Could a mere analysis of the language used to talk about anger actually uncover something real about the way we understand anger? (1983, p. 3). They discuss a folk theory based on the physiological effects of anger, which they identify as increased body heat, increased internal pressure, agitation and interference with accurate perception. Within this conceptual framework “the physiological effects of an emotion stand for the emotion” (Lakoff & Koveceses, 1983, p. 4).

A folk theory of the physiological effects of anger forms the basis of general metaphors utilised to describe and understand anger. The body, from this perspective, can be understood as a container for the emotions and anger is conceptualised as the heat of a
fluid within a container (Lakoff & Kovecses, 1983, p. 5). Conceptual metaphors can be helpful in that they allow knowledge to be gained via the transfer of details from the source domain to the target domain which means that knowledge about something obscure, abstract or difficult to understand (target domain) can be gained via something that is more concrete, accessible and easy to understand (source domain) (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Tapia, 2006).

Language can be used to construct models for understanding experience and therefore our metaphors can guide our inferences and therefore directly influence behaviour (Tapia, 2006). An example would be the metaphorical concept of the ‘Body as a container for the Self’ which can lead to a general ‘Subject-Self’ metaphor. This leads to conceptualisations such as: ‘I wasn’t myself’, It wasn’t the real me’ or ‘I was beside myself’ (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 269).

Examples of generic metaphors include intensity as heat and the body as a container (Soriano, 2003, p. 109). In addition, Soriano identifies a second group of ‘basic-level’ metaphors that are more typical of emotions in general and of anger in particular that provide the bulk of the conceptual structure for anger with direct links to experience. They include:

- Anger is the heat of a fluid in a container,
- Anger is fire,
- Anger is insanity,
- Anger is an opponent,
• Anger is a burden,

• Anger is a natural force and

• Anger is a controller (2003, p. 110).

Lakoff and Kovecses describe these basic-level metaphors as allowing us to comprehend and draw inferences about anger, using our knowledge of familiar, well-structured domains where anger is not just an amorphous feeling, but rather has an elaborate cognitive structure (1983, p. 28). When Kovecses found similar conceptualisations of anger across four differing cultures he proposed that this may be due to the fact that our conceptualisations are profoundly influenced by certain universal properties of the human body (2000, p. 161). He claims that diverse cultures tend to share a central metaphor that both informs and structures the concepts (i.e., a folk understanding). Kovecses found that all four cultures he examined conceptualised human beings as containers and anger as some kind of substance (a fluid or gas) inside the closed container (2000, p. 161).

The container metaphor has a number of advantages when conceptualising anger as it allows for dialogue regarding many aspects and properties of anger. “It allows us to conceptualise intensity (filled with), control (contain), loss of control (could not hold it in), dangerousness (to explode) and expression” (Kovecses, 2000, p. 161). He further asserts that within cultures that view anger as being associated with a physiological response of increased internal pressure then the use of the pressurised container metaphor is natural.
Kovecses’ claims that ‘heat’ metaphors and the ‘hot fluid in a container’ metaphor are central to the English conceptualisation of anger. This relates to a folk theory based on the physiological effects of anger and the resulting increase in body heat and tension (Lakoff & Kovecses, 1983). The emotional effect is understood in terms of the physiological effect and is subsequently viewed as a form of energy that when applied to the body begins to produce both internal heat and output energy. This internal heat can also function as input energy which produces various forms of output energy; for example, steam, pressure and agitation (Lakoff & Kovecses, 1983).

When anger is understood in terms of ‘the heat of a fluid within a container’ it reveals an ontology of anger and a central metaphor where anger leads to a dangerous loss of control or explosion. As anger intensity increases, the physiological effects of anger increase to the point that normal functioning is impaired and a loss of control eventuates which, like an explosion, is dangerous to the angry person and those around them (Lakoff & Kovecses, 1983, pp. 8-9).

The folk theory of anger utilises similar conceptual frameworks to that of insanity where both are described as highly energised states with insane and aggressive behaviour identified as a form of energy output (Lakoff & Kovecses, 1983, p. 11). Angry people, similar to the insane, are described in terms of exhibiting high level agitation, pressured and incoherent speech, uncontrolled and uncoordinated body movements (p. 13).
In the case of anger Kovecses claims specific metaphors relating to anger arise out of embodiment which occurs when it is really the case that people’s temperature and blood pressure rise in anger (Kovecses, 2000, p. 165). Powlison (1996), in contrast, argues that anger is not a thing or substance or something inside you; it is a moral act of the whole person. He asserts that this hydraulic theory of anger, based on a folk theory, along with the metaphors that describe anger in colourful terms as a pressurised substance inside us, although capturing how anger feels, are not meant to overpower the thing they intend to illustrate. “Anger feels fiery but it is not fire, the burning metaphor graphically captures the sensation of anger and its effects but is not intended to cancel out the fact that anger is something people do” (Powlison, 1996, p. 12).

When people believe that anger is a pressurised substance, something inside, not something they do, the idea points to a solution other than the individual taking personal responsibility for their actions and therefore reduces their capacity for remorse, reflection and change of behaviour while promoting the need for some form of catharsis where the anger is expelled from the self (Powlison, 1996). This leads to the notion of society having to step in with control and management strategies to restrict the actions of a person who cannot exercise self-control. Powlison (1995) proposes anger to be intrinsically a moral matter, evaluating and weighing something or someone, finding it lacking, wrong or displeasing and therefore moving into action. He continues that anger is a self-contained judicial system reacting to a perceived wrong with energy, it is not a thing but a moral act of the whole person, which requires increased self-understanding (1995, p. 48). Adams (1986) similarly claims that whenever the metaphorical or other use of language becomes a hindrance to proper thought and action it must be confronted directly while explaining the facts and correcting the erroneous thought and speech that lie at its base.
The literature review, at the start of the thesis, highlighted how anger has been historically associated with madness or lunacy, as a beastly passion that can negatively impact a person’s ability to reason and think rationally. Philosophers through the ages have debated whether or not anger can be brought under the authority of reason and cultures have differed in their views regarding whether or not anger and the aggression that it often produces is acceptable to achieve personal and social goals.

One of the concepts identified in the literature review guiding this research project has been that anger as an emotion needs to be understood and that we need to understand how different people think about anger in their specific contexts. Although the focus group participants struggled to articulate exactly what anger was, a clear description via their use of metaphor was uncovered, which corresponds to a folk theory of anger. The folk theory has helped to examine the words of participants in order to understand how anger is perceived and experienced in their real life contexts. They view anger via specific cultural lenses where the destructive consequences of their anger may be endorsed as acceptable due to the belief that anger overrides their ability to reason or think rationally thereby removing personal responsibility.

Focus group participants have highlighted the specific difficulties that they experience when angry. They have detailed the negative impact on their ability to think clearly in certain situations and how this has influenced the explosive and destructive physical consequences of their anger. The specific metaphors utilised by participants have been suggested to relate to the physiological effects of anger actually standing for the emotion, however, this has meant that possible skill deficits have not been addressed due to
historical-cultural notions of anger that have endorsed these attitudes and dialogue. Plato proposed that anger could be mastered by reason and researchers continue to argue how this can be achieved.

Greene et al. (2007) conceptualises problem anger and aggressive behaviour as the by-product of lagging cognitive skills in the domains of flexibility, frustration tolerance, and problem solving. Greene asserts that the way we understand angry behaviour directly impacts the way we respond to it (2010, p. 130). He continues that many young people who demonstrate explosive behaviour have deficits in crucial thinking skills commonly referred to as executive functions and that these deficits in executive function skills, social skills and language processing skills reveal what is or is not going on in the heads of young people when they are angry or frustrated (2010, pp. 29-30).

Greene discusses the concept of working memory where a person’s ability to multi-task requires three cognitive files to be accessed simultaneously. If a person is experiencing frustration, a problem or conflict situation they need to be able to identify the specific problem faced, to access their hindsight file in order to review how this situation has been handled in the past, and their forethought file for projecting possible solutions into the future and selecting the best option (2010, pp. 31-32). Greene continues that if these cognitive files are not all accessed and kept open at the same time then the ‘thinking through’ process stalls and risk of explosive behaviour increases (2010).
Blake and Hamrin define anger as “a subjective emotional state that involves the relationship of psychological components and cognitive appraisal” (2007, p. 209). They further point out that aggressive behaviour in children is fairly common, however, explain that as the child develops they learn skills to manage their anger before it becomes problematic. Children with high levels of aggression have deficits in social information processing which comprises of cognitive perception and appraisal, formulation and selection of goals and behavioural enactment (Blake & Hamrin, 2007, p. 210).

Many young people “lack even rudimentary vocabulary for describing their emotions” (Greene, 2010, p. 41). Young people can have difficulty categorizing and labelling their previous experiences and so may not know how they feel at any given moment and therefore have difficulty remembering how they previously responded when they felt the same way. They may be able to say ‘I am angry’, however, don’t know what to do next as a result of their anger (Greene, 2010). Greene (2009) refers to another cognitive skill as the ‘separation of affect’, which is the ability to separate the emotions being felt in a conflict, problem or frustrating situation from the thinking needed to resolve the situation. Young people “skilled at separating affect tend to respond to problems or frustrations with more thought than emotion” (Greene, 2009, p. 20).

The folk theory description of anger seems to have served as an excuse that anger and any resulting destructive action or catharsis can’t be changed thereby reducing an individual’s personal responsibility. It has also limited the use of language to describe anger, which was evident in participants limited dialogue and responses where they were convinced that aggression in their lives would continue and could not be stopped.
Greene highlights that there is a big difference between interpreting skill deficits as excuses rather than explanations. When used as excuses the door slams shut on the process of helping young people with problem anger, leading to strategies of management or containment. When used as an explanation it increases our understanding of potential skill deficits that this cohort of adolescent males have experienced and had culturally endorsed (2010, p. 55). This increased understanding of the adolescent male perspective on anger can improve how we help young men experiencing problem anger and potentially reduce the resulting explosive behaviours.

**Section 3 - Primes for Adolescent Male Aggression**

This section presents a discussion of participant responses to research questions four and five: Under what circumstances would adolescent male participants become aggressive? And where do adolescent male participants learn skills to deal with aggressive incidents? These questions relate to the second research aim: Identify why rural adolescent male participants act aggressively. As participants responded to these questions and responses were examined in relation to the literature it became evident that the identified antecedents to aggression were directly linked to an historical-cultural concept known as larrikinism.

Due to the fact that participant answers demonstrate a link to historical concepts that seemingly inform their beliefs and attitudes an introductory discussion is presented where an aggressive impulse in males is proposed to have been encouraged and rewarded by western society. The concept of Larrikinism is introduced as describing Australian
adolescent males for the first time and it is contrasted with the Australian national
class character and concept of masculinity. Specific personological and situational primes
(antecedents) for aggression identified by participants are then presented and examined in
relation to the broader literature, which demonstrates a clear historical-cultural genesis to
the primes for aggression identified by participants.

Understanding aggression and the role of priming

Aggression has been defined by Anderson and Huesmann as “behaviour directed toward
another individual carried out with proximate (immediate) intent to cause harm” (2003, p.
298). They claim that actual harm is not required and go on to make a distinction between
direct and indirect aggression. Direct aggression is committed in the presence of the target
whereas indirect aggression is committed outside the presence of the target, for example,
slandering or insulting the person to others (Anderson & Huesmann, 2003, p. 298).

When attempting to characterise aspects of aggression for comparison and gaining further
insight, authors such as Anderson and Huesmann (2003) and Bushman and Anderson
(2001) provide the following dimensions:

- Degree of hostility or agitated affect present,
- Automaticity of response,
- Degree to which the primary or ultimate goal was to harm the victim as opposed to
  benefitting the perpetrator, and finally
- The degree to which consequences were considered.
Many authors similarly identify a number of specific triggers that facilitate anger and increase the risk of aggressive behaviour (Batson et al., 2007; Darley & Pittman, 2003; Forgas & Smith, 2003; Haidt, 2003; Hoffman, 2000). They group these triggers into three categories based on the type of personal or social goal that is being hindered or threatened, these include:

- A moral goal, where a standard of fairness has been threatened,
- An egocentric goal, where personal well-being is threatened, and
- An altruistic goal, where the well-being of a cared-for other is threatened.

Batson et al. assert that each of the above forms of anger evoke different responses. They suggest that where a moral goal is threatened, individuals experience moral outrage, which elicits a response aimed at rectifying the perceived violation of the moral standard. When personal anger is elicited because of an egocentric goal being threatened, the response is geared toward retaliation and the promotion of self-interest and where an altruistic goal is threatened empathic anger will elicit direct action aimed at retaliation and the promotion of the interests of the cared-for other (2007, pp. 1273-1274). Moral outrage can be claimed by an individual to incite anger in others at a perceived miscarriage of justice, whereas in actuality the situation may be more accurately described as personal or empathic anger. The cry for justice can assist individuals to engage support in their cause and therefore serves to justify the resulting anger display or aggressive action (Batson et al., 2007).

Believing that aggressive behaviour is acceptable predicts aggressive behaviour in children and adolescents and yet the role in which knowledge structures are involved in
aggressive behaviour has received little attention (Calvete & Orue, 2012, p. 106). Broad dysfunctional memories and cognitions about oneself and relationship with others, termed Early Maladaptive Schemas, developed in childhood and elaborated throughout an individual’s life-time may underlie aggressive behaviour. For example mistrust schemas, where there is an expectation that others will hurt, abuse, humiliate or take advantage of a person, are directly related to aggressive behaviour (Calvete & Orue, 2012, p. 106). Children with high levels of aggression tend to perceive neutral cues in their environment as threatening and hostile. These misappraisals, in turn, justify their negative and aggressive response (Blake & Hamrin, 2007, p. 210).

Jacoby discusses the concept of priming which he describes as “an increased sensitivity to certain stimuli due to prior experience” (Jacoby, 1983, p. 21). Jacoby further suggests that priming occurs outside of our conscious awareness and differs from memory that relies more on the direct retrieval of information. “Priming is when a stimulus raises the activation level of a relevant knowledge structure, thereby making it more likely to be subsequently activated” (Jacoby, 1983, p. 21).

Anderson and Huesmann expand on this concept, introducing personological and situational factors that relate to a propensity to aggress. Both are proximate causal factors as they directly influence the current situation. Personological causes are described as whatever the person brings to the situation, including their attitudes, beliefs and behavioural tendencies. Situational causes are described as relating to the specific features of the present situation that increase or inhibit aggression (Anderson et al., 2003, p. 299).
Authors such as Berkowitz (1993) and Aronson, Wilson and Aker (2005) have similarly demonstrated that likelihood of anger expression in the form of aggression is increased via priming. Both authors link the role of personological and situational factors such as provocation, frustration, exposure to media violence, drug and alcohol use, inflated self-esteem, mood and beliefs about the appropriateness of aggression in differing social contexts, to increased aggressive responses.

Raval et al. conceptualise emotions such as anger as being an interactional process embedded in a particular cultural context that shapes meaning and experience. They assert that it is vital to understand beliefs about the causes and concomitants of and behavioural responses to one’s own and others anger, as well as family patterns of anger expression as a component of socialisation processes (2012, p. 320). When trying to differentiate between what constitutes the experience of an emotion three components are common:

- The causes or situational antecedents that lead to the experience,
- The emotional state that includes the concomitant physiological and cognitive responses that define the subjective experience, and
- The consequences of the emotional experience, how the individual and others respond to the experience (Raval et al., 2012, p. 321).

Raval et al. assert that cultural influences are evident in all three components of an emotion and that children learn a set of display rules or feeling rules, guidelines about which situations typically cause certain emotions, which emotions are appropriate and which ones are not and whether and how to respond to one’s own and others emotions. Parents and family members play particularly crucial roles in teaching children the display
rules of their culture through their direct responses to children’s emotions, as well as modelling their own emotional expressions and management strategies. The overall emotional climate of the family, broader goals of socialisation and specific conversations about emotions all contribute to children’s developing skills for emotional management and important aspects of self development (2012, pp. 320-322).

Cox and Harrison discuss terms like anger, hostility and aggression as merely serving as convenient, heuristic labels differentiating between the affective, behavioural and cognitive components of a single construct. They claim that most cognitive models of anger indicate that the experience of anger depends on the higher order appraisals of events, which determine whether or not an event will lead to the experience of anger or expression of aggression (2008, p. 373).

Focus group participants specified that they would become aggressive if they heard others threaten friends or family members and that they perceived verbal insults toward friends or family as being the same as a threat. Personal insults related to being teased about a range of factors such as culture, weight, intelligence, disability and compliance with masculine stereotypes, any characteristic that exposed a difference to the wider peer group norms. Participants did differentiate between how they responded to those making the verbal insults with a greater tolerance for comments from friends, which was identified as more likely a joke, as opposed to insults from people outside of their family or circle of friends.
Participants stated that they would become extremely angry if they experienced unfair treatment by teachers or parents and that this could lead to explosive and destructive behaviour that resulted because of the perceived injustice. Participants identified a number of things that seemed to act as primes for their aggressive behaviour, the majority of these related to personological factors (attitudes and beliefs) such as racism or homophobia and attitudes, beliefs and behavioural tendencies resulting from observational learning via role models, family members or the media. Situational factors identified by participants, the specific features of the situation that increased the chance of aggression, were the use of alcohol, peer pressure, the need to save face and territorial disputes among peers.

As participant views were explored it was evident that these beliefs and attitudes had a historical-cultural genesis that was quite fixed across generations. The historical literature linked participant responses directly to dialogues associated with an Australian conceptualisation of adolescent masculinity known as larrikinism. A discussion of male identity, Australian male identity and larrikinism follows as it provides contextual insight into the personological and situational factors that have acted as primes for aggression within this cohort of Australian rural adolescent males.

The instinct to be a fighter

Stories can be a powerful way of engaging with people’s experience across time. One of the classic stories about boys is ‘The Adventures of Tom Sawyer’ by Mark Twain (Twain, 1876). Twain prefaces his book with the comment:

most of the adventures recorded in this book really occurred; one or two were experiences of my own, the rest those of boys who were school mates of mine. Huck
Finn was drawn from life; Tom Sawyer also, but not from an individual – he is a combination of the characteristics of three boys whom I knew, and therefore belongs to the composite order of architecture.

He goes on to state that his plan for writing the book was ‘to try to pleasantly remind adults of what they once were themselves and of how they felt and thought and talked, and what queer enterprises they sometimes engaged in’.

Mark Twain provides an insight into the lives of boys in the late 19th century. We are invited to listen to their thoughts and use of language while vicariously experiencing their adventures. Fiction based on fact is a powerful social and cultural commentary regarding the times and provides insight into how these boys (characters) experienced those times.

Two excerpts from The Adventures of Tom Sawyer will be utilised to illustrate the journey that the researcher has taken while synthesising the participant focus group responses from the QR into a composite order of architecture.

Shortly Tom came upon the juvenile pariah of the village, Huckleberry Finn, son of the town drunkard. Huckleberry was cordially hated and dreaded by all the mothers of the town, because he was idle and lawless and vulgar and bad – and because all their children admired him so, and delighted in his forbidden society, and wished they dared to be like him. Tom was like the rest of the respectable boys, in that he envied Huckleberry his gaudy outcast condition, and was under strict orders not to play with him. So he played with him every time he got a chance. Huckleberry was always dressed in the cast-off clothes of full-grown men, and they were in perennial bloom and fluttering with rags. His hat was a vast ruin with a wide crescent lopped out of its brim; his coat, when he wore one, hung nearly to his heels and had the rearward buttons far down the back; but one suspender supported his trousers; the seat of the trousers bagged low and contained nothing; the fringed legs dragged in the dirt when rolled up.

Huckleberry came and went, at his own free will. He slept on doorsteps in fine weather and in empty hogsheads in wet; he did not have to go to school or to church, or call any being master or obey anybody; he could go fishing or swimming when and where he chose, and stay as long as it suited him; nobody forbade him to fight; he could sit up as late as he pleased; he was always the first boy that went barefoot in the spring and the
last to resume leather in the fall; he never had to wash, nor put on clean clothes; he could swear wonderfully. In a word, everything that goes to make life precious, that boy had. So thought every harassed, hampered, respectable boy in St. Petersburg (pp. 38-39).

Mark Twain allows us to see Huckleberry through the eyes of youth and yet as adult readers we can also see beyond the superficial manifestation of these ‘freedoms’ to Huckleberry’s deeper needs, which are invisible and unimportant to the youthful reader. We are provided a taste of this powerful medicine called perception. We celebrate the mischievous deeds and rebellion against authority of these boys while at the same time knowing that we are critical of boys who behave like this in our own contexts. We see the characteristics that are perceived by the St Petersburg boys as ‘making life precious’ and yet know that they will change these perceptions over time as they grow and mature. As Hutchins reports, the ancient Hellenistic philosopher Plato is said to have made the statement that ‘of all the animals, the boy is the most unmanageable’ (1952). It is difficult not to smile and share a moment of understanding with a man separated from us by so much more than just time.

Mark Twain also describes a very funny and yet insightful meeting between two boys who up until that point in time are strangers:

The summer evenings were long. It was not dark, yet. Presently Tom checked his whistle. A stranger was before him – a boy a shade bigger than himself. A new comer of any age or either sex was an impressive curiosity in the poor little shabby village of St Petersburg. This boy was well dressed, too – well dressed on a weekday. This was simply astounding. His cap was a dainty thing, his close-buttoned blue cloth roundabout was new and natty, and so were his pantaloons. He had shoes on – and it was only Friday. He even wore a necktie, a bright bit of ribbon. He had a citified air about him that ate into Tom’s vitals. The more Tom stared at the splendid marvel, the higher he turned up his nose at his finery and the shabbier and shabbier his own outfit seemed to him to grow. Neither boy spoke. If one moved, the other moved – but only
sidewise, in a circle; they kept face to face and eye to eye all the time. Finally Tom said:

‘I can lick you!’

‘I’d like to see you try it’.

‘Well, I can do it’.

‘No you can’t, either’.

‘Yes I can’.

‘No you can’t’” (pp. 5-6).

The scene continues for some time where the two boys continue to put challenge after challenge to each other, each time the one raising the bar that little bit further for the other until they are forced to save face by engaging in a physical fight. The two boys thrash around as one tries to assert his dominance over the other until Tom gets the upper hand and forces the most humiliating of words from the other, ‘Nuff’ (enough). As one boy runs off with his pride in tatters Tom yells out, ‘Now that’ll learn you. Better look out who you’re fooling with next time’ (p. 8).

This inner desire or instinct to ‘be a fighter’, as philosopher William James would say, seems so typified in this interaction between our two young characters that we are left with the impression that physical challenge and prowess lay at the heart of a young man’s sense of identity. Physicality becomes the expression of his masculinity and the way that he evaluates the self in relation to the unknown ‘other’. In dominating the other physically he has in a very real sense validated his sense of self. Tom’s concept of reality had been threatened but after the battle his world remains intact. The interaction demonstrates clearly that neither boy wants to fight. Twain brilliantly articulates the lengths that both boys go to in order to try and save face, to walk away with pride intact and yet the
differences between them are experienced as a threat and their pride pushes them into a seemingly inevitable physical confrontation.

Why couldn’t one back down or walk away? Why was difference experienced as a threat? William James speaks to this issue where he describes a scene from the Peloponnesian Wars. He recounts the Athenian response to a request for peace by the Milians where they state: ‘the powerful exact what they can and the weak grant what they must. Of the gods we believe and of man we know that, by law of their nature, wherever they can rule, they will. This law was not made by us and we are not the first to have acted upon it, we did but inherit it and we know that you and all mankind, if you were as strong as we are, would do as we do’ (1910, pp. 463-464).

Anderson and Huesmann point out that individuals respond to their world based on situational factors and the knowledge structures that they have learned and habitually use (2003, p. 302). Tom has dominated his opponent physically and believes that this has endorsed his identity over that of the stranger. Similar to the Athenians Tom seems to demonstrate an inner will to power, a desire to rule the situation that leads to physical conflict which is experienced as both reasonable and inevitable.

**A substitute for violence**

life’ (1966, p. 195). He proposed that every society has had in their traditional code of behaviour, particularly for young males, the commandment to ‘be a fighter’. He continues, ‘. . . our ancestors have bred pugnacity into our bones and throughout human history the aggressive impulse, so deeply embedded in our genes, has had no trouble in finding a socially acceptable outlet that was encouraged and rewarded’ (Fisher, 1966, p. 195).

Fisher suggests that young men over the years have been encouraged to emulate heroes from the Bible or folklore who had the enviable characteristics of physical strength, reckless courage and skill with weapons. He claimed that changes in culture and society have reduced the opportunities for young men to express this aggressive instinct and therefore young men attempt to meet this need to ‘be a fighter’ vicariously, by watching murder, football and faked wrestling matches on television or by chasing high risk, adrenaline producing activities. These substitutes, he suggested, have one great drawback; they are contrived and artificial. Fisher asserts ‘young men yearn for a chance to prove their hardiness in a way that really means something’ (Fisher, 1966, p. 196). He concludes that this aggressive instinct will continue to seek expression within society until we find what William James called a ‘moral equivalent for war’.

James (1910), a pacifist, stated that human history is a bath of blood, mankind has been nursed in pain, aggression and fear and the transition to a pleasure economy may have been fatal. He claims that men’s military instincts are being kept in a state of latency, however, the long-held scorn for inferiority engages them in a moment as in the battle cry of Fredrick the Great, ‘Dogs, would you live forever?’ Sell et al. (2012) asserts that contrary to common belief, human violence has been steadily declining over recorded
history. They continue that the modern pacification of human beings has led scholars to underestimate the frequency of aggression in ancestral societies with the average westerner finding it impossible to comprehend the pervasiveness of aggression and violence among males in many small-scale societies (p. 32). Historical records going back over hundreds of years and forensic evidence from archaeological excavations demonstrate a high prevalence for physical aggression and combat in human history (Sell et al., 2012, p. 35).

James (1910) continues that all the qualities of a man acquire dignity when he knows that the services of the collectivity that owns him, needs him and that if men are proud of the collectivity their own pride will rise in proportion. He asks, ‘what is it that men will feel honoured to belong to?’ and continues that only by answering this question will we understand how to elicit young men’s martial virtues whereby personal interest is surrendered to a selfless discipline for the common good or cause.

**Larrikinism and Australian adolescent male identity**

In late nineteenth century Australia there arose a problematic element of society that strongly challenged the prevailing cultural ideal of masculinity. They were adolescent males who came to be grouped under the term of larrikin (a term used in Australia prior to the concept of adolescence) and their behaviour under the collective larrikinism. Despite attempts to contain, control and remove these young Australians from society, elements of their character have become incorporated into the national male identity. As Vine notes,
‘larrikinism remains a perpetual streak in the Australian character which can be found in an array of different individuals’ (2009, p. 124).

Hirst (2008) suggests that the larrikin spirit relates to a certain boldness, a self-confidence resulting from young men who were aggressively freeing themselves from old-world class distinctions, who absolutely refused to be confined or controlled. Smith explains that the contemporary meaning of larrikin relates to the hard working, hard drinking, rough talking, rule breaking bloke whose behaviour seems to be popular among, and reinforced by, his mates. However, Hirst clarifies that the larrikins’ violence and aggression make them a difficult legacy for proponents of an Australian national type (2008, p. 31).

Bellanta (2012) asserts that larrikinism placed a premium on hyper-masculine qualities such as cockiness and fighting prowess, it celebrated physical aggression, endorsed violence against women, was flagrantly heterosexual, racist and believed that a great leader had to be a hard hitter who could hold his liquor.

In 1998 Rickard conducted a textual analysis related to how the larrikin has been represented throughout Australia’s history and identified: ‘Aggression, both physical and verbal, a censorious edge (the larrikin can not only ‘take the piss’ out of people, but stand in judgement over them), humour and a romantic attachment to working class origins’ as four main larrikin characteristics (as cited in Vine, 2009, p. 125). Earlier, Pearl provides a vivid and sobering description of the nineteenth century larrikin as a:

coward and a brute. He hunted in packs. His weapons were the boot, the broken tumbler, the butt of the bottle, the chunk of blue metal. His diversions, when he was not making war against rival pushes (gangs) or dancing with his donah (female larrikin), were bar-wrecking, window smashing or breaking up a picnic party (1958, p. 8).
Manning Clark, in his history of Australia, similarly describes larrikins as young men who derived devilish pleasure from destruction of property simply for destruction’s sake. The one ambition of the Australian larrikin was to ‘spit moral and material filth at every respectable person who passed him by’ (1997, p. 359). The Bulletin (1892, p. 4, as cited by Smith, 2008), which was an important source of social commentary and a staunch promoter of the Australian masculine archetype, wrote extensively on the larrikin and described larrikinism as involving:

idleness, destruction of property, acts of violence, obstructing the highway, bad language, the assumption of an aggressively disrespectful attitude, ignorance, an unshaven aspect, a fishy eye, retreating forehead, a braided coat, a soft black hat, bell-bottomed trousers, high heeled boots and a general and promiscuous cussedness of demeanour’ (p. 156).

The Australian Journal (1873, p. 587, as cited by Smith, 2008) clearly identified that:

the term larrikins has been applied to fast rowdy youths who sought their amusement in all kinds of vicious larking. They are young blackguards of the streets, pleasure reserves and places of public resort and amusements, whose chief pleasure is derived from making themselves disagreeable to others by the utter looseness and grossness of their demeanour...noisy, rowdy, vicious, smoking, drinking, gambling, daring young blackguards (p. 156).

The larrikin character has been transformed and sanitised and yet it remains and continues to portray certain behaviours that, although problematic for Australian society, continue to be sufficiently accepted and even promoted. The off-handed comment by philologist Sidney Baker may in fact be quite profound where he claims that ‘if an Australian boy or youth does not have a little of the larrikin in him, then he is scarcely worth his inheritance’ (1945, p. 112). Bellanta similarly states ‘that so many Australians should choose to adopt a version of larrikinism as a badge of national identity thus reveals a great deal about Australian culture and history (2012, p. 191).
Sleight refers to a number of Melbourne newspaper and police reports from the 1870s where larrikins were described as being in their early teens, that transitional age between childhood and adult maturity (2009, p. 235). He continues that Police Sergeant Dalton, to whom the term larrikin is often attributed due to his Irish pronunciation of the term ‘larking’, was quoted as saying that the young men he most often dealt with were between fourteen to eighteen years of age with the majority growing out of these behaviours by their twenties (p. 234). Larrikinism, it seems, was ‘predominantly, though not exclusively, a passion of youth’ (Sleight, 2009, p. 234).

Historian Manning Clark provides the classic example of larrikinism as being epitomised by Australian soldiers in World War I where they refused to salute officers, were involved in sex orgies before being shipped out, had violent confrontations with Melbourne police and while in Egypt ‘burned the belongings of local people, brawled, got drunk and rioted, and spent sufficient time in local brothels for many of them to suffer from venereal disease” (Clark, 1997, p. 453). Gorman declared that:

The conflict between being a soldier, subject to discipline, however, refusing to display that subjection, is an apt metaphor for much of the ambivalence in the Australian character. When laws do not reflect common sense but merely creedless moralism there will inevitably arise larrikins who rebel against those laws, and against the tyranny of opinion that supports them. (Gorman, 1990, p. 37, as cited by Vine, 2009, p. 114)

Smith asserts that certain larrikin traits were unable to be removed through various strategies and therefore were redefined and reconceptualised into a new national masculinity (Smith, 2008, p. 239). Many characteristics of the larrikin were subsumed into the national stereotype and things that larrikins had initially been criticised for, like
drinking to get drunk, physical aggression and disrespect for authority, became acceptable as they were adopted into this revised national stereotype (Smith, 2008, p. 239).

Ward (1958) provides this extensive description of the Australian national type and writes:

According to the myth “the typical Australian” is a practical man, rough and ready in his manners and quick to decry any appearance of affection in others. He is a great improviser, ever willing ‘to have a go’ at anything but willing to be content with a task done in a way that is ‘near enough’. Though capable of great exertion in an emergency, he normally feels no impulse to work hard without good cause. He swears hard and consistently, gambles heavily and often, and drinks deeply on occasion. Though he is “the world’s best confidence man” he is usually taciturn rather than talkative, one who endures stoically rather than one who acts busily. He is a “hard case”, sceptical about the value of religion and intellectual and cultural pursuits generally. He believes that Jack is not only as good as his master but, at least in principle, probably a good deal better, and so he is a great “knocker” of eminent people unless, as in the case of his sporting heroes, they are distinguished by physical prowess. He is a fiercely independent person who hates officiousness and authority, especially when these qualities are embodied in military officers and policemen. Yet he is very hospitable and, above all, will stick to his mates through thick and thin, even if he thinks they may be in the wrong…he tends to be a rolling stone, highly suspect if he should chance to gather much moss” (pp. 1-2).

The national character ‘warts and all’

An article by Australian historian John Hirst in ‘the Monthly’ July, 2008, titled ‘An oddity from the start: Convicts and national character’ explored some of the traits identified as belonging to the Australian national character (since European settlement) such as anti-authoritarianism, mateship, larrikinism, and the supposed links to our convict past. Hirst (2008) points out that a ‘larrikin’ had been defined as a boisterous, often badly behaved young man, however, stated that they could also be referred to as a person who disregarded convention and a person given to comical or outlandish behaviour. This sounded rather like an Australian equivalent to Tom Sawyer and yet early descriptions of
‘larrikins’ also conveyed an element of deviance and of an anti-social and highly aggressive flavour.

Hirst (2008) suggests that the larrikin spirit in Australia remains a mysterious phenomenon with much debate even as to the origin of the term. As Hirst says, ‘It was the boldness that came from self-confidence, of young men who would not be confined. A prosperous working class, free of old-world condescension, had spawned in its native-born youth this baroque display of independence’ (2008 n.p.n.). Recently, Bellanta goes as far as stating that larrikinism potentially unlocks the secret to the Australian national identity (2012).

Hirst (2008) continues that in the early days of European settlement Australians were constantly being reminded that their nation was founded with convicts which he contended made it morally suspect in the eyes of the global community. By way of compensation much of the early Australian literature conveyed an image of purity, of a virginal country, white and springing forth from new beginnings, casting aside the old world ways and class biases. ‘White Australia’ as a concept of purity, morality and re-birth from a convict past was subsequently transformed into a policy with race overtones that began to ‘deal with’ aspects of the new society that did not fit this political agenda. Aboriginal Australians bore the brunt of this policy via various manifestations of systems designed to hide or remove the perceived ‘impure’ aspects of society, and certain young Australian men, ‘larrikins’, were also identified by the media of the day as a serious problem that needed to be dealt with.
Hirst (2008) goes on to claim that Gallipoli was a significant turning point for Australia due to the fact that following the heroism demonstrated by Australian troops against what seemed like insurmountable odds Britain, for the first time, acknowledged Australia as a nation of worth. Our soldiers had cemented Australia's reputation before the world and even though the ‘larrikin’ spirit had been both present and problematic within the character of the ‘digger’ (Australian soldier) Australians now accepted their soldiers as heroes and as a strong national identity, ‘warts and all’.

Hirst (2008) explains how the digger was now seen as a respectable warrior for the Empire; however, there remained aspects of his character, such as his refusal to show respect to officers and his tendency to larrikinism, which were now indulged: ‘Every Anzac Day both parts of the Australian male character were on display; the warrior in the formal celebrations in the morning and the drunk, aggressive two-up player in the afternoon, when the police turned a blind eye so that the digger as larrikin could have free rein’ (2008 n.p.n.). Bellanta (2012) similarly discusses how servicemen during the First World War claimed a distinctly Australian character that was openly aggressive with a pugnacious edge. Diggers celebrated their affinity with larrikins and after the armistice these larrikin digger characters were increasingly celebrated as quintessentially Australian. The idea that Australian men were quick with their fists, given to salty language and tomfoolery but with a heart of gold demonstrates how the larrikin spirit was transformed and embraced by Australians at large (Bellanta, 2012).

In one sense the digger had legitimised our national identity and therefore it was embraced by all segments of society and yet, as Hirst highlights, this meant that certain negative
aspects of the digger’s behaviour were now tolerated because of the overall benefits that had resulted. Hirst (2008) describes these less than desirable aspects of the digger as ‘larrikinism’ and explains how Australian society’s take on larrikins was transformed to a more positive connotation. Prior to this time ‘larrikinism’ had been experienced by Australian society as a form of deviance or as the anti-social element living on the fringes, criminal and a growing menace, a link to a convict past that ‘white Australia’ wanted distance from and if possible removed. We now had a dualistic concept of the Australian male that encompassed both hero and larrikin, which therefore provided a powerful motivator for ‘turning a blind eye’ to certain behaviours that were now ‘part of the masculine package’.

Bellanta (2012) asserts that anyone living in Australia long enough knows that the archetypal image of the ANZAC digger was of the ordinary working man given to drunkenness and irreverent humour. He was anti-authoritarian and nonchalant in the face of adversity. To call someone a larrikin became an excuse for their bad behaviour, offering an affectionate slant to their disrespect for social niceties and raucous drunkenness with mates. It also became an excuse for more serious digger transgressions such as racist assaults against Egyptian civilians and instances of rape, murder and inveterate brothelising. When linked to larrikinism many of these behaviours were dismissed as no more than the actions of mischievous youth. Eckersley makes the point that if we are to optimise the wellbeing of young Australians it should involve ‘at the most fundamental, cultural level, changing the stories or narratives by which Australian’s define themselves, their lives and their goals’ (2008, p. 5).
An Australian masculinity

It is important to note that the Bulletin magazine had been a primary voice in characterising the larrikin element. In the 1890s the Bulletin began promoting a different and sanitised form of larrikinism that celebrated the ‘bush legend’. This concept of the Australian male became a national image promoting the hard drinking, rough talking, independent and anti-authoritarian bush worker. This image was very much promoted throughout Australian literature at the time with such icons as Banjo Paterson and Henry Lawson even participating in an ongoing debate regarding perceptions of the ‘bush legend’ that was printed in the Bulletin between 1892-1893.

With a growing fear that reports of larrikinism might dissuade skilled workers from coming to Australia the reputation of this young nation needed to be safeguarded and the image of the larrikin transformed. Along with Banjo Paterson and Henry Lawson the literature of Ethel Turner in her 1896 publication ‘The Little Larrikin’ challenged the prevailing social attitudes towards certain ‘youthful endeavours’ and wrote of an innate goodness concealed behind the overtly coarse nature of the larrikin (Sleight, 2009, pp. 247-249).

C.J. Dennis similarly trialled his character ‘The Sentimental Bloke’ in the pages of the Bulletin before publishing it and his ‘The Moods of Ginger Mick’ proved incredibly popular around the years of World War I. Ginger Mick was transformed from larrikin to digger sacrificed on the slopes of Gallipoli for the national cause and greater good (Sleight, 2009, p. 249). An earlier short story ‘Dick Kelly Larrikin’, which was published...
in the Weekly Times in April of 1902, also described a Melbourne push leader with a violent past who heroically rescues a number of people from a sinking boat. Dick subsequently volunteers for military service in the Boer War and it is during combat and national service that he finds ‘a purposeful channel for his combative inclination (Sleight, 2009, p. 249). Dick manages to hold his tongue and exercise self-control with superior officers. In battle, surrounded and facing bullets from all sides Dick is mortally wounded and gives up his horse to a mate before succumbing to his wounds. He dies a hero, redeemed from his past ways by demonstrating selfless valour for the greater good (Sleight, 2009, pp. 249-250). Dick proves that despite his past larrikin behaviour he is a poor dear boy who underneath the tough, aggressive exterior had a heart of gold.

**Personological factors identified by participants**

This section presents the primes for aggression as identified by focus group participants. They are deliberately located after the preceding historical dialogue in order to provide a cultural context for each individual prime. Each personological and situational factor is linked to the broader literature demonstrating the role of historical-cultural context in influencing participants’ ongoing attitudes and beliefs regarding aggression.

**Priming for Aggression: Racism**

Racism was a topic that surfaced during the focus groups as an attitude that would lead to participant aggression. Twelve percent of participants (Appendix H) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI), which is significantly higher than state and
national averages of between two to four percent (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008; Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2009; Muir et al., 2009; NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 2009; NSW Government, 2010).

Even though the focus groups captured enough of the comments concerning racism to explore the topic further within this thesis, many conversations both during the course of the RWP and post individual sessions were informal and not captured. Many boys with an ATSI background wanted to convey their experiences of racism first hand, following the research sessions where racism was discussed, to explain how many of their white friends would not understand how racism impacted their day-to-day experiences.

Racism is discussed here in the limited context of how it impacts Indigenous Australians as this was the primary context throughout focus group discussions. An unpublished thesis by Saunders was extremely helpful with two questions posed:

- “Why does the existence of an Aboriginal ‘Other’ threaten a white sense of belonging?” and
- “What are the mechanisms and purposes of aggression towards, or exclusion of, that which represents otherness in the Australian context?” (Saunders, 2006, p. xiv).

These questions were relevant for an exploration into racism as a primer for aggressive behaviour in rural adolescent males and therefore a range of quotes and references from Saunders’ thesis are used to complement the broader research included.
Indigenous Australians and links to aggression

Australian school data highlight that there is a greater prevalence of assault in the ATSI verses the non-ATSI student population (Grunseit et al., 2005). Violence presents a significant challenge to Indigenous Australians and is an all too regular presence in their lives (Macklin & Gilbert, 2011). Statements like the above are not meant to convey that Aboriginal people have a congenital propensity towards violence but rather acknowledge the consequences of different child-rearing practices and the impact of certain social and economic factors on child development and subsequent behavioural outcomes (Grunseit et al., 2005). Examining why high rates of aggression exist for adolescent males within Indigenous communities sheds some light on the broader issue of increasing societal aggression among Australian adolescent males.

Aboriginal people have suffered major and frequent losses and have also experienced the loss of practices and rituals that enabled them to deal with these losses (Hillin & McAlpine, 2004a, pp. 17-18). When any group of people experience a profound sense of loss, disorientation, disempowerment and frustration it can lead to morbid aggression, depression and lethal despair (Bolton, 1994, as cited by Hillin & McAlpine, 2004a, p. 18). “Under colonisation, ‘Aborigines’ became a collectivity that precluded any understanding of the diversity of Aboriginal Australia. Aboriginal people stopped being Koori, Murri, Gamiloroi, Wiradjuri, Yorta Yorta, Pitjantjatjarra, Walpiri, Nyoongar, Yolngu and became merely a ‘race’ of people (and British subjects)” (NSW Institute of Psychiatry, 2004, p. 18).
Research by Day et al. (2006) with Aboriginal offenders in Australia directly linked experiences of anger with both intergenerational and historical experiences. Anger was described by offenders in terms of being passed down from one generation to the next and was inextricably linked to family and community dynamics. This relationship between trauma, anger and violence is vital to the understanding of violent behaviour among Indigenous offenders (Macklin & Gilbert, 2011, p. 2).

At present there is a massive over-representation of Aboriginal youth in the Australian and NSW criminal justice system: “Indigenous young people, between 10-17 years of age, were detained at ten times the rate of all young people in Australia”, The Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002-2003 as cited by The Australian Human Rights Commission, (2006). “Aboriginal Australia had its own system of Law, which included ‘punishment’, but did not have within it a system of ‘incarceration’ and ‘confinement’; it did not have the concept of the ‘gaol’ where people were locked away. Incarceration was to become an overwhelming feature of the Aboriginal experience of colonisation which took a myriad of forms including; missions, reserves, offshore islands, hospitals, stations, ‘native’ settlements, institutions and children’s ‘homes’, as well as prisons” (NSW Institute of Psychiatry, 2004, p. 18).

If anger is elicited by threats to identity and as promoting self-assertive qualities in order to maintain personal boundaries, then surely the line between personal anger and moral outrage is blurred for many Indigenous Australians. Indicators of health and wellbeing show that young indigenous Australians have comparatively very poor outcomes (Aird, Najman, & Shuttlewood, 2004; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2005). It is
important to note that only 54% of Indigenous young people between the ages of 15-19 years are enrolled in education compared to 76% of non-Indigenous young people in the same age bracket (Muir et al., 2009, p. 38) and that suicide rates for Indigenous youth are four (males) to seven (females) times higher than for non-Indigenous Australian youth (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2008).

Priest and Paradies (2010) point out that we have no idea of the financial cost of racism to society, however, we do know that people experiencing racism exhibit a higher incidence of mental health and behavioural problems, especially young people. Racism and discrimination contributes significantly to individual and community stress levels and the experience of social exclusion which in turn have been linked to alcohol and other drug use, physical assault and mental health problems (Paradies, Harris, & Anderson, 2008). Priest and Paradies (2010) add that there is a dearth of empirical evidence regarding the extent of racist attitudes in Australia, however, point out that the studies that do exist suggest an ongoing societal problem. The 2007 South Australian survey on racism found that 88.3% of respondents identified that racial prejudice was present in Australia (Dunn, White, & Gandhi, 2010, p. 25).

Racism relates directly to the destructive influence of narrow ideas regarding Australian-ness (Bulbeck, 2004). Eckersley et al. (2006) point out that culture tends to be transparent or invisible to the individuals living within it and therefore the deeply internalised assumptions and beliefs that influence day-to-day experience are difficult to discern (p. 33).
Birch (2003) in his essay, ‘Nothing has changed: The making and unmaking of Koori culture’, claims that following the European settlement of Australia there was a deeply Eurocentric notion that the land had been empty (terra nullius). This assumption, based on European notions of land ownership and culture, led to the denial of and devaluing of Indigenous culture and eventually even the denial of an Indigenous presence. He states “these hegemonic histories take possession of others’ histories and silence them or manipulate and deform them” (Birch, 2003, p. 152). The failure of initial attempts to deny Aboriginal presence (terra nullius) and later, to absorb it (assimilation) have compounded the problematic relationship between Aboriginal people and white Australians (Saunders, 2006).

As Anderson and Huesmann (2003) point out there appear to be at least two important mechanisms that allow people to disengage their moral standards – moral justifications and dehumanising the victim. Moral justifications for extreme and mass violence include ‘it is for the person’s own good’, it is for the good of society, or it satisfies the demands of personal honour. Such justifications can be applied at multiple levels, from child abuse to genocidal war. Dehumanising the victim operates by making sure that one’s moral standards are simply not applicable. Potential victims are placed in the ultimate out-group, one that has no human qualities (Anderson & Huesmann, 2003, p. 309).

When Australian youth were demonstrating problematic behaviour in the late nineteenth century they were seen as a threat to the wider social fabric of the times. Newspaper articles influenced the dialogue of the day when talking about these ‘larrikins’ and utilised racist metaphors to dehumanise the rebellious youth. They were referred to in terms of
being savages, uncivilised blackguards and troublemakers who gather in tribes. Their supposed leaders were referred to as chiefs and their actions were likened to the lewd actions of camp black gins. This public discourse exposes the racist mindset of the times where the larrikin element being referred to were also renowned for their own overt racism and brutal attacks on non-white Australians (Bellanta, 2012).

Saunders (2006) refers to comments made by the former ATSIC Commissioner, Alison Anderson, from a television interview on Lateline, April 16, 2004. Anderson stated that, “200 years ago the non-indigenous people when they came into Australia actually gave our people quick death by gun, they shot ‘em. But the life that we have as Indigenous people in Australia today is a slow death by policy”. Stanner (2001) similarly asserts a wilful occlusion of Aboriginality in the Australian psyche and claims that this is not simply due to cultural misunderstandings but rather a deliberate structural matter where a view from a window has been created to deliberately exclude a whole segment of the landscape.

Saunders is passionate in stating that we will never understand who we are as Australians unless we embrace our Aboriginal element and truly know and become proud of our shared history and identity (Saunders, 2006, p. 378). Saunders cites Dodson’s remarks made in 2000, “each of us is unique, we are different. We’re all Australians and we call this place home. Let us rejoice in our diversity and difference because it’s they that will ultimately enrich us as peoples but going forward is also about remembering and I beg you to listen to those whispers in your heart and let them bellow out for a better future, a future that is steeped in the spirit of reconciliation” (Saunders, 2006, p. 375).
Anger and aggression in this context is clearly embedded within a cultural framework where historical events have shaped and influenced the way that anger has been expressed and communicated across generations in Indigenous Australians. Aggression in this context can be linked directly to self-assertive action aimed at correcting an injustice and as fighting against a threat to identity and a wider sense of where an individual fits within society at large. Focus group participants demonstrated that they continue to manifest attitudes and behaviour that is deeply influenced by our historical approach to race.

**Priming for Aggression: Homophobia**

When the topic of homosexuality was mentioned the focus group participants overwhelmingly expressed disgust and aggressive attitudes toward same-sex attracted male peers. Because the conversations were in the focus group context it was difficult to determine how much of these interactions were a true reflection of individual opinions as opposed to comments that would be endorsed by the group as a whole (possible influence of groupthink). Regardless of the motivating factor participants exposed contempt for this different form of masculinity and believed that aggression was justified in order to police a ‘more acceptable’ masculinity. These homophobic attitudes extended to behaviours that were perceived to be feminine, like being academic, and so were not just related to sexuality.

Researchers are calling for a greater effort and commitment to challenge stereotypes relating to what is a ‘normal’ or a ‘proper boy’ in schools. These stereotypes, too often, “prevent boys from developing a broader set of skills for coping and surviving in a
changing society where interpersonal skills and emotional literacy are being valued more and more in the labour market” (Martino, 2005, p. 1). Martino poses the question, how do we encourage and embrace diversity and different ways of being a boy in our schools and society? He suggests that we need to explore ways of creating safe spaces in schools for addressing issues of masculinity in respectful and meaningful ways (2005, pp. 1-2).

Martino claims that adolescent males feel a constant pressure to avoid working hard at school so that they don’t appear ‘geekish’ to their peers. These male students were prepared to utilize disruptive behaviour if necessary to pursue the more desirable status of rebel (2000, p. 102). Boys’ fear of failure operates across a number of domains. It relates to fear of not living up to popular images of masculinity, fear of being labelled ‘sissy’ or seen as feminine in any way and a fear of having their sexuality questioned (Martin, 2003, p. 59). This fear can also have the effect of exaggerating boys’ masculinity contributing to a ‘hyper-masculinity’ (Martin, 2003). Boys attempting to gain peer acceptance via hyper-masculine behaviour can promote some forms of aggression where “physical violence backs up the dominant cultural pattern, for example beating up ‘perverts’” (Connell, 1987, p. 60).

Bellanta (2012) points out that the Australian masculine identity has been shaped by an aggressive and determined heterosexuality with a deliberate distancing from anything considered effeminate. Boys are at risk of being called things like ‘fag’ (derogatory term inferring that they are homosexual) if they are perceived by peers as being overly emotive, warm or expressive, non-competitive, physically weak, or if they are unable or unwilling to dominate girls (Pascoe, 2007). Many young men might undertake a constant regime of
self-surveillance in order to avoid being perceived as the ‘hard-working student’, which they often designated as “feminized other” (Martino, 2000, p. 102).

This notion of boys reinforcing or policing that it is ‘not cool to be clever’ was, however, overwhelmingly rejected by male students in a study by Trent and Slade (2001) where the students identified such statements as being simplistic and as an example of adults simply getting it wrong. The male students wanted commonly held assumptions about boys’ attitudes questioned and claimed it was further evidence of the adult world not actively listening. Focus group participants, in contrast, supported the concept that there was a narrow and specific masculinity that they aspired to and that this was reinforced by peer group pressure. The study by Trent and Slade (2001) highlights the need to view results in a broader context as, despite comments by students in their research, the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that homophobic policing is a reality with negative consequences for many young men.

Lingard et al. (2002) state that homophobic put-downs were used as a method of control over certain boys who were identified as not conforming to the dominant and stereotyped ways of being male, e.g., some boys with pro-academic attitudes. These put-downs were suggested to relate more to the ‘policing’ of suitable male behaviour as opposed to issues of sexuality (Lingard et al., 2002, p. 83). Such bullying behaviour by boys, which were identified as a problem in most of the case-study schools, can contribute to particular ‘macho’ cultures which contribute to boys being resistant to schooling and at increased risk for mental health issues (Lingard et al., 2002, p. 83).
Kimmel and Mahler (2003) similarly state that the most common put-down heard in high schools is ‘that’s so gay’. They claim boys hear this as a constant assessment and commentary of their masculinity, which is not necessarily related to their sexual orientation. “Gay-baiting suggests that he is a failure at the one thing he knows he wants to be and is expected to be – a man” (Kimmel & Mahler, 2003, p. 1453).

Australian research has found that same-sex attracted (SSA) young people experience school as overwhelmingly heterosexual, violent (or fearful of violence), alienating and homophobic in that homophobia is used to ‘police’ gender by challenging anyone who doesn’t behave according to sanctioned gender roles, regardless of sexual orientation (Hillin & McAlpine, 2004b, p. 19). Forty six percent of Australian SSA young people had experienced verbal or physical violence, most of which (70%) occurred at school (Hillier, Harrison, & Dempsey, 1999).

Connell (1995) refers to the ‘social organisation of masculinity’ and states that within this organisation most boys are happy being boys because they recognise the status that goes with being a man in today’s society, hence the use of terms like ‘girl’ as an insult utilised against boys. Pro-feminist programs that suggest males should consider giving up privileges and the desire to be a powerful actor in the social order are not particularly enticing or convincing for many men (Mills, 1997).

The Australian research report, ‘Addressing the Educational Needs of Boys’ presents comprehensive findings to the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and
Training (Lingard et al., 2002). The authors point out that boys’ disruptive behaviour was directly linked to their desire to gain approval within their peer group, referred to as ‘acting cool’. Many students from the research schools commented that there were greater levels of peer group pressure on boys to conform with these ‘cool’ behaviours, or at least that this pressure was more strongly enforced amongst boys via bullying, physical and verbal put-downs, especially homophobic behaviours (Lingard et al., 2002, pp. 13-14).

Throughout adolescence, the intensification of peer relationships assists the male to move away from fantasy and imagination play to an emphasis on sports, sports involvement, and competition. A male not conforming to typical norm behaviours is at risk for considerable ostracism from his peers, social isolation, and, specifically, bullying. Although girls experience more bullying by means of verbal abuse, boys experience bullying behaviours that are physically more aggressive (Marcell & Monasterio, 2003).

Many authors strongly assert that boys, as a social group, do need to change due to the fact that they continue to be negatively influenced by dominant constructs of masculinity. Concepts of masculinity that are associated with power, domination and non-emotion while devaluing and demeaning activities connoted as feminine must be challenged if our boys are to achieve positive behavioural and attitudinal change within the school environment and wider society (Connell, 2000; Keddie, 2003; Lingard et al., 2002; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003; Mills & Keddie, 2005b).

So what is a boy? And do we want boys to change? The multitude of differences amongst boys will always make it very difficult to identify a pedagogy that is appropriate for ‘all’
boys (Francis, 2000; Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003). Weaver-Hightower states that "there is no single, universal, historical version of masculinity to which all cultures subscribe or aspire, rather, ideals of masculinity are historically and contextually dependent, making a nearly infinite number of masculinities possible” (2003, p. 479). Australian adolescent males are the product of a distinctly Australian culture and as such we need to examine the historical and contextual influences, both positive and negative, that have shaped their current concept of identity.

**Priming for Aggression: Family influence and observational learning**

Focus group participants stated that they rarely learned how to deal with aggressive incidents and many stated that the RWP was the only place that this had occurred. A number of focus group participants identified learning skills to deal with aggressive incidents from family members whose ability to resolve conflicts were described in terms of their ability to win physical fights.

The family could be considered the most proximal influence relating to the socialisation of children and young people. Culture is a more distal influence and yet directly impacts the social mechanisms of family, school, church and the mass media. The acceptance of aggression can vary greatly within cultural groups and within differing societal contexts (Anderson & Huesmann, 2003; Raval, Raval & Becker, 2012).
Anthropologists have charted how the central ideas of communities are carried between generations in the stories that they tell, and that story is a powerful vehicle for transporting ideas over time. Out of the field of education comes the realisation that the kinds of stories people tell actually shape history, how people tell a story will shape how they act, so what gets selected as being important, and how it is told, is inherently political (Eckersley et al., 2006).

We will never understand the role of anger and aggression in our adolescent males unless we can begin to understand the stories that they tell others about the kind of person that they would like to become (Eckersley et al., 2006, p. 28). The clarity of the story is directly linked to the clarity of action that the person engages in and, as Davies claims, these stories become “the mechanisms through which we are spoken into existence” (1993, p. 15).

Young people’s behaviour is influenced to a large extent by parental behaviour and their beliefs and attitudes regarding anger and aggression directly correlate with that of parents and peers (Anderson & Huesmann, 2003; Guerra, Huesmann, & Spindler, 2002; Parker & Benson, 2004). Social learning and social cognitive theories link the development of social behaviour to internalised standards of behaviour that are formed via social influences and observational learning. These internalised standards in turn influence cognitive evaluations and the interpretation of life events (Anderson & Huesmann, 2003, p. 301). Lack of positive role models and modelling of aggressive behaviour is a primary catalyst for aggressive behaviour in young people (Bandura, 2011).
When a young person witnesses regular aggressive behaviour, particularly from trusted adults, it conveys a permissiveness for, or tolerance of, aggression and can reduce inhibitory responses to frustration, thereby increasing aggressive reactions in the young person (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961). From a social learning perspective aggression is learned through the observation of models (observational learning) and subsequent imitation of these behaviours (Eyal & Rubin, 2003). Guerra, Huesmann and Spindler (2003) referring to the work of Bandura describe aggression modelled by parents or family members as the most prominent source of behavioural modelling and that children use the same aggressive tactics with others that are modelled by their parents.

Guerra et al. (2003) claim that children growing up in an aggressive environment behave more aggressively and are more likely to be aggressive toward their own children later in life, which perpetuates aggressive behaviour across successive generations. If a young person witnesses aggression that is in some way approved by significant others in their life then this behaviour is experienced as acceptable and is reinforced, and the young person is unwittingly ingesting the situational factors and forming scripts that they will utilise in similar situations (Eyal & Rubin, 2003). In addition Eyal and Rubin identify three features that are essential for vicarious learning to occur under Bandura’s Social Learning theory:

- The need for ‘homophily’ (similarity between the actor and observer),
- ‘Identification’ (the observer being able to empathise and share in the actor’s experience), and
- ‘Para-social interaction’ (a friendship / bond with the actor) (2003, p. 77).
“Relationships with family and friends are vitally important to long-term emotional and psychological development of young people” (UNICEF, 2007, p. 23). Family means different things to different people and as such it is difficult if not impossible to define the typical Australian family. A report from the Commonwealth of Australia suggests that it can be more meaningful to define families according to what they do as opposed to what they look like. They propose that families are ideally where children receive care, support, protection and love (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008, p. 6). In contrast authors such as Hemphill, Toumbourou and Catalano (2005) and Parker and Benson (2004) point out that the presence of family conflict and perceived lack of support increases the risk of aggressive behaviour in youth.

A young person’s wellbeing is directly related to the wellbeing of their immediate family which is ultimately related to community and societal conditions (Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002). Young people highly value their family relationships and friends along with their health and independence (Muir et al., 2009, p. 31) and therefore issues of intimacy, belonging and support demonstrate the level to which a young person feels connected to or engaged within their relationships (Eckersley et al., 2006).

The World Health Organisation states that “young people who are not socially integrated are far more likely to exhibit difficulties with their physical and emotional health” (World Health Organisation, 2004, p. 34). Similarly Eckersley et al. (2006) suggest that anything that leads a young person to feel isolated exacts the highest price and removes them from the social structures that assist them to find meaning via their specific context.
Trust is an important factor that is directly related to perceptions of safety. In 2006, the General Social Survey demonstrated that 30% of young Australians (18-24 years) strongly agreed that ‘in general people cannot be trusted’ (as cited in Muir et al., 2009, p. 116). Trust is a major factor in relation to whether or not young people decide to access support services when needed. Young people may be aware of a health service and what it offers, however, will not access it unless it either involves a person they trust or they are introduced to it by a person they trust (Wierenga, 2001).

Young people can learn information and parrot it back. However, if they have not developed trust they are less likely to incorporate the information being imparted into their approach to life (Muir et al., 2009). Research by Cahill, Shaw, Wyn and Smith (2004) found that trusting relationships are the very foundation of social exchange and that young people in crisis situations will only access trusting relationships that are already established. Wierenga (2001) introduces the concept of ‘subjective understandings’ where young people’s different cultural definitions of ‘people like me, ‘who I am’, ‘who we are’, ‘them and us’ become significant filters for ideas and information while providing an insight into the characteristics of the people that they are trusting. Evidence from focus group participants suggest that family attitudes to aggression and conflict management significantly impact their attitudes and subsequent behaviour.

The influence of the family in relation to perpetuating aggressive scripts is not a new concept. The Australian Magazine (1886) provides an insight into the family life of the larrikin where it states ‘the larrikin has treated his mother with disregard, and his father with defiance, he is dangerous to the community and is a human wild beast rather than a
thinking creature possessed of the nobility of manhood’ (p. 187). Similarly an article from the Bulletin (Anonymous, 1885, p. 13, as cited by Smith, 2008) describes the contribution of domestic violence and poor parental supervision to larrkin character development:

The children are allowed to run riot. The fact that Billy has turned upon his mother and that his mother has beaten him is the signal for Billy’s father to now down the lady in question and perform popular dances upon her prostrate body. And so the play goes on, till the boy, fearing no authority at home, fears none abroad, meets with others of his own kidney, thieves, gets into gaol and is turned out of that institution a ripe young ruffian’ (p. 172).

**Aggressive role models**

Martino (2005) states that ‘there are “rules” about being a boy which constrain many boys who feel they have to prove themselves, often to other boys and men in their lives’ (p. 1). Elsewhere, White reports, ‘the specific social context of the individual is crucial to understanding how different groups of men attempt to negotiate, reconcile or oppose the masculine ideal, in the light of the actual resources at their disposal’ (White, 2007, p. 41). Connell (2005) defines ‘hegemonic masculinity’ as the idea that a culturally normative ideal of male behaviour exists (i.e. that to which men are strongly encouraged to aim), which is calculated to guarantee the dominant position of some men over others and the subordination of women. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) state ‘it requires all other men to position themselves in relation to it’ (p. 832).

White suggests that the construction of an aggressive masculinity as a (predominantly) working class phenomenon relates directly to the historical importance of physicality in working class life and culture. He continues that traditionally most paid work was reliant upon physical tasks (in the factories, in the mines, in the trades, in the army) which
promoted the centrality of physique and celebrated strength, speed, agility and general physical prowess (2007, p. 40).

Cultural ideals of masculinity do not necessarily have to correspond to the actual personalities of the majority of men. The winning hegemony often involves the creation of and publicising of masculinity formulated in relation to fantasy figures, such as film characters, or real models that are so remote from everyday achievement that they have the effect of an unattainable ideal (Connell, 1987, p. 61). Very few boys or men can meet the standards constructed as the ‘ideal’ (Mills, 1997).

Social stories have always been a powerful mechanism for transferring identity across generations and Cousins (2005) highlights the role of writers and poets such as Banjo Patterson and Henry Lawson in perpetuating an Australian identity, based on the Aussie bushman, who they characterised as a resourceful larrikin, taming the harsh landscape while facing hardships heroically and often with the odds stacked against him. Ward (1958) similarly claims that the larrikin attitude was transformed, popularised and spread to the population primarily via the literature of Banjo Paterson and Henry Lawson. These writings along with the strong artistic representations of Australian life, for example, Frederick McCubbin’s ‘the Pioneer’ and Tom Roberts’ ‘Shearing the rams’, facilitated a nationalistic sentiment of a purely masculine domain ‘where issues of racism, brutality, violence, sexism, alcoholism and corruption never made it to the national stage’ (Cousins, 2005, p. 3).
It is incredible to note that when Ned Kelly was executed at Melbourne gaol there was an outpouring of resentment and grief throughout the streets surrounding the prison with thousands attending protests at the Melbourne Hippodrome and tens of thousands signing petitions calling for Kelly’s reprieve (Bellanta, 2009). Many of those who were present at the protests were the larrikins or rough youth that belonged to street pushes (gangs) and the night that Kelly died ‘hundreds crammed into the Apollo Hall paying a shilling apiece to get up close and personal with members of his family’ (Bellanta, 2009, p. 677). Much of this public support related to the perception that Kelly had been the victim of police persecution and squatter harassment and yet it was impossible to deny that Kelly had been ‘an aggressive stock thief spreading his own brand of fear and intimidation’ (Vine, 2009, p. 116).

Bellanta (2012) claims a strong message has been passed down across generations of Australian men that you don’t walk away from a fight. She, in addition, discusses how Australian fathers often communicate to their sons that in order to win respect you have to be prepared to use your fists to stand up for yourself. This concept clearly promotes a view of toughness where young men can’t afford to be perceived as weak, especially by significant men in their lives and in front of peers. Boys’ aggression, disregard for authority and anti-academic behaviour can function to create or maintain their social status among peers and / or family (Alloway et al., 2002; Mills, 2001).
Priming for Aggression: Media

Gauntlett (1998) and Trend (2007) writing almost a decade apart challenge researchers to deliver results that demonstrate any direct links between media violence and actual violence. Gauntlett (1998) claims that the big question relating to why people would imitate media violence has not been adequately addressed while Trend (2007) proposes an alarmist agenda has dominated. Research related to the impact of media violence has been lacking with respect to sampling populations and measuring criterion outcomes of greatest interest to developmental and child-clinical researchers (Boxer, Huesmann, Bushman, O’Brien, & Moceri, 2008, p. 1).

Participants in the focus groups, in contrast to the above authors, had no doubt that certain music, movies and computer games with violent content had a negative impact on children and youth and increased risk of aggression. They were especially concerned about the negative influence of rap music and aggressive computer games on younger children. Participants discussed the fact that societal aggression was all around them and saturated their lives via the news and various media outlets. Fabiansson (2007) highlights how the portrayal of both community and global events via the mass media can negatively impact youth perceptions of safety and contribute to violence via priming aggressive scripts. “Numerous stimuli can serve as aggression primes, for example, the immediate increase in aggression after exposure to media violence may result from the priming of aggressive thoughts, feelings and scripts” (Anderson & Huesmann, 2003, p. 305).
Krug et al. (2002) claim that Australian youth are currently exposed to unprecedented levels of media violence and that television, the internet and computer games directly impact the norms and values of Australian youth. Gerbner, from almost two decades ago warned “we are awash in a tide of violent representations unlike any the world has ever seen, drenching every home with graphic scenes of expertly choreographed brutality” (Gerbner, 1994, p. 133).

Despite the earlier mentioned voices of dissent, recent research supports focus group participant experiences and identifies direct links between childhood exposure to media violence and increased incidence of both youth and adult aggression (Anderson et al., 2003; Anderson & Huesmann, 2003; Anderson et al., 2010; Aronson et al., 2005; Bushman & Huesmann, 2006; Huesmann, 2010; Office of the Surgeon General, 2001). In a significant study by Boxer et al. (2008) involving data from 820 youth, including 390 juvenile delinquents and 430 high school students, researchers observed that childhood and adolescent violent media preferences contributed significantly to the prediction of violence and general aggression from cumulative risk totals. An extensive meta-analysis by Anderson et al. (2010) of the effects of violent video games confirms that they stimulate aggression in the short term and increase the risk for aggressive behaviours in later life. These effects were demonstrated in male and females and for children growing up in Eastern or Western cultures (Huesmann, 2010, p. 179).

As identified in the literature review, adolescence is a time of life when immense opportunities for growth, development and positive change occur (Currie, 2004; Rutter, 1987), adolescents’ capacity for cognitive self-regulation and memory storage is primed,
and learning centred on these activities asserts a powerful influence over adolescent identity formation (Currie, 2004). While adolescents are striving for self-identity they are also increasing their ability to problem solve, self-reflect and consider more abstract concepts via engaging in learning activities from their lived experiences (Lerner & Galambos, 1998). Healthy developmental pathways for adolescent males include a time of increasing egocentric, present-oriented and imagination-focused behaviours while moving from a more concrete to abstract thinking style (Emunah, 1990; Marcell & Monasterio, 2003).

Adolescent males strongly identify with and attempt to emulate behaviours associated with traditional masculine stereotypes and increasingly seek validation from same sex peers for these often high-risk and aggressive behaviours (Steinberg, 1993). While adolescent males are seeking this sense of identity and testing out scenarios to establish where they fit into their world they become particularly vulnerable to aggressive masculine stereotypes as a way of obtaining respect and acceptance from peers and wider society (Hendel, 2006; Watts & Borders, 2005).

Eckersley et al. (2006) point out the danger of society abdicating the role of storytelling to the mass media, particularly the commercial media, where stories can have a very individual focus influencing how young people make sense of social justice issues and possible world futures. They claim this becomes particularly pertinent in a context where many publicly available storylines are divisive and inflammatory, driven by commercial media (p. 35). Exposure to aggressive scripts that are promoted via music, movies and computer games risks normalising aggressive behaviours for adolescent males which
promote a stereotyped masculinity that is not reflective of wider societal norms. If adolescent males act consistently with these aggressive stereotypes they may be accepted by their subculture, however, risk being labelled deviant by the wider society which is exposed to broader and more realistic social stories and constructs (Fabiansson, 2007; Krug et al., 2002).

Australia shares broad cultural qualities with other modern Western societies but also comprises many subcultures marked by very different values, meanings and beliefs (Eckersley et al., 2006, p. 31). Individuals absorb cultural influences, but also interact actively with them; they are also creators of culture. The important point here is that young people will make their lives with the cultural resources (ideas, storylines) that are available (Eckersley et al., 2006, pp. 31-32).

The influence of nineteenth century theatre on Australian adolescent males

Bellanta (2008) describes the role of late nineteenth century Australian theatre in the popularisation of violence via ‘coon’ and ‘coster swell’ songs and performances where black-faced performers, who portrayed American negroes, the lower classes and larrikins, openly ridiculed and abused the upper class whites, bragging of fighting ability and sexual prowess while even displaying violent acts on stage. Comedy acts of the time included assaults on police, stealing, harassing pedestrians and mock drunkenness that not only portrayed larrikin life but also provided powerful imagery that was highly influential in how larrikins formed and expressed their sense of self. Bellanta identifies this as an example of art imitating life and life imitating art (2008).
Larrikins began to dress like and attempted to personify their heroes of the stage and Australian variety theatre. As Bellanta states “larrikinism was not just a label imposed on ‘low’ youth but one assumed by some of them for the purpose of self-definition and social resistance during the conflicts of the late colonial era” (2008, pp. 142-143). The Kelly gang were often described in terms of ‘blackness’ with newspapers of the day claiming that these “poor Irish-Australians of a larrikin and disorderly temperament were more cowardly than the wild blacks” (Bellanta, 2009, p. 677). The larrikin element began to deliberately associate themselves with descriptions of ‘blackness’ and were particularly drawn to the black-faced minstrel dandies of the music halls who profoundly influenced their dress sense and identity construction (Bellanta, 2009).

The influence of African American rappers on the identity formation of many young rural adolescents, particularly through gangster rap and gang violence in movies, seems almost identical to the influence of the initial ‘black-faced’ dandy minstrels. A ‘black gangster’, similar to the black-faced characters of nineteenth century theatre, is seen as providing an instant identity of toughness and street credibility which involved multiple stereotyped behaviours conveying a form of masculinity that challenged the dominant hegemonic version. This alternate masculinity celebrates aggression, criminality, drug use and the denigration of women.

Bellanta also clarifies that nineteenth century Australian theatre portrayed a masculinity that was strongly associated with ‘whiteness’ and respectability, whereas ‘blackness’ represented other more outcast versions of masculinity. She identifies how black-faced characters (actors who painted their faces black), although initially portraying African
Americans, were substituted for the working class Cockney, Irishmen and larrikin, who all shared the common traits of resisting work, tricking their superiors through sneaky manoeuvres, boasting about their ability to drink excessive amounts of alcohol, of their multiple female conquests, fighting ability and their lack of respectability and self-control (2008, p. 135).

‘Coon’ songs, which Bellanta describes as representing a racist and stereotyped image of black people, were extremely popular in the nineteenth century Australian theatre variety circuit. She points out that the ‘coons’ in these songs “boasted of being black sheep and ladies’ men and referred to their red-hot and promiscuous honeys while describing dancing, stealing and razor-wielding as typical coon pursuits” (Bellanta, 2008, p. 135). Similar to the ‘coons’ portrayed in the black-faced minstrel shows the larrikin was portrayed as violent, sexually rapacious and as being on a lower evolutionary scale than the rest of white Australia (Bellanta, 2008, p. 135). Rather than taking this as an insult the larrikin embraced this association as a badge of honour and would even dress up in black face when hanging out on street corners with their associates emulating the dances, songs and dialogue of the black-face theatre characters.

It is worth noting that while celebrating these forms of ‘black-faced’ masculinities the larrikin was subsequently responsible for perpetuating these stereotypes and incorporated these stereotypes into their own identity construction. Young people will construct their identity and life meaning from whatever cultural resources are available to them at the time (Eckersley et al., 2006, p. 31).
Eckersley and Reeder (2008) summarise round-table discussions with a range of expert stakeholders in a report commissioned by the Victorian Police due to ‘a recent upsurge in antisocial behaviour in public places’. Reading through the report of these ‘recent problems’ the content could be easily mistaken for any number of articles taken from the late nineteenth century on larrikinism with the almost identical causal factors and solutions identified. This is not a mere coincidence; we have simply found new ways of talking about issues that have been clearly transferred across generations of Australian young men. The nineteenth century theatre, similar to the influence of present day media, has directly influenced the identity formation of our adolescent males.

**Situational factors identified by participants**

**Priming for Aggression: Alcohol**

Participants in the focus groups were adamant that alcohol was a major situational factor for aggression and violence within their peers, family and social connections. They described a number of settings like parties, rugby league games and local events where they regularly witnessed alcohol-related aggression. When linking the effects of alcohol with aggression the reasons provided were exactly the same as the links between anger and aggression, for example, that alcohol negatively impacting ability to think and make rational decisions, led to a loss of physical control and impulsive acting-out at others and objects.
“There is a strong link between alcohol consumption and violence” (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2008b, p. 108). The links between young people, increasing alcohol use and increasing aggression are a growing concern for Australian communities and are problematic for governments both here and overseas (Anderson & Huesmann, 2003; Morgan & McAtamney, 2009). Rural communities within Australia are experiencing increasing rates of alcohol-related assaults with one-third of 14 – 19 year olds reporting physical abuse that was directly associated with alcohol use (Morgan & McAtamney, 2009, p. 2). Researchers such as Brown et al. assert that programs attempting to address youth violence and related alcohol use must consider context and the common cultural beliefs that young people have regarding alcohol use and aggressive behaviour (2010, p. 793).

The socio-cultural transmission of priming scripts that directly link alcohol use and aggression has been established by some researchers (Friedman, McCarthy, Bartholow, & Hicks, 2007). In an Australian context Morgan and McAtamney (2009) and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (2009) similarly assert that there is a long established drinking culture within Australia that positively reinforces an ethos of ‘drink to get drunk’. This behaviour has been linked by these authors to a range of cultural practices such as how Australians engage in sporting, social and entertainment events.

Bellanta (2012) in her study of late nineteenth century Australian adolescent males, who came to be known as larrikins, clearly identifies the importance of alcohol use to the larrikin identity. She describes how drunkenness and aggression among these young men were two of their primary identifying features championed within the subculture and
targeted from wider society. From the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth century alcohol use among young men was directly linked to the growing popularity of bare knuckle fights, sanctioned boxing arenas and football games. For many young Australian men the norm was to finish work, have a few drinks with mates and test their physical prowess against other young men in the ring, both legally and illegally. Many reports of the day describe how after football matches, which prior to the formal rules of today were aggressive affairs within themselves, there would always be physical fights between intoxicated young men (Bellanta, 2012). These historical narratives are almost identical to focus group participant descriptions of the regular behaviour they witness at current local rugby league games and parties.

Mazerolle (2008) claims that stereotyped masculinities contribute to the pressure within some social contexts for young men to act aggressively, especially under the influence of alcohol. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2008b) and Marcus and Braff (2007) state that males are more likely to be involved in physical violence at pubs and clubs and that increased incidents of violence coincide with increased alcohol consumption at major calendar and sporting events. According to Morgan and McAtamney (2009) alcohol-related aggression is often opportunistic, is more likely to involve strangers and is more common between nine pm and three am on Friday and Saturday nights.

An Australian study by Williams et al. found that 57% of Year 8 boys consumed alcohol and 5% of Year 6 boys and 9% of Year 8 boys reported that they had engaged in binge drinking (2009, pp. 21-22). The study defined violence as aggressive behaviour where the
young person had “attacked someone in the previous 12 months with the intention of seriously hurting them, or they had beaten someone so badly that they probably needed to see a doctor or a nurse” (p. 23), and boys aged 10-14 were significantly more likely than girls to have engaged in violent behaviour with alcohol implicated as a significant risk factor in these aggressive incidents (pp. 28-29). Hemphill and Smith similarly found that alcohol was involved in the majority of violent incidents between young people with “75% of violent offenders and 50% of victims intoxicated at the time of the incident” (2010, p. 13).

When researching the impact of social change over the last few decades Dwyer et al. (2003) have identified an increasing focus on ‘self’ among young people, a fact supported by a large scale American study by Twenge (2009) where up to a 30% increase in narcissistic traits was identified among college age students over a 30 year period. Eckersley (2008) writing from a public health perspective asserts that young people are suffering under the influence of individualism and, although they live in an era where they appear to be more connected than ever via social communication networks, the fact is they as a generation have never been more disconnected socially. He continues that young people are seeking a tribal connectedness due to a very human response to the isolation that modern society is causing and therefore it is no accident that the most popular drugs today are those (alcohol, marijuana and party drugs such as ecstasy) that dissolve the boundaries of the self and induce a sense of belonging, a merging with others.

The Australian attitude towards alcohol consumption is clearly identified by C.J. Dennis in his famous poem, ‘The Songs of a Sentimental Bloke’ where he provides a mini-
ethnography of larrikin life in the opening verses. It defines the larrikin by his alcohol use, ‘I spen’ me leisure gittin on the shick’, involvement in gambling, ‘jist ‘eadin ‘em and doin’ in me gilt’ at the two-up game’, and violent conflicts with the police, ‘doin’ a stretch for stouchin’ johns’ (Boyd, 1998, p. 10). The link between alcohol and aggression in Australian culture demonstrates roots deep and wide.

**Priming for Aggression: Young men fighting over boundaries**

The focus group participants went to great lengths to describe their localised, territorial affiliations and how these loyalties contributed to many disputes resulting in physical aggression with ‘other’ groups. Philosopher William James (1910) claims this type of behaviour is natural and based upon an instinctual drive within young men who in the absence of war create ways to test their masculinity against other young men.

Sleight (2009) describes how Melbourne residents regularly complained to police about large groups of larrikins congregating in public spaces who engaged in behaviours from stone throwing and swearing to more serious assaultive and delinquent behaviour. He asserts that these larrikin pushes (gangs) took on the name of their specific locations with examples including: ‘The Fitzroy Forties, the Napier Street Push, the Bouverie Forties and the Nicholson Street Push’ (p. 236). Sleight (2009) further states that these ‘pushes’ ‘indicated a strong territorial affinity with the word “forty” a slang synonym for area or stomping ground’ (p. 236). Sydney Pushes were also strongly territorial and similarly took on the name of their geographical locations (Smith, 2008, p. 161). As early as 1826,
Cunningham states plainly that ‘our currency lads are noted for their spirit and courage as well as for great clannishness’ (cited in Baker, 1945, p. 113).

Ajax (1884) highlights how fighting between gangs was a regular source of entertainment for larrikins “it is no uncommon experience for chaste and refined citizens to behold in many public parts of our city pot-valiant knaves in pugilistic recontre, foul mouthed courtesans asserting their impious importance, bands of genuine larrikins swollen with insolence and wine, forming opposing parties, and contending with infinite spirit by means of stones and fists” (p. 209).

Smith (2008) asserts that fighting was such an important part of the larrikin sub-culture that a large percentage of their time was engaged in actual fighting or betting on fights, both within their push and between competing pushes. The pushes even produced world famous boxers like Larry Foley and Albert ‘Griffo’ Griffiths who started their careers in gang fights and bare knuckle brawling, going on to professional ‘Queensbury Rules’ prize fighting (p. 160). Mawson (2009) points out that fighting was one of the major ways that young working-class men resolved disputes with one another and that during the ‘Millers Point Murder’ trial evidence provided by multiple ‘push’ members revealed that fighting was a common occurrence among them; even good friends had fought each other in bare knuckle encounters.

The Australian saying ‘as happy as Larry’ speaks to the Australian male stereotype in that it relates to the fact that Larry Foley was a tough street fighter, gang leader, who was said
to have remained undefeated throughout his career, making a lot of money by knocking other men out. To be as ‘happy as Larry’, to be dominant physically, respected by your mates for your toughness and ability to fight while making money for yourself by consistently winning against the odds. Foley had a huge larrikin following and even attracted the homage of Ned Kelly (Bellanta, 2012). Due to Foley’s popularity, boxing gyms formed everywhere, young men congregated to train and fight while inevitably forming rivalries with young men from other gyms. Adolescent males from these gyms started referring to themselves collectively as talents or pushes, clearly identifying themselves as gangs (Bellanta, 2012).

Bellanta (2012) highlights the changing nature of these adolescent male pushes or gangs at the beginning of the twentieth century describing how the initiation of formal sports and the strong affiliation that young men had with boxing gyms and football teams transformed the nature of gang behaviour from aggression directed toward police and random members of society to a more contained aggression aimed at each other. Fighting over territory became associated with the football team or boxing club representing the pushes’ locality.

Masculine stereotypes like the ones described above resonated within larrikin culture as they clearly wanted to be known as ‘hard doers’, ‘hard cases’ and just plain ‘hard’ (tough) (Sleight, 2009, p. 246). As stated earlier the larrikin celebrated the masculinity of anti-heroes like the Kelly gang, Larry Foley and the black-faced dandies of the theatre. It comes as no surprise that their behaviour was explained in terms of our convict past and linked to the working class slum communities with their supposed low morality, diseased
brains and prematurely developed passions which were linked to aggressiveness, drunkenness and sexual promiscuity (Mawson, 2009).

**Priming for Aggression: The school environment**

Focus group participants were pessimistic regarding stopping aggression at school. They did not think that it was possible. Fourteen percent stated that they had been bullied at school ‘often’ or ‘very often’ along with 19% of participants who identified being involved in a physical fight at school ‘often’ or ‘very often’ (Appendix I). When asked how important it was for them to do well at school 75% stated that it was ‘important’ or ‘very important’ (Appendix I) and yet 67% of participants stated that they ‘never’ or only ‘sometimes’ got along with their teachers (Appendix I).

Anger problems leading to aggressive behaviour have significantly increased on school grounds over the last decade (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2009; Burt et al., 2010; Grunseit et al., 2005). A young person’s exposure to such things as schoolyard aggression, bullying and racism has a major impact on their perception of safety which in turn influences their general wellbeing, ability to socialise and their quality of life in general (Muir et al., 2009, p. 115). Baker identified ‘a strong correlation between poor school performance and involvement in assault’ (1998, p. 22), whereas research by Brookmeyer, Fanti and Henrich (2006) demonstrated that students with high levels of school connectedness are less likely to be involved in schoolyard aggression.
An Australian study by Grunseit et al. (2005) identified both personal and family factors as playing key roles in shaping the risk of violence on school grounds. Students were more likely to have attacked someone if:

- They were male,
- They lived with only one parent or not with their parents at all,
- Their mother was 35 or younger,
- Their parent(s) employ(s) punitive disciplinary practices,
- Their parent(s) poorly supervise them,
- They have problems with their family,
- They have problems reading and/or writing, and
- They are impulsive (p. 60).

Other than the descriptive data already mentioned, 18% of participants had mothers less than 35 years of age (Appendix H), 43% identified that they ‘often’ or ‘very often’ do things without thinking what might happen (Appendix D) and 16% of participants identified that they ‘often’ or ‘very often’ had difficulty with reading and writing (Appendix I). School factors also played an important role with students more likely to have attacked someone if, in their opinion:

- The students at their school are racist,
- Kids who make racist remarks at the school don’t get into trouble with the teachers,
- Teachers do not intervene to stop bullying when they know about it, and
- They were never formally told the school rules (Grunseit et al., 2005, p. 60).
‘Aggression and violence in all its forms such as: bullying, fighting and abuse, shadow the lives of many young people, making the time of life that adults like to think of as happy and carefree into a time of anxiety and misery’ (UNICEF, 2007, p. 31). Aggressive behaviour in the form of bullying has been identified as a major issue impacting young people’s perception of safety in the school environment. This type of aggression negatively impacts attendance, academic achievement, socialisation, physical and mental health (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2009; Lodge, 2008; Muir et al., 2009). Thomas and Smith (2004) go as far as stating that ‘it is important to consider the school environment as a determinant of violent behaviour’ (Thomas & Smith, 2004, p. 146).

**Priming for Aggression: Peer pressure and saving face**

Focus group participants talked about the fact that girls were the source of many conflicts especially at parties and with inter-town rivalries. They talked about the peer pressure exerted to go through with a fight and that young men were extremely reluctant to walk away from a fight due to the public ridicule that would follow. The focus group participants also described how no-one would ever tell teachers or people in authority about a fight, preferring to deal with conflicts among themselves and that anyone who did tell authorities was seen by his peers as a ‘snitch’, as ‘dobbing’ or as being a ‘dog’. Participants stated that anyone doing this would be dealt with harshly and that aggressive revenge would be justified against the ‘snitch’.

In an insightful article from the Brisbane Courier (1887b) titled, ‘What a larrikin himself thinks’, we are provided one, if not the only, interview with a ‘larrikin’ from the late
nineteenth century. The anonymous interviewee went to great lengths to talk about the role that trying to impress girls played in escalating larrikin involvement in violence stating that ‘you may think that I don’t know what I’m saying, but I do, and I tell you that ninety-nine out of every hundred larrikins go wrong about a girl’ (Brisbane Courier, 1887b, p. 3). Sleight had similarly noted how among larrikins ‘the prospect of losing face in front of a female increased the likelihood of violent conduct’ (Sleight, 2009, p. 245).

Bellanta (2012) described very similar attitudes to focus group participants in relation to larrikin views on snitching to authority figures. She describes larrikin youth talking about peers who turned dog as being hated and that a key ethic amongst larrikin culture was aggressive revenge against these informants. After talking with focus group participants similarities in the account provided by convict J.F. Mortlock in the autobiographical ‘Experiences of a convict’ were insightful. Mortlock stated that ‘men betraying their companions or accepting authority over them, are often called “dogs”, and sometimes have their noses bitten off with the morsel being termed “a mouthful of dogs nose”’ (1865, p. 76).

Hughes (1988) highlights the case of a young convict named Paddy Galvin from September, 1800, which provides a disturbing example of the lengths that a convict would suffer in order not to ‘dog’ his mates to the authorities. The account describes Galvin being asked to provide information regarding the whereabouts and names of two Irish convicts supposedly planning an uprising to which he refused. Joseph Holt, who was also being held in prison, was forced to witness the flogging and provides the following account:
Next was tied up Paddy Galvin, a young boy about 20 years of age. He was ordered to get three hundred lashes. He got one hundred on the back, and you could see his backbone between his shoulder blades. Then the Doctor ordered him to get another hundred on his bottom. He got it and then his haunches were in such a jelly that the Doctor ordered him to be flogged on the calves of his legs. He got one hundred there and as much as a whimper he never gave. They asked him if he would tell where the pikes were hid. He said he did not know, and would not tell. ‘You may as well hang me now’, he said, ‘for you never will get any music from me’” (Hughes, 1988, p. 189).

Focus group participants seemed to endorse this culture of silence regarding protecting their mates from authority figures preferring to deal with the situation in their own way. To bear punishment without complaint, especially if it helped a friend, has been a culturally endorsed way that Australian adolescent males increase their reputation and respect among peers. It would seem that to deviate from this endorsed behaviour continues to meet with aggressive and vengeful retribution.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has presented a discussion of participant responses to the research questions with reference to the broader research and historical literature. Focus group participants endorsed the RWP and demonstrated clear evidence of motivation and ‘e’ngagement. They exposed negative views regarding certain boys’ programs and in particular anger management and yet related this to past strategies employed as opposed to the topics of anger and aggression, which they saw as invaluable and directly linked to their day-to-day experiences. The RWP demonstrated characteristics in line with current evidence in its approach to working with young men and challenged rather than catered to aggressive masculine stereotypes.
Although focus group participants seemed to have difficulty articulating how they recognised anger in themselves and others, a folk theory was revealed where the use of metaphor provided invaluable insight into the way that anger is conceptualised by this cohort of rural adolescent males. It also highlighted how potential skill deficits were being masked via the use of metaphorical language, which perpetuated an excuse for aggressive behaviour.

Participants identified a number of primes that directly led to them acting aggressively and these primes were traced to culturally endorsed characteristics of Australian masculinity. Focus group participants evidenced deeply embedded cultural attitudes and beliefs that directly impacted their expression and experience of anger and as such an historical cultural discourse has been included in relation to the focus group participant responses. The links to larrikinism were demonstrated, which has not been previously achieved in the literature.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

Introduction

In bringing this thesis to a conclusion it is important to acknowledge how an historical cultural discourse has been included in relation to the focus group participant responses. Results have clearly endorsed the RWP as a positive means of engaging this cohort in an anger management program and focus group discussions; however, above and beyond any dialogue related to effective anger management strategies is an historical cultural genesis to anger and aggression that needs to be understood before anything else makes sense. The data points to a fundamental need to further understand how the larrikin character has been formed, endorsed, and embedded within the Australian conceptualisation of masculinity and how this directly influenced the participants’ attitudes and beliefs about anger and aggression. Focus group participants have highlighted how anger and aggression need to be studied through the specific cultural lens from which they view the world.

Focus group participants evidenced deeply embedded cultural attitudes and beliefs that directly impacted their experience and expression of anger. Aggression was shown to be endorsed as a culturally acceptable way to resolve conflict and as a way of policing narrow views of Australian-ness. The social and cultural forces that initially attempted to deny, absorb and finally embrace the larrikin element were identified as endorsing characteristics of larrikin behaviour, such as aggression, in such a way that it continues as a fundamental component of Australian rural adolescent male identity. This historical cultural genesis to anger has directly impacted focus group participants’ experience of anger and explains why they act aggressively in certain contexts.
What was to be achieved?

The genesis of this research project related to a local and state identified problem for child and adolescent mental health services where there was increasing referrals for boys with problem anger and aggressive behaviour. There were no evidence based anger management programs that these boys could be referred to. A review of the broader literature identified increasing school and societal aggression, especially with young men, and a lack of evidence based anger management programs. As the literature review was refined it highlighted a lack of qualitative studies with rural adolescent males where their experience and expression of anger has not been explored. The previous literature had focused on evaluating anger management programs, which were identified as inconsistent with few demonstrating any long term reduction in problem anger or aggressive behaviour. Understanding anger from the personal perspective of rural adolescent males was identified as primary to the understanding of aggression and also primary to the exploration of anger management programs.

The Rock and Water Program (RWP) was used as a means of accessing 187 rural adolescent males from four schools on the north coast of NSW in order to explore their views relating to anger and aggression, as well as their perception of the RWP. Adolescent males are identified as extremely difficult to engage and despite wanting to be heard have limited voice in the research literature. A qualitative research methodology was utilized where focus groups were the method of data collection and thematic analysis the means by which the focus group data set was structured and analyzed. An action research framework of three cycles (phases) was utilized to enhance the focus group structure allowing for responsiveness of participant feedback to both evaluate and improve the RWP while
broadening and clarifying the research questions. Because of the difficulty encountered regarding inconsistent definitions of AR transformational change was not the ultimate goal of the AR component but rather focused on aspects such as:

- Facilitating collaboration between researcher and the participants,
- Generating, broadening and clarifying solutions to the practical problems identified,
- Promoting an educational experience for the researcher and participants, and
- Gaining insights from participants that could contribute to practice change.

Ultimately it was hoped that the research design would facilitate the engagement with a cohort of rural adolescent males so that their experience and expression of anger could be explored, reflected upon and understood. This was seen as the priority in order to meet the stated research aims and questions. It was hoped that the RWP would allow for close contact with a large cohort of rural adolescent males over an extended period to build up a level of trust so that they would be comfortable talking freely and honestly during focus groups. Since the RWP was a popular program that had engaged local adolescent males in issues related to anger management it was also hoped that participants might provide insight into what aspects of the RWP they liked and disliked so that it could be improved and contextualised for use with other young men on the North Coast of NSW.

**What was found?**

The third research aim related to collaborating with rural adolescent male participants in the evaluation and improvement of the RWP for more appropriate use in the context of the
North Coast of NSW. Focus group participants demonstrated ‘e’ngagement in the RWP endorsing it as a program that they enjoyed, would promote to peers and as a great learning experience that dealt with issues relevant to their everyday lives. They clearly articulated how they experience and express their anger while also identifying a number of specific primes relating to when, why and with whom they would act aggressively. Hearing from this cohort of rural adolescent males has given them a voice in the literature for the first time on the topics of anger and aggression while also illuminated their views regarding what engages or disengages them from certain programs and learning tasks.

Participant comments were examined against the literature relating to young men and engagement. It was successfully argued that participant responses were evidence that they had engaged with the RWP. This highlighted a number of characteristics that have possible implications for addressing disengagement in this cohort and similar cohorts of rural adolescent males. Because the RWP deals with issues of masculinity and anger management it was also argued that aspects of the program’s action oriented delivery strategy presents a valuable contribution to the broader literature on anger management approaches with young men as well as the issue of facilitating ‘boys programs’ and positive learning experiences for boys.

The only available evaluations for the RWP were shown to be anecdotal at best with many describing the program in glowing terms with reference to affirming statements developed from participants written self-reports. There are major flaws in all of these studies and this was acknowledged by the director of the Family Action Centre at the University of Newcastle who facilitate the RWP training in Australia. There were only six evaluations
available for adolescent males and these were compromised by small sample size, undisclosed participant numbers and sampling procedures, unidentified and inconsistent use of RWP session plans, unsubstantiated general comments and no critique of important aspects such as researcher bias, dominant voices or group think. No studies had engaged participants in a dialogue to hear from them regarding what they thought of the program beyond an opportunity for brief written comments.

This thesis presents for the first time in the literature an evaluation of the RWP by a large cohort of rural adolescent males (n=187) across four diverse rural settings where demographic and descriptive data for the purposeful sample are provided along with a detailed description of the method utilised for data collection, analysis and reporting. The specific RWP session plans utilised are provided in detail and participants were provided the opportunity to talk freely about the program while their full conversations and full list of questions asked are available for the reader to consider and critique. The RWP session plans were based directly on the RWP manual and were not combined with any other programs or activities (other than focus group discussions) and the facilitator specified his clinical skills and training level for conducting the RWP.

This qualitative study builds on previous positive anecdotal evidence for the RWP, however, rather than trying to demonstrate any positive behavioural or attitudinal change the focus became an examination of participant responses that were directly linked to the literature on motivation and engagement. Being able to engage adolescent males was demonstrated to be imperative if they are to learn skills for making positive change in their lives and it was the characteristics of the RWP that engaged participants, which therefore
facilitated focus group discussions and allowed for the perspective of this cohort to be accessed, examined and reported.

The first research aim involved identifying how rural adolescent male participants experience and express their anger. Participants described their experience and expression of anger in four specific ways:

- In terms of its physiological effects,
- The negative impact on their ability to think clearly,
- The destructive consequences of their anger, and
- Via metaphor.

Anger was experienced as something that seemed separate to the self, as something that negatively impacted their cognitive ability, decreased their control over bodily reactions, limited their use of language and contributed to explosive, destructive outbursts. Anger was perceived as directly linked to aggression, with anger also being identified as an energiser that could help participants to get what they want in certain situations. Participants described anger via the use of metaphor, which the researcher initially understood as superficial responses that highlighted how little participants knew about anger, however, as he reflected upon these responses and explored the literature it became evident that participant responses were evidence of a folk theory approach. When participant metaphors were examined from a folk theory perspective it was clear that the metaphorical statements were covert descriptions of their experience of anger. When these descriptions were brought out into the open they demonstrated insightful beliefs and attitudes about the nature of anger. Although this dialogue cannot be generalised beyond
the research cohort it provides a direct contribution to the research gap identified in the research aims of the thesis. The use of metaphor to describe anger is proposed to have potentially discounted the role of certain skill deficits, thereby being used as an excuse for destructive outbursts as opposed to an explanation that could be used to understand why and when destructive outbursts result from anger.

The second research aim related to identifying why rural adolescent male participants act aggressively. Participants identified a number of personological and situational factors that they described as increasing the risk that they would become aggressive (termed ‘primes’ in the thesis). Here for the first time in the literature is a cohort of rural Australian adolescent males identifying and discussing exactly what leads them to act aggressively. As the researcher explored these participant dialogues there was no contemporary literature for comparison, however, what began to emerge was that these dialogues were illuminated when compared and contrasted with Australian historical literature.

Historical journals, newspapers and historians have identified and discussed adolescent males in Australia, known as larrikins, speculating about the many problems associated with their aggressive behaviour, racist and homophobic attitudes, territorial disputes and distaste for school. The participants’ own words connected with these historical-cultural dialogues and demonstrated the continuing influence of larrikinism in this cohort. The connection between how this cohort expressed these concepts and the historical concept of larrikinsm has not been made in the literature and contributes significantly to the thesis aims and questions, which directly address the identified research gaps.
The literature review identified the need to hear directly from rural adolescent males as their voice was absent in the research literature. From the qualitative research framework emerged data that points to a fundamental need to understand how the larrikin character has been formed, endorsed, and embedded within the Australian conceptualisation of masculinity. Focus group participants highlighted how anger and aggression need to be studied through the specific cultural lens from which they view the world. Overt expressions of anger in the form of aggression have been the rule of thumb for Australian adolescent males since the late nineteenth century and as such need to be understood as something they do as a function of culture as well as an individual’s response to anger that needs to be restrained or managed.

What do participants think about the RWP? They liked it and wanted to learn how to deal with their problem anger and aggressive incidents. They thought it was a great learning experience that taught skills relevant to their real world problems. How would participants change the RWP to improve it? They wanted more physical activity and greater access for peers, however, basically liked it as it was. How do adolescent male participants recognise anger in themselves and others? Via a folk theory that inadvertently removes personal responsibility for destructive actions while potentially masking specific skill deficits. This may explain the vicious cycle that many of the young men in this cohort described where anger and aggression continues as significant problems in their lives. Under what circumstances would adolescent male participants become aggressive? As a result of specific personological factors such as: racist and homophobic attitudes, family influences via observational learning, aggressive role models and media violence, as well as, situational factors such as: alcohol use, fighting over boundaries with peers, school environment, peer pressure and saving face in front of valued others. Where do adolescent
male participants learn skills to deal with aggressive incidents? Via observational learning where trusted family members, peer influences and aggressive role models have endorsed aggressive responses to perceived threat or conflict. Many of the participants perceived violent retaliation as the justified response to aggressive incidents and identified the RWP as the only place that they had learned skills to deal with frustration, conflicts and aggressive incidents.

Earlier in the thesis it was claimed that two important mechanisms allow people to disengage their moral standards – moral justifications and dehumanising the victim. Moral justification was identified as being for the person’s own good, for the good of society or as satisfying demands of personal honour. Dehumanising the victim operates by making sure that one’s moral standards are simply not applicable. Dehumanising the victim was demonstrated in relation to racism and the racist dialogue that has been utilised in Australian culture, since colonial times, to target versions of masculinity that challenge the wider social norms. Larrikinism was initially targeted by similar dehumanising language and even incorporated racist dialogue into their identity construction as rebellious, defiant youth.

The linking of participant responses to historical reports of larrikinism has demonstrated a clear narrative relating to anger and aggression that has been communicated in Australia across generations, at least since the late nineteenth century. A significant reason that negative aspects of these narratives have continued clearly relate to specific moral justifications for problem anger and aggression with homophobic policing of masculinity a prime example. Three specific moral justifications have been identified that have
functioned to both disengage moral standards and to satisfy societal demands of maintaining personal honour.

- Firstly, participants’ use of metaphor to describe anger relates to a folk theory of anger, which has treated anger as something separate to the self that therefore removes personal responsibility for any negative consequences of anger or aggression. The use of metaphor potentially masks specific skill deficits leading to a vicious cycle where problem anger is not addressed and so becomes an excuse for the ongoing problem and not an explanation to be understood,

- Secondly, adolescence as a concept has functioned to excuse certain anti-social behaviour as being a normal component of adolescent development and maturation, and

- Thirdly, larrikinism has become a sanitised and endorsed concept of Australian masculinity that has functioned to remove personal responsibility for certain behaviour associated with problem anger and aggression. Larrikinism became an excuse for bad behaviour with problem anger and aggression often excused as the actions of mischievous youth.

As the participant responses were linked to the wider literature it was evident that they were voicing cultural attitudes toward anger and aggression that had been transmitted across generations. They had also clearly identified characteristics of engagement and disengagement that directly related to long held working class views in Australia relating to the roll of boys in education and work settings. Participant responses provided a link to our past via the stories that they told and in doing so demonstrated a clear direction for the further understanding of anger and aggression.
What remains to be done?

Due to the qualitative nature of this research project, results cannot be generalised to other cohorts of adolescent males. However, results suggest that the RWP should be implemented with other groups of rural adolescent males. Implementation should include an application process and at least one focus group session, which aims to give participants similar opportunities to this research project for exploring their experiences of anger and aggression while also evaluating the RWP in their specific context. A large scale triangulation study should be undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of the Rock and Water Program to ascertain whether or not:

- There is a decrease in aggressive behaviours long term in participants post intervention,
- There is evidence of increased participant ‘e’ngagement with their school or specific learning experience/program post intervention,
- There are specific skill acquisitions relating to frustration tolerance, problem solving and conflict resolution post intervention,
- The RWP has long term benefits beyond the initial positive comments expressed in the multiple evaluations.

Results also highlight a fundamental need to understand how the larrikin character has been formed, endorsed, and embedded within the Australian conceptualisation of masculinity, especially how this relates to ongoing beliefs and attitudes about the appropriate use of anger and aggression. Further research into the historical cultural genesis of anger is required in order to accurately understand how Australian adolescent
males experience and express anger in their lives. This may shed light as to why they act aggressively in certain contexts and provide valuable insight into how we should intervene to reduce school and societal aggression among adolescent males. As our understanding of how adolescent males experience and express their anger increases the ability to identify methods to engage them in learning experiences to counteract aggression will follow.

**Study limitations**

Coghlan (2007) describes the context of doctoral studies as changing. From the 19\(^{th}\) century the advancement of knowledge was the primary mission of the university and the focus of the doctorate. In the latter part of the 20\(^{th}\) century, the emergence of the practitioner doctorate has led to an additional mission, to develop the capacity to make a significant contribution to practice (p. 335). This relates to integrating both academic and practical knowledge, personal and professional development while making direct contributions to practice (Bourner & Simpson, 2005).

The AR component of the research design presented some difficulties when attempting to document the process and related to ambiguity within the literature regarding AR. The AR cycling did take place, however, was unsuccessful in demonstrating any transformative change in relation to the third research aim (improvements to the RWP), however, this was only one of the research aims. Collaboration between the researcher and participants did occur as the RWP was conducted and evaluated within the focus group format. Participant experiences and expression of anger was explored and documented with the possible impact of researcher bias, dominant voices and group think identified and discussed. In hindsight the aim should have been simply to ‘evaluate’ the RWP as any suggested
improvement was dependent upon the participants’ evaluation of the program. In this sense the collaboration still occurred with the evaluation successful as no transformative change was necessary. The difficulty encountered related to the documentation of the AR process (cycling for transformational change) as opposed to the actual use of AR as a method.

The AR method used to enhance the qualitative research process has been problematic in the implementation, however, has led to greater insights into the strengths and limitations of this method for future projects. Results cannot be generalised beyond the cohort of rural adolescent male participants, however, add to the dialogue regarding effectively engaging with and implementing strategies to assist young men with problem anger.

Limitations of AR identified included a lack of definition over its nature and difficulty measuring any claimed change, which was cited as possibly leading to poor theory development. Within the academic community there is debate regarding what constitutes good, bad or merely competent action research and in writing up the results it was difficult to convey that the AR process was followed while failing to demonstrate any change anticipated for research aim number three (ie. improvements to the RWP). This ambiguity was unforeseen when selecting AR as a method to enhance the qualitative nature of the study as a conventional format to write up AR effectively is difficult to find. As a result justifying the inclusion of AR in the overall research approach was problematic.

Representations of the AR process have been accused of being confusing as opposed to enlightening (Koshby, 2005; Walsh, et al, 2008), however, the process has been
responsive to the real world context of practice and the process has been precisely
documented for open critique. Other researchers may disagree with how this AR process
has been documented, however, they can identify the rationale via the clear explanation of
reasons presented for using AR (as a method within the research design) and the specific
focus group data collection and thematic analysis methods used. The resulting conclusions
have been demonstrated to directly link with the stated research aims.

The research design section of the thesis explored the possible limitations of focus groups,
for example the impact of researcher bias and the high visibility of a researcher also
conducting the focus groups, which can negatively impact or influence participant
responses. The researcher acknowledges that by running focus groups himself and
facilitating the RWP participants could have provided the responses that they felt the
researcher wanted to hear. The possible impact of concepts such as dominant voices and
group think (Bray & Kehle, 2011; David & Hutton, 2011; Hoglund & Obergpoint, 2011;
Remengi, 2012; Seale, 2012) were explored when deciding upon the use of focus groups.
In attempting to counteract the risk the researcher detailed his clinical experience in
running groups for young people, stipulating that he was aware of the possible problems
associated with dominant voices and that he possessed the interviewing skills to recognise
this problem while facilitating group-wide discussion.

Other strategies to counteract the above possible limitations included conducting the
research over a 12 month period where the researcher personally attended four schools
weekly with a total of 12 groups of young men each engaging in a 9 week program (a total
of 11.25 hours was spent with each individual group). This meant that the researcher spent
extended time with each separate group of participants and had the time to develop insight
regarding who were the dominant voices as well as participants who would be reluctant to voice their opinion or any dissent. The researcher continually reinforced that honesty within the responses to research questions was what would be valued most and that any criticism of the RWP or how it was facilitated was also valuable information. The time spent with participants did assist in the development of rapport and trust, however, it is impossible to objectively state whether or not this lead to honest answers from participants or an increased desire to please the researcher with their responses.

A criticism of qualitative data analyses is that they often present themes with no information provided about the degree of participant consensus and dissent, so that dissenters are effectively censored or marginalised. In order to accommodate for this possible limitation the thesis clearly identified and detailed the step- by- step thematic analysis method used for data analysis. Full participant responses to the research questions were detailed where a range of opinion was expressed with both group consensus and dissent evidenced. The researcher made descriptive, contextual comments like ‘laugh’, ‘extended pause’, ‘many participants ridiculing this comment’, and ‘many participants laughing and physically pushing the participant who made the statement’. These were taken directly from transcripts and provided the basic context and mood for the specific dialogue that aimed to enhance insight into group interactions.

When examining the possible limitations of this research process it is acknowledged that much bias comes from data collection and the interpretation process. As Moghaddam (2007) points out, every researcher starts doing research with an idea in mind and therefore looks at events from a specific perspective that might be based on a particular theory, which means the observations can be theory laden (p. 229). With this in mind the
researcher has attempted to document the research process succinctly and clearly so that it is open for full critique from peers.

**Validity**

Moghaddam (2007) proposes that when assessing descriptive validity the question that needs to be answered is: Did what is reported take place? And does the report reflect exactly what the researcher saw and heard? To the best of the researcher’s ability this thesis is a true and accurate account of what took place and recounts what the researcher saw and heard.

Interpretive validity relates to the degree to which participants viewpoints, thoughts, feelings, intentions and experiences are accurately understood by the researcher and portrayed in the report (Moghaddam, 2007). The thesis presents a valid account of participants’ perspective and has clearly set out the step by step process followed in order to report participant experiences in their own words.

Theoretical validity relates to the theoretical explanations developed from the research study fitting the data and therefore conveys credibility and defensibility (Moghaddam, 2007). Anger as a phenomenon and how it specifically operates in the lives of a cohort of rural adolescent males was clearly linked to a historical-cultural genesis. The data set examined against the literature was directly generated from participants.

Outcome validity can relate to the extent that the action resolved the problem being studied or how the process has allowed the problem to be reframed (Moghaddam, 2007).
The research process allowed the issue of finding evidence based management and control strategies to be reframed into a need for understanding the phenomenon of anger from the perspective of rural adolescent males.

Process validity relates to a critique of the logical soundness of the research process, for example how the themes were developed (Moghaddam, 2007). The research design and process have been clearly detailed with themes developed via a step-by-step method that has been utilised and endorsed within other research studies.

Catalytic validity refers to whether or not participants’ understanding of reality has been improved in order to transform it (Moghaddam, 2007). The importance of motivation and engagement within the process of learning for participants was demonstrated as paramount. With objective statements from participants that clearly imply they were engaged in the process the probability that they achieved an increased understanding of reality in regards the research aims are at the least highly likely.

**Conclusion**

The thesis presents a research process where a substantive data set has addressed the research aims while also addressing longstanding research gaps relating to adolescent males and anger. It is therefore presented for examination as a doctoral thesis meeting the requirements of Southern Cross University Higher Degree Research Committee.
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Appendix A: Local Stakeholders

Local Paediatricians,
General Practitioners,
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS),
Coffs Harbour Youth Suicide Committee,
Jetty Bunker Youth Refuge workers,
Juvenile Justice workers,
South Grafton Youth Detention Centre,
Department of Community Services (Department of Family and Community Services),
School Counsellors,
Local high school principals and teachers,
Church leaders,
Wundarra Services (24 hour residential support for high needs children),
Innovative Health Service for Homeless Youth (IHSHY) workers,
Drug and Alcohol Youth Social Worker (Ted Noffs drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre),
Police Youth Liaison Officer,
Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist,
Centrelink Psychologist,
Links to learning staff (education program for young people disengaged with school system),
Inpatient Psychiatric nurses,
Paediatric nurses,
Manager of Community Village Youth Services,
Job Placement and Employment Training (JPET),
Reconnect Services,
Nambucca Heads Aboriginal Youth Worker,
Aboriginal Family Wellbeing Service,
Police Citizens Youth Club,
Burnside Family Support.
Appendix B: Focus Group Format

Participants engage in Rock and Water Program activities for 30 minutes and a 45 minute focus group (sessions five and nine). Explanation of the reason for the focus group with topics identified. Group rules explained, everything said in the group stays in the group (unless issue of ‘risk of harm’ is disclosed by a participant, which would be reported to the DOCS Helpline as per protocol), participants speak one at a time and everyone’s opinion / comments are listened to free from interruption, issues related to confidentiality of information (no names used in transcripts) and limits of same explained (as per mandatory reporting obligations), contact numbers and available times provided for school counsellor and free local counselling options for any participant negatively affected by focus group discussion, complaint procedure and contact details referred to as per consent sheet, digital recorder placed in appropriate location. Commence focus group questions.
## Appendix C: Rock and Water Session Plans (Weeks 1 – 9)

### Session 1: Standing Strong

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity / Exercise:</th>
<th>Time:</th>
<th>Discussion Points:</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Group discussion. Sitting in circle. | 5 min | Introduce facilitators  
Everyone takes shoes off – reasons explained for safety, some training techniques, to feel the ground, natural way of standing.  
Introductory talk (didactic) related to why ‘Rock and Water’ ie. boys both main perpetrators and victims of violence, importance of learning communication skills, how to cope with conflict & aggression, insight into emotions & thoughts, body awareness, self-reflection.  
Participants fill out demographic information.  
Discuss group rules and behavioural expectations.  
When you solute you show respect and agree to stick to the rules of the games, ie. “we will not hurt each other”.  
Make calm eye contact, make fist with left hand (rock element – strength & inflexibility, I can defend myself, I can stand up for myself). Fist is brought to the heart (things concerning the heart will be defended).  
✓ The right hand is open, the hand you use to shake hands, this hand can give and receive, represents peace, friendship, solidarity and communication.  
✓ It covers the fist as our first intention is always solidarity and friendship through communication. |
| Introduce the ‘Rock and Water’ salute. | 2 min |  |
| Body Awareness  
1. Swinging on one leg. | 3 min | 1. Emphasise foot-ground-contact (grounding),  
Relationship between foot-leg-belly, |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Parallel swing.</td>
<td>3 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>Imagine foot stuck to the floor, Your belly is the central point, Feel your belly muscles (your centre). Do you feel any difference between your legs? How does the foot-ground contact compare between legs? Test stance, lean on someone, Nice to have a friend and be a friend that people can lean on once in a while, A real friend is centred &amp; grounded, can be Trusted, <strong>Increased body awareness = increased emotional awareness = increased self-awareness.</strong> Emotions expressed inside your body as tension, Self awareness = self-reflection ie. choice, Choice = decreased impulsivity = self-control.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Golden Rooster stands on one leg (Standing stronger, becoming aware of your centre).</td>
<td>2 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many sayings relate standing strong on your legs to mental strength. Dig in your heels – don’t give up. Stand on your own two feet – be independent. Stand your ground – for what you believe in. Unbalanced - somebody mentally unstable. Standing strong becomes being strong which increases self-confidence. <strong>Grounding, Centring, Focus.</strong> The belly is the centre of all movement, The centre of <strong>strength &amp; Calmness,</strong> Correct breathing, Focus your eyes to a fixed point, If eyes are closed difficult to keep balance, Importance of goals and an inner focus for your energy, Without focus you can be vulnerable to peer pressure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Walking about (in circle and criss-cross) and stopping at a signal.</td>
<td>5 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walk around in a circle firstly on heels, then outside of feet, then without using your toes. Finally walking normally, feeling every part of the bottom of your feet touching the ground. Same as above, however, ‘stop’ on facilitator’s command, within three counts you will stand as grounded as you are now. This time on the command ‘stop’ you only need one count, exhale the moment you stand still.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Now maintain your grounding while walking around, feel your feet on the ground, what touches first? leaves the ground last? try to be conscious of your centre.

Facilitator startles participants - exhale when startled, keep breathing in your centre, feel the ground and calmly look around.

Same exercise, however, criss-cross around gym.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. <strong>Balance</strong></th>
<th>5 min</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generating force from your basis.</td>
<td>Grab each other’s hands/wrists (in shake hands grip), get into strong position with legs wide apart facing away from each other (however maintain eye contact), slowly build up strength/pulling only using 50% of strength.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If participants coping well with this exercise is worth extending time-frame.</td>
<td>Try to find balance with your partner while maintaining eye contact. Exhale, centre and ground yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering gradual resistance.</td>
<td>Facilitator will say “let go”, boys will let go of hands/wrists, those not generating strength from base without focusing on their centre will overbalance easily. Not about who is strongest, focus on own goals of balance, being centred.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stay within basis, don’t lean out beyond basis trying to generate strength as creates poor balance. Don’t have balance/strength dependent on partner - can draw parallel with other forms of dependence.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Change partners a couple of times to feel variety.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Now pull your partner back a bit while he offers gradual resistance (makes it difficult but not too difficult, practising cooperation through physical communication). Generate strength from the legs, feet connecting with the ground and your centre – shoulder and arm remains relaxed.</td>
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<td>This exercise is a combination of strength and cooperation: ‘Physical communication’.</td>
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<tr>
<th>6. <strong>Competition</strong></th>
<th>5 min</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental aspects of confrontation.</td>
<td>Now boys try to pull each other across a line. Again changing partners very important.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>These games not about winning or losing, the focus is placed on developing personal skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is your attitude? Do you give up straight away? Do you take the underdog position (ie. evasive eyes, chin down)?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| | Steps prior to grabbing wrists ie. 1. Ground yourself, 2. Centre yourself 3. Make yourself bigger (body language) 4. Look
partner firmly in the eyes for 10 counts (eye contact).
Don’t ask who won, more how was your eye contact? grounding? etc.

| Introduction of self-defence attitude. | 3 min | Self-defence stance.  
Difference between ‘rock’ attitude and ‘water’ attitude. Rock attitude hands clenched in fists – this is rather aggressive but can be necessary in violent situations. Water attitude hands are open – “Stop I don’t want to fight you, but I can defend myself”.  
The importance to express alertness, spirit and conviction in these stances.  
Can do push-ups to bring attention to shoulders, arms.  
Do I defend myself and my principles or not?  
What is worth fighting for? What is going on in your mind if involved in a fight? Do you feel anger building up or does it take you by surprise? |

| Questions | 2 min | Bringing your energy back into harmony, maintaining self-control.  
Reinforces physical strength with explosive exhale.  
Reinforces mental strength, increases self-confidence.  
Brings focus back to breathing.  
Discourages impulsive action so you can think before acting.  
Any conflict situation requires skills related to communication and self-control. |

| 7. Kiai and self-defence attitude. | 5 min | Boys walk around the gym, grounded/centred. At a signal they jump into self-defence attitude with a loud kiai. |

| 8. Flaming eyes in a confrontation. | 5 min | The same as above, however, boys take fighting position facing another boy who is closest. Explosive kiai and flaming eyes.  
This time after flaming eyes, lower your breathe to your belly. Feel the ground below your feet. Make your eyes soft, relaxed and calm. Let tension flow into the ground. |

| 9. Chinese boxing. Standing strong | 10 min | The aim is to get the opponent off balance by tapping against his hands. If he moves one foot his partner gets a point. |
In competition:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise/activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Discussion points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How many points did you get? <strong>How was your centre?</strong> Get the boys to rate their centre. This stimulates self-awareness and self-reflection. Rock attitude makes it easy to lose balance in this exercise, point out importance of strong base and centre while staying relaxed and calm. Swap partners a number of times and start a final round with those winning the game. Ask the boys why these people are doing so well?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Exercises ie. Push-ups, sit-ups.</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Dependent on available time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion:
The RWP will help you learn how to become stronger both physically and mentally, it will teach you ways of standing up for yourself without having to fight.

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### Session 2: Rock and Water

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise/activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Discussion points</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening discussion</td>
<td>2 min</td>
<td>Remove shoes and stand in circle. Rock and Water salute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallel swing Standing strong.</td>
<td>2 min</td>
<td>Feet, legs and belly control the movement. A collective tempo is maintained. What do you feel when your arms are pushed up with your legs? What do you feel in your hands? Stop swinging and feel how you are standing. Does the stance feel stronger? Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turning wheel.</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Boys stand opposite a partner. Partner A pushes the left shoulder of B with his right hand (water fist) B catches the energy of the push in his centre, yields with his shoulder but will stay centred and grounded. Same as above with opposite shoulder. Now do either shoulder. Trust your reflexes and try not to anticipate. Stay relaxed, centred, grounded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rock and Water Fist</td>
<td>2 min</td>
<td>Demonstrate how to make a rock fist and get boys to punch their opposite hand 10 times, they will notice that this hurts. The rock fist has a certain sound, look and feeling. Now demonstrate how to make a water fist and hit opposite hand 10 times. Water has a different look, sound and feel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning how to punch.</td>
<td>2 min</td>
<td>Demonstrate how to make a fist. Punching is an outgoing movement, so it is supported by an exhalation. Practise left and right punches, advantages and disadvantages of each ie. Big fist and small fist. Five times left followed by 5 time’s right. Encourage participants to feel the difference between punches. Four times left and then left-right combination. As before with addition of kiai.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punching without a partner.</td>
<td>1 min</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punching to partners hand.</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Rock and Water salute. Centred/grounded. Stick to rules of not hurting each other. Form pairs and punch with relaxed fist to the open hand of partner. Feel difference between water fist and rock fist. How do you react to both punches ie. a hard action calls for a hard reaction. Partner moves forward and back, so that other boy has to adjust his position by moving his feet. Emphasise the need to feel your own centre and then your partners centre when connecting to his hand with the punch. If partner is ‘to rock’ or hits too hard boys are to communicate this, eg. “Stop, I need more water”. Change partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First correcting exercise.</td>
<td>1 min</td>
<td>Some boys lose their basis easily when they punch, especially with right fist. In pairs, punch with your right fist and leave it there. Your partner grabs your fist and tries to unbalance you, by slightly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
progressing) | pulling the fist.  
If this works you were no longer in your basis. If you can withdraw from the pulling force, you were well grounded.  
After this push slightly to the fist of your partner to feel if fist, centre and ground are really connected.

| Developing and experiencing the centre of power. | Partner A stands in the self-defence position with the elbow of his big fist close to the hip. In this way a strong centre-fist connection is possible.  
Partner B (in parallel position opposite A) has one open hand, braced at the wrist by the other hand and places his hand on the fist of partner A.  
Partner A pushes partner B backwards, supported by a strong exhalation whilst paying attention to his centre. After the push A will end in a strong self-defence position with both heels still attached to the ground. Partner B yields back a few metres backwards.

| Rocking your partner (dependent upon time and how class progressing). | Partner A stands in the same self-defence position, but instead of a fist he has two open hands. Partner B stands beside him. Partner A places a hand on the shoulder and one hand on the forearm and starts to rock partner B.  
Can also do this between 2 boys, rock person from side to side.

| Punch pushing (If time permits) | Partner A punches against B’s hand and pushes him back in doing so.  
Physical communication with the aspects of strength and connectedness.

| Introduction of the ‘Rock & Water’ attitude (Discussion during exercises). | Learning to communicate ie. able to reveal one’s point of view in a clear, controlled manner.  
Learning to read situations accurately.  
Staying calm in a conflict, standing strong and relaxed.  
The physical rock attitude & the mental rock attitude = you have considered other’s opinions, however, decide upon your own opinion (strong weapon against peer pressure). The social rock attitude can be positive or negative.  
Physical water attitude & mental water attitude = self-confidence, ready to cooperate, prepared to exchange ideas. Social water attitude = communication. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening the physical rock and water attitude.</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Test the stance/posture with slight pushes with the back of the hand in various positions ie. both shoulders, both hips, the lower back, upper back and chest bone. *The chest bone stimulates the awareness of presence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of the mental rock attitude. (powerful against bullying).</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Now partner A stays in self-defence stance while partner B tries to distract him while partner A stares straight ahead to a fixed point. Initially tries to distract via movements, than noises, than can use words. Boys swap partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The physical water attitude.</td>
<td>……</td>
<td>Student asked to push teacher’s left shoulder, teacher resists with rock attitude. When tries again teacher moves and uses student’s own force to unbalance him via ward off with left hand and control with right hand on student’s forearm. Discuss difference between rock and water approach to this physical exercise and make connection to conversations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking away strong without losing face.</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Catch the energy of the push of your partner in your centre and yield. Take four or five steps backwards till safe distance. Exhale, centre and ground yourself and look your partner strongly in the eyes for about 3-5 seconds sending the message “I am not afraid of you but I don’t want to fight for silly things”. Walk away with firm steps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock and Water in verbal confrontations.</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td><strong>Water attitude in conversation:</strong> Teacher gives an example (teacher plays person trying to get on mat) ie. Partner A is standing on a mat, it is his mat! Partner B wants to join him on the mat and thinks of a number of reasons. They are allowed to talk but no physical contact. Boys must listen <strong>carefully and consider</strong> the other’s argument. Coming to agree with someone is not losing face; it is being prepared to change your view. <strong>Rock attitude in conversation:</strong> Now Partner B is forceful in attitude and choice of words, will not change his mind. Rock is not interested in the opinion of others. Partner A starts with water attitude, when realises that doesn’t work becomes rock, he can use arm to maintain personal space. Important for boys not to get into screaming match. Point out that no one has respect for people who lose self-control.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Discussion   | 5 min | What does it mean to ‘stand strong’? ie. low breath, good grounding, chin up, eye contact.  
What is it to ‘be balanced and grounded’? ie. calmness, self-confidence and alertness toward others.  
Have you seen the rock and water attitude in a fight? An argument / conversation?  
What does it mean to be flexible (water) and not blunt (rock)?  
When did you last have an argument? What happened? Did you react as rock or water? What was the proper reaction? Why? |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Session 3: Rock and Water in the School Yard</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise / Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Discussion Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Discuss content of today’s lesson and some revision of last week’s lesson and principles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm-up</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Push-ups, sit-ups, swinging arms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Rooster-fight: Balance and control | 5 min | Form pairs. Each pair holds each other by one hand and then stands on one leg. By pulling, pushing and skipping on one leg, one rooster tries to disturb the others balance. Two feet on the ground is a point for the other person.  
Try not to generate strength from shoulders or arms as this leads to your breathe being too high. Try to stay grounded / centred / strength from base. Keep your head up for maximum balance.  
Swap partners and separate winners and losers so that each meets a similar opponent in subsequent rounds.  
Try to maintain your own balance & self-control. |
| Chinese sticky hands. | 10 min | Like Chinese boxing, however, hands stay connected and so a pushing game trying to generate strength from the centre.  
Point out the more they use arm muscles the weaker their centre will be. Competition is as much with yourself as with your partner, can you stay relaxed, focused, grounded and centred? |
| Push hands.          | ……   | Intermediate exercise: left foot forward partners face each other, |
| (dependent on time) | grab one of each other’s hands and try to pull each other out of balance. Second round the other foot is put forward.  

**Intermediate exercise**: Same position facing each other take one of each other’s hands and try to tag opponent’s knee with your index finger. No moving feet.  

**Intermediate exercise**: Same as above, however, partners can move feet. After few games can introduce 2nd target ie. centre.  

Face each other as above, left foot forward. As soon as the wrists touch the game begins trying to unbalance each other by pushing, pulling and moving point of gravity. Can touch between waist and head, however, no grabbing around neck or judo throws, leg-sweeps etc.  

Form in a large circle and swap partners after each two rounds ie. left and right foot have been forward.  

During this exercise can also have 2 observers (coaches) for every 2 competitors. Who alternates the R&W attitude well? Who uses correct breath technique? Who has self-control and self-confidence? Stimulates self-reflection.  

**Creating body tension by push-ups. (if need time filler)**  

| …… | Many boys are not aware of the proper body-tension in their shoulders, wrists and hands.  

Do a number of push-ups.  

**Punching on count**  

| 5 min | Left x 5, right x 5, on each 5th punch a Kiai.  

Left-right combinations x 5.  

Same routine, however, speed up.  

**Punching to shields.**  

| 10 min | Same as above. Changing partners regularly. Partner B holding shield will take small steps forward and backward so partner A has to adjust feet position.  

**Rock ward off. (self-defence)**  

| 5 min | Partner A, **with one arm behind back**, calmly tries to touch B to the side of the head and partner B wards off with the rock technique. Partner A swaps arms. Also partner swap from attacker to defender.  

The contact is painful and shows again that rock on rock is not the nicest way to make contact (communicate).  

**Water ward-off.**  

| 5 min | Now B wards off with water technique. He steps back with the left leg if the left side of the head is being attacked and versa.  

Partner B can also place second hand on inside elbow of
attacker, subsequently pressing the attacker downward while saying: “Stop, I don’t want to fight you”.

Practise both sides and swap partners. Also can alternate between R&W technique once both practiced.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Push against the chest: Walking away without losing face.</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Boys usually feel that if challenged with a firm push to chest that there are only two options, either to fight or run. We present a third option; walking away with strong body language and eyes (this shows I am not afraid to fight but choose not to). Catch the push in your centre and yield 4 or 5 steps till safe distance. Exhale, centre and ground, and then make big shoulders to show you are calm and confident. Look your partner calmly and strongly into their eyes for approx 3-5 seconds. Walk away calmly with firm steps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Touch Boxing</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Partner A attacks and tries to touch both shoulders and chest of B. Each touch is a point. Both A and B attack. Two questions afterward (small question) How many points did you score? (big question) How was your centre?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock in the schoolyard</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Boys walk in a rock manner (straight line without taking others into account) to the four corners of a square and back to starting point. What do you think of people who act this way? Do you know anyone who walks around school like this? Why would someone behave like this? Does that person gain sympathy or respect?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water in the schoolyard</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>As above except walk with water attitude. What advantages of Water attitude? What is better to be treated like rock or water? Do exercises again, however, make square smaller and smaller.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>???</td>
<td>What is honourable and what isn’t? Honour is about having a focus, persisting, playing by the rules and not losing self-control.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exercise / Activity</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Discussion Points</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm-up exercises</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Emphasis on breathing, being centred and grounding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion.</td>
<td></td>
<td>How do you treat people? Like rock or water?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>We will all lose at some time in our life, there will be people stronger and weaker than yourself when it comes to physical power. When it comes to perseverance and learning how to deal with barriers in your life sometimes losing can help us to learn and make us stronger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock and Water Fist</td>
<td>3 min</td>
<td>We have not talked about how we associate with each other ie. are you too much rock or too much water?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bull-fight</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Go over the difference between the rock and water fist and the difference in how they feel, look and sound.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Make the connection to how contact with people can also have a different look, sound and feeling. How rock on rock closes off communication whereas water can facilitate communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushing hands</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>The toreador keeps his forearms crossed horizontally in front of and away from his chest. The bull has to try and push the toreador’s arms against his chest. The toreador moves smoothly with the bulls pushes, deflecting his power by good footwork.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(fixed step)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Demonstrates the limits of brute force. Draw parallel to discussion/communication. The one who listens carefully to the other and remains calm himself, usually has the best chance of winning the game.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp; (option of parallel feet)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Discuss benefits of water attitude. Toreador remains within his basis all the time and anticipates the bull’s actions. The bull loses his basis constantly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finger fencing</td>
<td></td>
<td>As per description in session 3. Options of intermediate exercises.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>As above, however, have to try and tag opponents knee with his index finger. Firstly opponents can only move one foot then both.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Option of Tournament - choose some ‘masters’ who may be challenged. Approach the master with respect, if you defeat them you take their place. Try to challenge someone bigger than yourself, you may not win but valuable lessons can be learned.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Point out the good players can alternate between rock and water,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rock and Water Attitude in conversation.</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Drama exercise. Boys partner up and one partner has just been given a present that he does not want his friend (partner) to use. The friend wants to have a turn of the present. Firstly both boys demonstrate a rock attitude while trying to achieve their goals. Secondly they demonstrate a water attitude to each other. Reflect on the differences in the conversations, advantages and disadvantages of each approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forward kick combined with hara attitude</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Boys divide into two lines facing each other opposite their partner. Partner As move toward partner Bs doing front kicks in slow, controlled manner and stop when at safe distance from partner Bs. Partner Bs have to exercise trust of their partner and focus on remaining calm through breathing and being grounded and centred. Make connection to assertiveness and importance of remaining calm if someone becoming aggressive in their communications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-pulling</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Make groups of 5-6 students. Each group takes a position around a mat and holds each other by the hand or wrists. Students try to pull someone onto the mat (into the well), once on the mat is a demerit, the second time is disqualification. There can be a spare mat so that the first 4-5 students disqualified can form new group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest and discussion</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>How do you treat each other? Are you someone who can listen carefully? Be helpful? Has his own opinion? Do you pay attention to other people’s feelings and opinions? Do you easily lose self-control? These questions aim to stimulate self-reflection and therefore self-awareness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock or Water?</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Boys break into groups of two (with a friend). Partner A tells partner B what kind of friend he is ie. mostly rock, water or a mixture and tries to give examples. Partner B can only respond when facilitator gives permission. Boys now swap roles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Positive labelling.                          | 5 min    | Partner A names a positive characteristic of partner B. Partners swap


| Questions. |  | What was positive and negative about these interactions?  
Which was more difficult giving or receiving a compliment? Consider how others may see you? Are you happy with this? Is there anything you would like to change? |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Bullying Discussion. | 5 min | It’s nice to hear someone say nice things about you and you can remember these things for a long time.  
What would the feeling be like if someone is calling another person names? Has anyone experienced this?  
What attitude does a bully have, rock or water?  
What attitude can you use when someone calls you names?  
Calling names is an expression of weakness and loss of self-control.  
If this happens it is important not to keep your feelings to yourself, talk to someone and help stop bullying.  
Teacher to point out options for any student being bullied.  
**Success** – what is needed to make this class a happy and successful one?  
**Pride** – What will I learn from this course? What can I be proud of?  
**Goals** – What goals can I set that will contribute to the happiness and success of my class?  
Stimulating self-reflection, a sense of responsibility and feelings of solidarity. |
| Teacher provides info. | 2 min | |

### Session 5: Breath Strength

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise / Activity:</th>
<th>Time:</th>
<th>Discussion Points:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Warm up exercises | 5 min | To date we have looked at standing strong, rock & water attitude, rock & water in the schoolyard and rock & water in personal contact.  
The next 4 lessons are about breathing strength, body language. |
The arms are brought up sideways higher than the shoulders. While lifting their arms the boys lift their heels from the ground so that they come to stand on their toes. At a signal they drop their arms and their heels to the ground.

Breathe in as lifting arms and exhale as arms and heels go down. Point out that when on toes, which is awkward for balancing, we take our breath up high to our chest. This makes balancing even more difficult. **The same happens in times of stress, unbalancing us physically and mentally.**

Now stand on toes again and lower your breath to your belly. Feel the difference; it will help your balance in awkward situations by lowering your breath.

Practise now and feel your breath lowering itself when you exhale. It increases the feeling of grounding. Your base ie. **the ground, your feet, legs and centre, form a solid pyramid.**

No matter how hard people push, talk or scream at you, when you keep your breath down in your belly you will be able to remain calm and make a wise decision about how to act or what to say.

Now make a loud, powerful kiai when you drop. This kiai makes you mentally stronger because you are heard; it helps you bring your emotions under control. This also makes you physically stronger. (Examples, footballers, tennis players, boxer etc).

Same principles, exhaling brings you back to balance eg. Giving a talk before the class, asking the teacher to explain something again, and standing up for yourself if someone is crossing your boundaries.

Students focus in middle of circle & take it in turns to kiai around the circle one at a time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heel lifting.</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>The arms are brought up sideways higher than the shoulders. While lifting their arms the boys lift their heels from the ground so that they come to stand on their toes. At a signal they drop their arms and their heels to the ground.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heel lifting and breathing.</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Qigong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heel lifting &amp; grounding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heel lifting with kiai</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiai wave</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Push-ups with different breathing</td>
<td>2 min</td>
<td>Firstly inhale when push-up, try this a few times with 5 push-ups. Then try exhaling as &amp; kiai pushing up. Feel the difference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stand-ups with kiai</td>
<td>......</td>
<td>Three boys of similar height with two boys putting their hands on the middle boy’s shoulders. He bends his knees and keeps his back straight and then forces his way upward firstly with an inhalation. Tries again with an exhalation and kiai.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent upon time.</td>
<td>......</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifting high</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Form pairs of equal weight. Firstly get partner A to inhale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
breath

Lifting low breath

min

depedly and fix his breath high in the chest. Partner B puts his arms around partner A and lifts which will be much lighter than he expects.

Now the same except partner A exhales fixes his breath low, relaxes to the maximum, all muscles heavy and relaxed. Partner B will find this much more difficult to lift him.

When you are relaxed it is difficult to upset you (to unbalance you), you are in control because you control your breath.

With your breath you control your energy and your emotions and in so doing so you control difficult situations.

Pushing away, high breath and low breath.

5 min

Same principles as above with one boy standing next to the other boy and gently pushing with other boy firstly with high breath and then low breath and relaxed.

Breath strength and breath control go together with relaxation, self-control and power. You radiate calm and strength.

Connect to everyday situations ie. If you’re getting angry and fix your breath high the other person can unbalance you with a slight push or remark.

Continuous physical pressure

5 min

Partner B puts continuous pressure on partners hip while partner A stays centred and grounded while inhaling and exhaling. It is possible to stay centred and grounded when inhaling and exhaling.

Focus group discussion as per research questions

45 min

Refer focus group format and questions.

Session 6: Body Language

Exercise / Activity | Time | Discussion Points
--- | --- | ---
Warm-up | 5 min | Push-ups, sit-ups etc.
Just Walking | 2 min | Walk to the other side of the gym the way you usually walk. Don’t talk but be conscious of your attitude and movement.
Walking chin up | 2 | Now do same but at half way lengthen your step and increase your speed. By doing this you show purposefulness & self-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walking confidently</td>
<td>3 min</td>
<td>We are not just in a hurry, be conscious of the width of your shoulders, relax so your chest comes forward. Careful not to go into macho attitude.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position of Head</td>
<td>3 min</td>
<td>Especially the chin. Chin too low expresses a weak attitude, too high it is snobbish. Put one hand on your chest over the heart and one finger on your chin and feel the difference when you move your chin up and down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The gauntlet</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Boys now practise their confident body language as they walk past all the other participants who are standing in a line. The boys reflect on who looks confident? aggressive? passive? and the messages they communicate with their body language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beach and Tunnel Attitude</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Beach attitude = confidence, good eye contact, shoulders back chest out, good strides etc. Tunnel attitude = looks at the ground, no eye contact, slow small steps, hunched shoulders, no talking etc. Boys alternate walking criss-cross around the gym in the different attitudes guided by facilitator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bully</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>The boys keep walking as normal and one boy is asked to walk in the tunnel attitude and one boy is asked to be the bully with the person in the tunnel attitude.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bully and tunnel</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Do exercise again with one or two bullies and tunnel walkers, boys are asked to help the victims, Point out what they did well and what could have inflamed the situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offering Help</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Demonstrate with 3 boys shoulder to shoulder that they mean business and won’t stand bullying. They also help the bully to save face by one boy walking away with him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instep kick and forward kick.</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Practise techniques building on all concepts to date.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Session 7: Boundaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise/Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Discussion Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warm-up and Group discussion.</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Every game has its own set of rules, how it will look, how it is played, how disputes between players are settled, Countries also have laws, boundaries. The clearer the rules or laws the easier to respect them. Some rules are not written but still important and vary dependent on culture, religion etc. Your skin, hair etc. is one boundary for your body. We also have a right to our own personal space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundary Awareness.</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Walk up to partner until they say stop, where they would be comfortable to have a conversation with you. Now take a step backwards, how does that feel? Find boundary again and take one step forward, inside the persons boundary, how does that feel? Boys will feel that there is a boundary where someone’s personal space is crossed. Some people do it accidentally, however, some do it on purpose to intimidate. People usually regulate personal space subconsciously, however, in the RWP becoming aware of one’s personal space takes a predominant place. Example of train in India or beach on the North Coast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video-scene: ‘Chatting up’</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>What did Dennis do wrong? How would you have handled it? If Rosa doesn’t want to be involved with you, how would you deal with that? Stepping into someone’s personal space is experienced as threatening by every girl and women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video-scene: ‘Betting’</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Instead of looking at his own approach Dennis can become offended, angry and instead of taking the blame himself puts the blame on Rosa. Why does Dennis challenge Robert to assault Rosa?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is assault a criminal offence and could Rosa press charges?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Can young men be victims of assault? What makes Robert accept the bet in the end?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling Boundaries</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Pupil A walks toward pupil B and stops when he thinks this is the boundary, he asks the pupil whether or not he is right and adjusts accordingly. How did you know this was the boundary? What did you feel and where did you feel it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting boundaries</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Now partner B puts his hand up at chest height and says stop when partner A reaches his boundary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphatic feeling</td>
<td>2 min</td>
<td>Same exercise, however, group identifies when partner A has reached partner B’s boundary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossing boundaries and applying the rules of confrontation</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>After partner B says stop, partner A tries to continue on. What does partner B feel now? He stands strong, makes himself bigger, makes eye contact, and says what he wants the other to do. Rules of confrontation. Keep your basis, expand yourself and take your space, look the other in the eye, calm and convincing voice, say clearly what you don’t like and what you want the other person to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrist liberation</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Demonstrate simple, non-confrontational method of getting away if someone grabs your wrist or shirt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye contact</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>‘The eyes are the window to the soul” What could this mean? When is it difficult to look someone in the eyes? Sit with partner approx 1m apart and make eye contact for 1 minute. Now try it while focused on contracting your centre, place both hands over your belly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye contact standing up</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Same, however, now standing. Focus on grounding, being centred. Can use points system to encourage. (competition)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushing Boundaries</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Partner A takes up strong rock posture with abdominals tensed, partner B starts to punch partner A’s belly, softly and then slowly harder until partner A says stop at his boundary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This is a trust exercise and is not about trying to show how tough we are, set your boundary and communicate when you want your partner to stop.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pushing hands, fixed step.</th>
<th>10 min</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fitness exercises.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Session 8: Intuition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercises</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Discussion Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warm-up</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Push-ups, sit-ups, review today’s learning objectives. Link last week’s lesson on boundaries to this week’s lesson on intuition ie. How do I know when I cross someone else’s boundary? What messages are sent by my own and others’ body language?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward-off techniques</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>To a one-handed push to shoulder. Two-handed push to chest. Rock &amp; Water methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Castle</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Partner A in self defence position while partner B makes water fist and tests out stance at various points, ie. Both hips, base of spine, both shoulders and chest bone (centre of presence). Golden rule: before touching each other centre and ground ourselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water mental attitude</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Same as Rock mental exercise, however, partner B can move around and makes eye contact with partner A while partner A tries to distract partner B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punching, kicking techniques</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Revision of front push kick, front snap kick, punches. Use bags if time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling the presence of your partner with closed eyes</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Group claps hands while partner B closes his eyes, Partner A walks and stands somewhere close to B, in-front, beside or behind. Partner B takes a deep breath, grounds and centres himself and points to where he can sense a presence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise / Activity</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Discussion Points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm up and discussion.</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Strength comes from more than physical power, it comes from self-confidence and is expressed via your knowledge of yourself and interactions with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mental strength evidenced by your body language, breath strength, intuition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Physical fitness and strength promotes mental fitness and strength.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breathe Strength.</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Correct breathing helps you to remain grounded and centred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pick-up with high and low breath.</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>When you are grounded you are less likely to be unbalanced (physically and mentally).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Body Language</strong></td>
<td><strong>What do we communicate through our body language?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk the gauntlet, Walking away from confrontation.</td>
<td>Bullies will target the tunnel attitude, What are the advantages and disadvantages of the different attitudes?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Mental Strength</strong></th>
<th><strong>What is mental strength?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standing strong (rock attitude)</td>
<td>Discuss and review concepts from physical to mental strength using examples from the exercises that the boys have experienced. Do exercise for rock mental attitude and then for water mental attitude. Add standing normally, as if in a conversation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Breath Strength.</strong></th>
<th><strong>What is breath strength?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Group breathing exercise. Everyone closes their eyes and imagines legs becoming tree roots, the roots go down into the floor and start to interconnect with everyone else in the group. Talk about interconnected nature of our social experience. How our actions affect others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Focus group discussion as per research questions</strong></th>
<th><strong>Refer focus group format and questions.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Appendix D: Consent Form

NAME OF PROGRAM / STUDY

An Action Research Project Examining Anger and Aggression with Rural Adolescent Males Participating in the Rock and Water Program.

To whom it may concern,

My name is Paul Edwards and I am a Clinical Nurse Specialist with the Coffs Harbour Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. I am currently studying for a PhD at Southern Cross University which involves an action research project examining anger and aggression with rural adolescent males participating in the Rock and Water Program, which I am facilitating at your son’s school.

Your son is invited to participate in a study aiming to determine whether or not the ‘Rock and Water Program’ is experienced as helpful and relevant to their everyday lives. The Rock and Water Program is an innovative way of teaching adolescent males about conflict resolution, personal boundaries, body language, anxiety/stress management, and how to stand strong physically and mentally. It uses a range of fun, competitive and physical exercises to teach mental and social skills. The study specifically aims to hear from participants regarding what they think about the Rock and Water Program and what they think are important issues relating to anger and aggression.

Procedure to be followed

Your son would participate in the ‘Rock and Water Program’ which involves attending for one period per week, at school, for 9 weeks. During these sessions your son will learn a variety of mental and social skills through a range of fun, competitive and physical exercises. Through these exercises your son will explore issues such as physical and verbal confrontation, body language, recognising boundaries (personal space) for self and others, breath strength / anxiety management, using inner focus (goal setting, problem solving) and how to self-reflect (thinking about the consequences before acting).
Your son would also participate in two focus group discussions, week 5 and week 9, related to the topics of anger and aggression while also being asked to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Rock and Water Program. These focus group discussions will be audio-taped so that I, as researcher, can attempt to identify common themes from what the participants say in order to hear from them exactly what their issues are. No names of participants would be used in any published material.

Potential benefits to your son include; improved self-esteem, improved communication skills, increased self-awareness and an improved ability to manage his emotions (eg. anger). All these skills have been linked to improved academic performance, positive peer interactions and as protective factors against mental health problems such as depression, suicide and anxiety disorders. They will also contribute to the evaluation of the Rock and Water Program which could help to improve the program for wider use in local schools, health services and non-government organisations.

Potential risks for participants are no greater than for involvement in any school sport or a physical education lesson. There is potential, as in every school situation, for participant/s to become overstimulated or to demonstrate a lack of self-control, physical injury is a potential risk in any group activity involving exercise and physical interaction and there is potential risk for participant/s becoming embarrassed during activities or focus group discussions. These risks have been considered and a risk management plan formulated to reduce these potential risks to an absolute minimum (refer attachment).

Responsibility of researcher: Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with the participant (your son) will remain confidential. Any quotes used from your son, in final publications, made during focus group discussion will not include his name.

Responsibility of the Participant and Parent / Guardian: To fully disclose any information that could affect the participants’ physical or emotional safety.

Responsibility of Indigenous Australian Participants and their Parent / Guardian: To contact the researcher or research supervisor with any cultural concerns or concerns relating to how the research would contribute to the health and wellbeing of participants and communities; how the research links to regional Indigenous health priorities; whether or not the research should be modified according to community values; how the contribution of Indigenous Australian adolescent males would be acknowledged; whether
or not participants and their parent / carer have understood and are satisfied with the proposed research; and whether or not the spirit and integrity of Indigenous Australians could be compromised.

Freedom of Consent: Participation in this project is voluntary and will assist greatly in expanding the knowledge base related to program effectiveness for adolescent males. If you choose to withdraw your son at any time for whatever reason your decision will be respected and your son’s access to healthcare and education services will not be affected. Your son is also free to withdraw without coercion and all data associated with his contribution would not be used in the study.

Inquiries: If you have any questions, we expect you to ask us and would like you to please communicate these questions to us.

Supervisor Details:

Dr Tony O’Brien
Ph: 65801130 Fax: 65801110
E-mail: aobrien@scu.edu.au

Researcher Details:

Paul Edwards (CNS, MN)
Ph: 66567904 Fax: 66567928
E-mail: pauledwards@mncahs.health.nsw.gov.au

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Southern Cross University Human Research Ethics Committee.

The approval number is ECN-06-22
If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspects of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Ethics Complaints Officer, Ms Sue Kelly, (telephone 66269139 or fax 66269145, e-mail: sue.kelly@scu.edu.au).

Any complaints you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

I have read and understand the information above and consent for my son

..................................................................................................................................................

to participate in this research study, which has been explained to me by:

..................................................................................................................................................

I understand that my child is free to withdraw from the study at any time and that this decision will not adversely affect my child in accessing any healthcare services, or in his relationship with his school.

NAME OF YOUNG PERSON (Please print)

..................................................................................................................................................

NAME OF PARENT/GUARDIAN (Please print)

..................................................................................................................................................

SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

..................................................................................................................................................

SIGNATURE OF YOUNG PERSON

..................................................................................................................................................

SIGNATURE
RESEARCHER………………………………………DATE…………………………..
Consent Form Attachment: Risk Management Plan

- Potential risk: Inappropriate venue without enough space for participants, lack of privacy, high stimulus, cluttered, slippery floors.
- How likely is the risk and how is the risk minimised?

Unlikely. The venue is agreed upon between the school Principal, school counsellor and researcher prior to commencement of the RWP. Venue is chosen for a maximum of 20 participants with the need for privacy and low stimulus taken into consideration. The researcher, school counsellor and participating teacher arrive at venue 5-10 minutes prior to commencement of session, while the teacher takes attendance the researcher and school counsellor do a check of venue for any water or objects on the floor and remove any items causing clutter or that could be used inappropriately by participants.

- Potential risk: Not enough adult supervision.
- How likely is the risk and how is the risk minimised?

Unlikely. At each session the researcher, school counsellor and a male teacher is present as the minimum requirement for the session to proceed. This allows for a ratio of one adult for every seven participants.

- Potential risk: Participant overstimulated, acting out, lack of control during activities placing self and/or others at risk.
- How likely is the risk and how is the risk minimised?

Likely. The RWP has been developed specifically because adolescent males can have difficulty at school with impulsive behaviour, can become overstimulated in group settings and can lack self-control. As a result sessions are highly structured with firm boundaries and strict limit setting. Sessions focus on engaging participants in a range of physical activities which are constantly linked to mental and social skills. Within the RWP structure there is enough flexibility to adapt sessions dependent upon the behaviour and activity level of participants. There is a minimum ratio of one adult for every seven participants and early signs of behavioural escalation in any participant will be acted upon proactively rather than reactively or punitively.

Participants are constantly involved in structured, short duration activities that are fun, competitive and directly related to increasing self-control, communication skills and body awareness. If a participant is finding it difficult to follow instructions or engage in the activities safely they will be offered someone to one time with the teacher aside from other participants. If the participant can’t rejoin the session or remains disruptive they will be asked to sit out for the remainder of the session and invited to join in with the next session. Group rules are explained prior to commencement of each session so that participants are aware that any action taken by adults is related to the risk management plan rather than a punitive reaction to a participant’s behaviour. The primary rules of the RWP which will be continually reinforced to participants are;
1. We respect each other and will not hurt each other with our words or actions; and
2. Before touching a partner for an activity both partners stop, centre and ground themselves so that they can be calm enough to think before any physical action.

- Potential risk: Participant injury during RWP activities.
- How likely is the risk and how is the risk minimised?

Unlikely. There is less risk of accidental injury than would be expected in usual playground or school sporting activity. All activities are monitored closely by the adults present with constant risk assessment influencing the progression of each RWP activity throughout the session. Participants are asked before each session if anyone has any injuries or physical limitations that may exclude them from certain RWP activities. All sessions start with a period of warming up with every activity thoroughly explained and demonstrated prior to participants engaging in the activity. If a participant is injured, for example a sprained ankle, basic first aid would be attended by the school staff present, the participants parent or guardian would be notified by the school counsellor and a school incident form (as per NSW Department of Education and Training Accident to School Student or Visitor forms, 2003) would be completed and given to the principal utilising the guidelines as per NSW Department of Education and Training, Reporting School Accidents (2002).

- Potential risk: Participant embarrassment during focus group discussion.
- How likely is the risk and how is the risk minimised?

Unlikely. There is no more risk for participants then would be experienced participating in a classroom situation. Participation in the discussions is voluntarily and topics are clearly specified beforehand. Contact details for the school counsellor and local counselling services will be provided to all participants and they will be encouraged to utilise these resources if any issues raised are upsetting or affect them in a negative way. A complaint procedure and contact details are included as part of the informed consent so that participants and their parent/guardian have an avenue for effective management of any complaints related to the research project. Although extremely unlikely in this setting, if a disclosure was made by a participant that involved risk of harm issues the researcher would make a report to the Department of Community Services Help-line, as per Mandatory reporting protocol.
Appendix E: Demographic and Descriptive Information Questionnaire

Please tick the circle that corresponds to your answer or specify where indicated.

1. How old are you?
(Please Specify)………………………………………………………………

2. What year are you in at school?
(Please Specify)………………………………………………………………

3. What ethnicity are you?
   - Aboriginal
   - Torres Strait Islander
   - Australian born Caucasian
   - Born overseas
(If born overseas please specify)………………………………………….

4. Were your parents born in Australia?
   - Yes
   - No
(If no please specify)…………………………………………………………

5. What language/s do you speak at home?
(Please specify)………………………………………………………………

6. Who do you live with at home?
   - Both my natural parents
   - One of my natural parents only
   - One natural parent & a step-parent
   - Neither natural parents

7. How many other children, not counting yourself, live at your house?
   - None
   - One
   - Two
   - Three
   - Four or more
8. How old is your Mum?
   o 35 or younger
   o 36 – 40
   o Over 40
   o Don’t Know

9. How old is your Dad?
   o 35 or younger
   o 36 – 40
   o Over 40
   o Don’t Know

10. Do you have any difficulties reading and writing?
    o Never
    o Sometimes
    o Often
    o Very Often

11. Do you ever do things without thinking of what might happen?
    o Never
    o Sometimes
    o Often
    o Very Often

12. How often do you get angry?
    o Never
    o Sometimes
    o Often
    o Very Often

13. Please rate (circle) your **average** mood over the last two weeks?
    (Zero represents the worst you’ve ever felt, ten is the best you’ve ever felt)

    0……..1……..2……..3……..4……..5……..6……..7……..8……..9……..10

    Terrible / Sad                                      OK/Average                          Really good / Happy
14. Do you get along with the teachers at your school?
   - Never
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Very Often

15. Do you get along with your family?
   - Never
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Very Often

16. Do you ever feel unsafe at your school?
   - Never
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Very Often

17. Are you a confident person?
   - Never
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Very Often

18. Do you make friends easily?
   - Never
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Very Often

19. Do you do some sort of physical exercise for 30 minutes, at least 3 times a week?
   - Never
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Very Often
20. How important is it for you to do well at school?
   - Not very important
   - Somewhat important
   - Important
   - Very important

21. How often have you been involved in a physical fight at school?
   - Never
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Very Often

22. Are boys and girls treated equally at your school?
   - Never
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Very Often

23. Have you been diagnosed with an emotional problem by your doctor?
   - Yes
   - No
   (If yes please tick appropriate circle)
   - ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)
   - ODD (Oppositional Defiant Disorder)
   - Depression
   - Anxiety
   - Other (Please specify)…………………………………………………

24. Have you ever been the victim of bullying at school?
   - Never
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Very Often

25. Do your Religious or Spiritual beliefs influence your behaviour?
   - Never
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Very Often
   If so, please comment…………………………………………………
Appendix F: Student/participant numbers (n) from each school.

The following table F.1 presents the total number of participants from each school that attended five or more RWP sessions and who attended one or both of the focus group sessions (weeks 5 and 9). Twenty-nine percent of participants came from Toormina high school, 24% of participants were from Dorrigo high school with a further 24% of participants from Bellingen high school. The remaining 22% of participants were from Woolgoolga high school.

Table F.1 Student/participant numbers (n) from each school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Toormina</th>
<th>Dorrigo</th>
<th>Bellingen</th>
<th>Woolgoolga</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1 of Action Research (n) = 74</td>
<td>20 (27%)</td>
<td>18 (24%)</td>
<td>16 (22%)</td>
<td>20 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2 of Action Research (n) = 63</td>
<td>20 (32%)</td>
<td>17 (27%)</td>
<td>16 (25%)</td>
<td>10 (16%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3 of Action Research (n) = 50</td>
<td>15 (30%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>13 (26%)</td>
<td>12 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of participants involved in Action Research (n) = 187</td>
<td>55 (29%)</td>
<td>10 (20%)</td>
<td>45 (24%)</td>
<td>42 (22%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages may not sum exactly to 100% due to rounding.*
Appendix G: Students/participants numbers (n=12) excluded from data collection from all schools.

The following table G.1 presents the total number of students/participants excluded from the focus group data collected. Exclusion reasons included:

- One student from Dorrigo high school was a young man of African descent who was 22 years of age, he engaged in the RWP but was asked to sit out of both focus group discussions.
- The remaining exclusions related to participants who did not attend both focus group sessions (weeks 5 and 9).
- No participant attended less than five RWP sessions.

The students who missed both focus group sessions still participated in the RWP, however, did not contribute to the focus group discussion and subsequent data collected. The total number of participants (n) was 199, however, after the exclusion of 12 participants (6%) a total of 187 participants were engaged in the data collection process.

Table G.1 Students/participants numbers excluded from focus group data collection (n) from each school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Toormina</th>
<th>Dorrigo</th>
<th>Bellingen</th>
<th>Woolgoolga</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1 of Action Research (n) = 3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 2 of Action Research (n) = 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3 of Action Research (n) = 8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of participants excluded (n) = 12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H: Demographic profile of participants (n=187).

The age of participants ranged from 12-17 (13.6 ± 0.96 S.D.) years and 46% of participants were 13 years of age (Table H.1). Participants were drawn from Years 7-10 and Year 8 students represented 42% of the overall cohort. Twelve percent of participants identified as ATSI and only 45% of participants lived with both parents. When asked whether or not they had been diagnosed with an emotional problem by a doctor 24% of participants answered yes. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) had been diagnosed in 14% of participants, 3% had the diagnosis of Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) and a further 3% had been diagnosed with depression.

Table H.1 Demographic profile of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Percentage*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year at School</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Australian Born Caucasian</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Born Overseas</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents born in Australia</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants live with</td>
<td>Both Parents</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One Parent</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent &amp; Step-parent</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of participants mother</td>
<td>Neither Parents</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 or less</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 or more</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever been diagnosed with an emotional problem by your doctor?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>44</th>
<th>24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Of participants with a diagnosis what is the primary diagnosis?</th>
<th>Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder</th>
<th>27</th>
<th>14**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppositional Defiant Disorder</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourettes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages may not sum exactly to 100% due to rounding. **Expressed as a percentage of total participants (n=187).
Appendix I: Descriptive profile of participants’ school risk factors for aggressive behaviour (n=187).

Seventy-five percent of participants described doing well at school as being ‘important’ or ‘very important’ (Table I.1). Sixty-seven percent of participants identified they ‘never’ or only ‘sometimes’ got along with their teachers and 16% ‘often’ or ‘very often’ had difficulty with their reading and writing. Eighteen percent of participants had been involved in a physical fight at school ‘often’ or ‘very often’ while 14% identified that they had ‘often’ or ‘very often’ been the victim of bullying. When asked if their religious or spiritual beliefs influenced their behaviour 80% stated ‘never’ with a further 18% stating ‘only sometimes’. Two participants out of 187 stated that their religious or spiritual beliefs influenced their behaviour ‘very often’.

Table I.1 Descriptive profile of participants’ school risk factors for aggressive behaviour (n=187).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Very often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you have difficulty with reading and writing?</td>
<td>76 (41%)</td>
<td>81 (43%)</td>
<td>17 (9%)</td>
<td>13 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you get along with the teachers at your school?</td>
<td>28 (15%)</td>
<td>97 (52%)</td>
<td>44 (24%)</td>
<td>18 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you ever feel unsafe at your school?</td>
<td>115 (61%)</td>
<td>58 (31%)</td>
<td>11 (6%)</td>
<td>3 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often have you been involved in a physical fight at school?</td>
<td>68 (36%)</td>
<td>84 (45%)</td>
<td>27 (14%)</td>
<td>8 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever been the victim of bullying at your school?</td>
<td>63 (34%)</td>
<td>97 (52%)</td>
<td>13 (7%)</td>
<td>14 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are boys and girls treated equally at your school?</td>
<td>59 (32%)</td>
<td>61 (33%)</td>
<td>47 (25%)</td>
<td>20 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do your religious or spiritual beliefs influence your behaviour?</td>
<td>150 (80%)</td>
<td>34 (18%)</td>
<td>1 (1%)</td>
<td>2 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important is it for you to do well at school?</td>
<td>13 (7%)</td>
<td>34 (18%)</td>
<td>78 (42%)</td>
<td>62 (33%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages may not sum exactly to 100% due to rounding.
Appendix J: Demographic profile of participants (n=187)

Table J.1 Demographic details of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Percentage*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants born overseas and where they came from</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Papua new Guinea</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents not born in Australia</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Father</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both Parents</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of origin for parents born overseas</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tonga</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Holland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of other children at home</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 or more</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of participants father</td>
<td>35 or less</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40 or more</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages may not sum exactly to 100% due to rounding.
Appendix K: Descriptive profile of participants (n=187)

Table K.1 Descriptive profile of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Very often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you ever do things without thinking what might happen?</td>
<td>11 (6%)</td>
<td>96 (51%)</td>
<td>49 (26%)</td>
<td>31 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you get angry?</td>
<td>6 (3%)</td>
<td>90 (48%)</td>
<td>59 (32%)</td>
<td>32 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you a confident person?</td>
<td>9 (5%)</td>
<td>60 (32%)</td>
<td>71 (38%)</td>
<td>37 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you make friends easily?</td>
<td>8 (4%)</td>
<td>66 (35%)</td>
<td>71 (38%)</td>
<td>42 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you do some sort of physical exercise for 30 minutes at least 3 times per week?</td>
<td>17 (9%)</td>
<td>32 (17%)</td>
<td>38 (20%)</td>
<td>100 (53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you get along with your family?</td>
<td>6 (3%)</td>
<td>37 (20%)</td>
<td>61 (33%)</td>
<td>83 (44%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages may not sum exactly to 100% due to rounding.*