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Young Maori perceptions of a youth development programme

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Project K is a youth development programme that targets young people aged 14–15 years with low self-efficacy. It is run by the Foundation for Youth Development. Story-telling style interviews that asked participants to imagine themselves in a reality television show with different ‘episodes’ were conducted with six Maori Project K participants on the effectiveness of the programme and if and how it works with Maori ‘as Maori’. Results suggested the programme used graded mastery, team work and fun to produce positive outcomes. It also had high expectations of participants, coupled with intense support. Participants described the programme as not particularly attending to them ‘as Maori’, which they generally viewed positively. A workshop was held with key programme staff to analyse the results and formulate an action plan to address areas for improvement. Implications for other programmes that involve indigenous youth are outlined.

Keywords: youth; Maori; self-efficacy; positive youth development; youth development programme

Introduction

Project K is a youth development programme provided by the Foundation of Youth Development (FYD) that operates in 11 regions across New Zealand. The programme targets young people aged approximately 14–15 years with low self-efficacy as determined by their responses to a questionnaire and the judgements of two of their teachers. The aim is to improve participants’ self-efficacy across a range of settings. In this article, we report on interviews with young Maori Project K participants who shared their views of the effectiveness of the programme, the extent to which it promotes self-efficacy and other desirable characteristics, and if and how it works with Maori youth ‘as Maori’. We also show how Project K incorporated the findings from our research into further development of the programme.

We conclude with suggestions for youth development programmes.

As noted, the main selection criteria and primary aim of Project K concerns self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is a person’s belief that they can do something in a given situation with the skills that they have, and that their skills are adaptable enough to be used across situations (Bandura 1997; Miller et al. 1991). While an individual’s self-efficacy is influenced by the true demands of the situation and his or her capacity to meet these, it is also driven by more complex factors including knowledge of past performances, observations of others’ performances, physiological reactions to situations (such as increased heart beat) and the encouragement of others (Schunk & Meece 2006).

The demands of adolescence can result in a decreased sense of efficacy (Schunk & Meece

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2006). A key reason for this appears to be an increasing focus on the opinions of peers and negative comparisons with others that can reduce the young person's belief that they can cope with the demands of daily life (Garland & Zigler 1994). This can lead to negative outcomes including depression, drug use and poorer future aspirations (Kerpelman et al. 2008).

Project K targets the skills, social interactions and beliefs that underlie self-efficacy through three core programme components. The first is a Wilderness Adventure that takes place during a three-week camp. Students are taught navigational and survival skills and then they have to apply these skills using team work in a natural setting. It is hoped that the acquisition and application of these skills gives the participants a sense of confidence and willingness to take on new challenges (Project K 2009). The next component, a Community Challenge, gives the young people an opportunity to put their newly acquired practical and social skills into action, as they are connected with a community leader and design an activity which requires 'giving back' to their local area (FYD 2005). Students are taught to establish networks and identify key resources. It is hoped that the new relationships developed with others (adults, strangers and peers) are positive and enable the students to recognize opportunities to take steps towards their goals. Lastly, for the year following these two blocks, students are paired with a mentor (Project K 2009). The mentor is expected to meet with the student at least once a fortnight and maintain weekly contact via phone or email. Mentoring is designed to provide the necessary support, encouragement and help that the student requires to develop their skills further and achieve their goals; as well as to manage adolescent life (Project K 2009). Notably, it is positive relationships and experiences such as those offered by Project K (with role models and peers) that are considered to significantly influence self-efficacy in adolescents (Farrugia & Bullen, in press; Schunk & Meece 2006).

A three-year randomized-control trial of Project K has recently been conducted and preliminary results show the programme does have the overall effect of increasing self-efficacy, especially for participants who are Maori, male and come from low-decile schools (Qiao & McNaught 2007). There is also ongoing research on perspectives of staff, facilitators and teachers. The current project looks at the perspectives of a special group of participants: young Maori. While Project K does not specifically target Maori, in some regions the percentage of Maori participants is high. In West Auckland, the region from which most of the current participants were drawn, 50% are Maori. There is also good reason to believe that self-efficacy may be a particular struggle for young Maori, as for other indigenous people.

With regards to Maori, the roots of low self-efficacy are likely to be historically located. The initial contact between European and Maori, during the *pre-colonization* (1769–39) period mainly involved trade (Ausubel 1977). Although European weapons and diseases were being introduced, and these would eventually have a devastating effect, during this era it could be argued that Maori were efficacious. The signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 between Maori chiefs and the British Crown was the beginning of *colonization* (1840–49) for Maori. This period is recognized by the land wars of the 1860s (Ausubel 1977), alienation from tribal home lands (Turia 2000), new laws and institutions (McCarthy 1997), a substantial drop in the Maori population and an economic shift in the mid-1900s which left many Maori unemployed (van Meijl 2002). It is possible that self-efficacy at this time would have dropped significantly.

The *urbanization* period (1950s–70s) saw many Maori migrate from their rural homelands to urban areas for employment (Van Meijl 2002). While in 1945, 25% of Maori were living in urban areas, by the mid-1970s nearly 75% were urbanized (Statistics New Zealand 2004a). Psychologically, colonial beliefs about the superiority of the British

worldview appeared to have become internalized (Ausubel 1977; McCarthy 1997; Turia 2000) leading many Maori to reject their culture and language. This loss of resources and inability to have a say in the day-to-day lives of their own people are likely to have significantly damaged the self-efficacy beliefs of Maori. Nevertheless, as more Maori sought tertiary education in the 1970s–80s, a period of *renaissance* occurred. Attempts were made to hold the government responsible for breeches of the Treaty of Waitangi, Maori language pre-schools were developed (*Kohanga Reo*) and Te Reo Maori became a national language (van Meijl 2002). More recently, the 1990s was a period focusing on reducing the socio-economic disparities that existed between Maori and Pakeha.

In the mid-1990s programmes specifically targeting youth were introduced (Fuller & Bullen, in press; FYD 2005). It was hoped that changes such as these would increase social outcomes for Maori. This did not appear to be the case. Young Maori still face poorer social outcomes than many of their peer contemporaries, such as high rates of suicide, unemployment (Te Puni Kokiri 2006) and teenage parenthood (Statistics New Zealand 2004b). As Tariana Turia (2000) argued, Maori were still suffering from the traumatic effects of alienation, assimilation and deculturation. She labelled this 'Post Colonial Traumatic Stress Disorder' and described symptoms including learned helplessness, poor self-image, a tendency for self-belittling, the inability to identify with one's home tribe, violence (domestic and otherwise) and personal, institutional and cultural racism; all symptoms of low self-efficacy. Many have argued that cultural identity is an important indicator of, and protective factor for well-being amongst Maori (Borrell 2005; Houkamau 2006; Kerpelman et al. 2008). For example, in interviews with young urban Maori about their identity, Borrell (2005) found that they were proud of being Maori. Borrell argued that interventions should therefore build on these positive markers of identity.

In the current study we were interested in exploring the extent to which Project K was perceived to work for young Maori participants, in particular by increasing their skills and confidence (self-efficacy) and by acknowledging and working with their identity as Maori. Our specific research questions were:

1. What is the perceived effect of Project K on Maori participants?
2. What *programme conditions* do the participants describe that appear to promote self-efficacy and other positive outcomes?
3. To what *extent* do participants describe Project K as developing self-efficacy and other positive outcomes in themselves?
4. To what extent does the programme work for Maori as Maori?

The research was conducted in close conjunction with the research and programme development teams of Project K. In the discussion section of this article, we outline the procedure for presenting the results to Project K and the process by which they considered the findings and incorporated these into the programme structure.

Method

Participants

Participants were graduates of Project K and were selected based on the following criteria; that they were over 16 years of age (to reduce ethical concerns), they identified as Maori and that they lived in the West Auckland or North Shore areas of the Auckland region. A representative from the FYD (the fourth author of this article) who had access to this information contacted potential participants. She gave potential participants the contact details of the first author of this article. Six participants (two male, four female) contacted the researcher and were thus interviewed (five were from West Auckland, one from North Shore). A \$20 Warehouse gift voucher was given to those who participated.

Interview schedule

The interview schedule was based on the storytelling method devised by McAdams (1995). McAdams's method gets participants to recall the past few years as though they were reading a book. Recognizing that young people today are rarely avid readers, our participants were asked to imagine a television reality show, starring themselves. The show's 'season' was the year before the participant joined Project K to the present. By dividing the interview into episodes, the participants were encouraged to reflect on specific aspects of Project K and their lives. First, they were encouraged to describe a 'trailer' for the show that included the major events in their lives from one year before Project K to the present. Episode one was their 'life before Project K', episode two was about their experience of Project K, episode three was about their experience of school throughout the period, episodes four and five focused on a low point and a high point, respectively, over the target period, episode six was about key influences, episode seven focused on being Maori and the final episode featured their reflections and future aspirations. There were a series of prompts to ensure that participants addressed the research questions, and the full interview schedule can be obtained from the authors. Participants were also invited to tweak the structure of the episodes, following the collaborative approach suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2005). Importantly too, this structure tapped into the oral tradition consistent with Maori and other indigenous cultures (Labonte et al. 1999; Smith, 1999).

Procedure

After possible participants contacted the researcher via text message, the first author then called each participant and organized a time for the interview at the University of Auckland. In one instance, the researcher went to the participant's house. Most interviews lasted approximately one hour. In an attempt to

create a space comfortable for the young Maori participants, the researcher was informed by tikanga Maori principles (Jones et al. 2006; Mead 2003). To ensure comfort, food was provided throughout. At the end, participants were thanked for their time, given gift vouchers as a koha for their time and offered a tour of the University. This offer of feeding back to the participants was to recognize the importance of their contribution and to share some of the researcher's experience with the participants. In addition, in an attempt to allow the participants to be a partner in the research, they were given the opportunity to change their interview transcripts, they were informed of the key themes that had been analysed from the data and given the opportunity to make comments and were invited to take part in presentations on the research, but none of the participants undertook this.

Analysis

Each interview was transcribed. Names of the participants and those they spoke about were changed to ensure confidentiality. The process of analysis was undertaken using the thematic analysis procedures identified by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Schmidt (2004) as well as template analysis as discussed by Hawe and Riley (2005). The first author read each of the transcripts for any material related to the research questions. This information was then coded under the research questions. After this, themes were identified. A second read-through looked for additional material that could be further coded under these themes. The number of participants who had extracts coded under each theme was recorded. The second author then also read through the transcripts for further information related to the research questions and to verify the initial coding by the first author. In the results, quotations are used verbatim to express participants' opinions.

Results

1. What is the perceived effect of Project K on Maori participants?

Remarkably, every participant used negative concepts to describe him or herself prior to the programme. All reported participating in *maladaptive behaviours* whether this was creating conflict in the classroom, trouble with the law or the consumption of illegal substances. They used terms and phrases such as 'naughty' and 'getting up to mischief'. It was clear that, at this stage, these individuals were not heading down a positive path.

I hanged out with the naughty students and did drugs and disrespected all the teachers and did alcohol at school, um, wagged... I didn't learn and I wasn't interested. (Interview 5)

So did the programme contribute to steering these participants towards more positive outcomes? According to all six participants, their experiences in Project K could be credited for contributing to *substantial positive changes* in their behaviour. Often this was in relation to behaviour and focus at school, as well as risk behaviours and employment. All expressed appreciation for having had the opportunity to participate in the programme.

It was odd but it was because of Project K that I stopped rebelling. I stopped smoking weed. Um, I stopped drinking for like a whole year afterwards. Um, I stayed in school. I finished fifth, sixth and seventh. All with level one, two and three. And, yeah it changed everything for me. It changed my perspective on life. (Interview 4)

Three of the participants emphasized that these positive changes were not isolated to themselves but they observed successful transitions in all of the Project K participants in their group. However, this was not the case across the board; two individuals did indicate that not all participants in their group were satisfied with some components of the programme.

Um, for others I think that they didn't like the community service as much but most of us did... (Interview 5)

some of the students didn't like doing stuff with their mentors. Yeah they were like 'nah that's stupid'... They thought they were too cool... (Interview 6)

2. What programme conditions do the participants describe that appear to promote self-efficacy and other positive outcomes?

Evidently, the programme made a lasting positive impression on the participants. So what kind of environment produced these positive changes? Here, we discuss comments made in relation to how each component of the programme promoted their development.

The Wilderness Adventure, in particular, was recalled by three participants as being a *challenging environment that pushed their expectations* and allowed them to accomplish new things.

[Participant] The wilderness adventure was, ohhh, man, that was pretty hard for me back then cause I would have been like fourteen, fifteen? Yeah. Not used to, wasn't used to it aye. [Interviewer] What did you, what did you think about it? [participant] I just thought oh I wanna go home [Interviewer] And um, what were um, the most important parts of the wilderness experience for you? [Participant] Ah, probably getting over, I dunno, just like getting over the fact that whatever I say or do is not gonna change anything so I just got on with it. (Interview 1)

Some of the tasks were described as physically challenging such as kayaking or hiking, while others were reported as socially demanding. For example, participants were often asked to speak in front of the group or be a leader. The level of discipline expected from the participants was also a new concept for one. This enabled the student to realise how her behaviour was influencing other environments such as school.

... because... like I went through a stage that I disrespected our tutors and I got disciplined and our teachers didn't discipline me. They just leave me

and ignore me and I'd distract others but they [Project K tutors] disciplined us. And it kinda just made me think that that teacher probably feels the same way. (Interview 5)

Two others emphasized that the Project K environment was conducive to *self-reflection* as it was an opportunity to get away from their current environment and to think about the choices that they had been making.

... you have the perfect amount of opportunities to really look at yourself and help others to see themselves, sorta thing... without any distractions around you. (Interview 4)

Teamwork was an important social component for achieving goals on the programme which was acknowledged by four of the participants. Students were unable to neglect their duties because of the team's reliance on them. This encouraged them to work harder.

I didn't think I could do it. None of us thought we could. But we, we realized we needed each other's support to carry on or just give up. (Interview 5)

Working well as a team was especially necessary since participants were expected to take *responsibility* and be in control of organizing and executing tasks on their own (both in the Wilderness Adventure and the Community Challenge) but this was done in a manner conducive to success. According to four participants, the instructors facilitated a process of *graded mastery*. Participants were taught crucial skills initially then left to work independently unless support was called for.

[our instructors] would tell us what we have to do and then they would just show us how to do it and then see if we could do it and they would just go along with their own thing and let us do it but they'll still give us help if we needed it. (Interview 3)

Although the Community Challenge was at times discussed as being challenging, given the extra responsibility participants had to take on to organize events, it was nevertheless recalled

by five participants as being *fun*. For three of these individuals the enjoyment was linked to this stage's goal of *giving back* to the community.

Community challenges. Um, yeah some of them were quite challenging. Sometimes we had to look after um, like disabled people. Take, oh we took them bowling. That was actually quite fun. (Interview 3)

The most salient factor in the mentoring relationship (according to four individuals) was the *provision of support* whether this was companionship or 'a non-judgemental person to talk to', giving advice or more often supporting participants to set and achieve their goals.

...a good mentor would go over your goals....And like make sure you achieve them or make sure you try your hardest to achieve them.(Interview 6)

Unfortunately, not all mentors were supportive. One participant felt her mentor lost interest because she lived between both of her parents' houses; the other mentor was often unable to catch up with his mentee because he was away on travel. Nevertheless, both participants were able to achieve their goals by identifying other significant adults to help with them.

Yeah I wanted to change my mentor but my friend's mentor, she always took me as well as my friend Toni to help me achieve my goals as well. (Interview 5)

Despite these two unsuitable mentoring arrangements, all participants described the conditions of the programme in terms of being conducive to their personal growth.

3. To what *extent* do participants describe Project K as developing self-efficacy and other positive outcomes in themselves?

Five of the six participants acknowledged a change in their self-beliefs which they expressed as a newfound *confidence* in their abilities. This confidence was expressed in regards to different

contexts (for example, one was more confident in her ability to take up activities in her everyday life such as running, while another described being more confident in job interviews).

We got to the top of that and so then like after it you think oh "if I can walk up that I can do anything" like, so you would like, we'd go running, like me and my friend who done it. (Interview 2)

The improved confidence in an interview setting mentioned by one participant is also indicative of increased *social competence* and *communication skills* which is not surprising given that participants were encouraged to speak publicly (i.e. at their graduation) and at de-briefs during the Wilderness Adventure. Three acknowledged this as enabling them to communicate confidently with others after the programme.

...we had to go individually and kind of talk in front of other people. But now I can, I can stand up and talk. (Interview 5)

In addition, two recalled an increase in their ability to associate with students from other backgrounds and the *close relationships* that developed due to the necessity to work together to achieve daily goals was spoken about in a positive light by half of the participants.

Oh we all found that when we were off the wilderness, we all had a really tight bond and we all helped each other and worked. (Interview 5)

4. To what extent does the programme work for Maori as Maori?

Maori identity, as discussed earlier, is associated with numerous historical challenges which have resulted in disparities between Pakeha and Maori for generations. The fact that these disparities are salient to young Maori today was evident in our group of participants as all recalled that it was difficult being young and Maori and acknowledged that their ethnicity was associated with a *negative stereotype*. This was identified through discourse such as

being Maori was 'pretty hard', that you were 'peer pressured to stuff up' and a belief that Maori get 'below standard' as compared to others. They acknowledged that this has had an impact on them as young people and can invite an increase in criticism towards the self.

Despite the hardships experienced by participants in regards to their ethnicity, the four females identified a positive perspective and *pride* in being Maori.

I'm proud. Um, I don't like people talking negatively about being Maori. I'm really offensive towards it. It's something I treasure and I have, um my Koro teaches me a lot about the knowledge and stuff and what happens. The rights and wrongs and stuff like that. (Interview 5)

When exploring the cultural climate of Project K, we discovered that the majority of participants thought the programme did not accommodate them specifically as Maori. Five of the participants noted that instructors cultivated an atmosphere of *ethnic equality* where expectations were the same regardless of one's ethnicity. However, they did not perceive this as a bad thing. Project K offered an opportunity for the participants to just be young people. They were not discriminated against because of their background and were able to live within an environment that expected them to achieve; contrary to other expectations.

I don't think it was like race specific, as there's... just a random bunch of us... I'm pretty sure not once did any of us ever feel like racially compromised sorta thing. So I don't think it targeted anything specifically it just targeted the person. So it didn't matter what colour we were, what language we spoke, how we spoke, um, yeah what blood ran through our veins, it was just targeted specifically towards an individual person, which, which was good I think... cause if I think if it was all twelve Maori students that went, it would be like, you'd ending up getting criticized like 'why, why is it only them that get it?' and all that sorta stuff, or oh ok, cause they're all the delinquent ones only Maori students are delinquent sorta thing. (Interview 4)

Despite the intentions to treat participants equally, a few cultural conflicts were reported. Participants noted three occasions that made them feel 'weird' in terms of being Maori. The first was when a participant arrived at a drop-off point that was a resting place for fantails, which are commonly associated with death in Maori culture:

I think the worst thing for Barry that happened on that, was that our first drop off point was Fantail Bay. And fantail's associated with, yeah death... and yeah he automatically freaked out that something was gonna happen with his family. And that was just because of the way we were raised. (Interview 4)

The same participant had a disagreement with one of the instructors stemming from differing beliefs about God:

The religion thing came out a couple of times... like one of our tutors because she was all godly and it was one specific God and Jesus Christ... me and Barry didn't believe that because that's not the religion we chose sorta thing and yeah... it was hard when she was trying to preach upon us there's only one God, it was like um no, that's kinda not what I believe. (Interview 4)

Another participant disliked other students damaging the environment on the Wilderness Adventure:

...cause we were in the bush a lot, like they'd wrecking like all the trees and the bush and I'm like 'That isn't right. That's tangata whenua, you're gonna, you're gonna get hurt' (Interview 5)

It is worthy to note that students who had had Maori instructors throughout the programme did not indicate any cultural conflict. These participants felt that their Maori instructors provided them with the necessary support for cultural matters.

... I think everyone's just treated the same. Like you're not um, like oh Maori students kind of thing. They were like cool as to you at PK. And cause

most of your instructors are all Maori anyway. (Interview 2)

I reckon they should have at least one Maori instructor though. Cause yeah, cause they understand. Cause we had two Maori instructors, that's why it was so good for us. I dunno, I dunno how we woulda coped if like we had just straight Pakeha instructors. (Interview 6)

Two participants suggested that Project K could benefit by incorporating opportunities for students to develop Maori cultural competencies

... I reckon it would be cool if they went to like Maori places like...where they could look at the Maori culture. Like stuff like...where they go for Waitangi?...I reckon like schools there, should, could go there and stuff for the activities cause I reckon, yeah, that'd be cool. (Interview 2)

Discussion

Participants' were keen to credit Project K for positive changes in themselves and others. This included substantial transformations from being a 'naughty' student to one who completed secondary school. Project K was described as providing a challenging environment that pushed their expectations, as well as one that encouraged responsibility, teamwork and self-reflection. This was done within a supportive environment that allowed for graded mastery. These qualities are similar to those offered by other successful youth development programmes (Farrugia & Bullen, in Press; Multon & Brown 1991; Schunk & Meece 2006; Turner et al. 2006). These experiences in turn appeared to create confidence, social competence and improved communication skills. Therefore, it appears Project K did indeed provide the experiences and social context to encourage self-efficacy.

As discussed in the introduction, many have argued for the importance of a strong cultural identity in Maori wellbeing (e.g. Houkamau 2006; Kerpelman et al. 2008) and the desirability of youth programmes promoting this (Borrell 2005). It is notable that our

participants did not perceive Project K to work directly with their identity as Maori.

However, for the most part this was considered a positive feature of the programme.

The explanation for why the young people liked Project K not being 'race specific' (in the words of one participant), seems to lie in their acute awareness of negative stereotypes about young Maori. Their descriptions included less privilege, more violence and crime and more discrimination from peers and from teachers. These features are consistent with those Tari-ana Turia's (2000) described as symptoms of 'post-colonial traumatic stress disorder' brought about by the history we described in the introduction to this article. Their portrayal of their group's social standing also fits Julian Rappaport's (2000) concept of 'tales of terror', that is, community narratives that suggest a highly undesirable life pattern for a social group. Despite the deeply disturbing future these narratives foretell, they act as a self-fulfilling prophecy for many of those they claim to describe. Given that adolescence is a period where young people are trying to make sense of themselves in the world (Schunk & Meece 2006; Steinberg 2008), it is not surprising that our participants felt liberated by being part of a programme that did not buy into these tales of terror. Instead, Project K had high expectations of the young people and did not let them give up. Of course it is possible that in future the participants may not be satisfied with escaping their cultural tale of terror but may seek a 'Tale of joy' about being Maori.

Despite this generally positive view of Project K they did highlight some 'weird' incidents that indicate possible cultural insensitivity on the part of the instructors concerned. One was when their group arrived at Fantail Bay. Fantails are an omen of death in Maori culture (Troup 2009). A notable character in Maori tradition, a demi-god called Maui, tried to defy mortality for humans by entering the body of the goddess of death (Hine-nui-te-po). When he was halfway through, a fantail laughed and Maui was killed. It is not

surprising, therefore that one student got very worried for his family because of the numerous fantails flying around. Unfortunately, the instructor appeared unaware of the problem and so could not provide the desirable support.

On a second occasion an instructor was described as preaching about one, Christian god which the participant said was not consistent with the views of her and her friend. In the Maori worldview, there are multiple deities, called Atua, who oversee various components of physical and non-physical realms such as the wind (Tawhirimatea), conflict (Tumatauenga), oceans (Tangaroa) and the underworld (Hine-nui-te-po). Finally, another participant was uncomfortable about the damage being caused to the bush during the Wilderness Adventure, describing the bush as having agency 'that's tangata whenua...you're gonna get hurt' consistent with the view that people descend from Tanemahuta, who is also the god of the forest.

It is notable that the participants who described these incidents had no Maori instructors. Those with Maori instructors did not describe 'weird' moments. This suggests that it would be desirable for instructors to have some working knowledge of Maori culture or to be open with the students about their cultural limitations and invite participants to help them learn more. Indeed, it appears some non-Maori instructors may do this already, as two participants acknowledged being asked what words for plants or birds were in Maori.

Despite the tendency to describe Project K as culturally neutral, it is interesting that one of the core aims of the programme—for students to take on new challenges and develop their skills with support from instructors and a mentor—is consistent with a Maori metaphor that focus on the poutama (Tangaere 1997). The stairwell design symbolizes that as an individual masters a task, he or she progresses to the next level of complexity for that task. At each stage of the staircase, there is a mentor or other individual to guide the person through the process, yet also stepping back so the individual can achieve mastery over the task.

Mentoring too, is consistent with the *tuakana/teina* (older sibling/younger sibling) structure that is set up in Maori culture (Tangaere 1997). Both processes allow the opportunity for autonomy, yet knowing that help is there if needed.

So, while the participants considered Project K a supportive environment to get away from the negative stereotypes and pressures of being Maori, there may also be simple ways in which the programme could build on existing positive aspects of being Maori to encourage a positive cultural identity (as recommended by Borrell 2005). This could include explaining the underlying principles with the use of Maori cultural devices and inviting Maori to contribute their perspectives as Maori in the reflective sessions that are part of the programme. Maori leaders could be brought in to speak to groups, a strategy that has been used with indigenous North American youth (Turner et al. 2006). It may also be possible to offer opportunities for Maori students to learn more about their culture, two of our participants stated that is something they would like to see in the programme.

As described earlier, this research was carried out in close conjunction with the FYD's Project K research and programme development teams. In 2009a workshop process was trialled to facilitate a systematic review of the research findings. The first workshop was attended by the FYD training, research and programme development teams, the national relationship manager and programme operations manager. Prior to the first workshop, the research manager reviewed the research findings and identified three key areas for programme development: (1) Promoting a positive sense of cultural identity; (2) Cultural difference and cultural support and (3) Encouraging school support. For each of the three key areas, the findings and recommendations from the research were collated into a draft document and distributed to the workshop participants. At the workshop, discussions were held on the implications of the findings and recommenda-

tions and possible actions for the organization. All possible actions were then added to the draft document and re-distributed to participants.

At a second workshop, the possible actions for each of the three key areas were reviewed and considered based on four criteria: feasibility; importance; effectiveness and ethical acceptability. Decisions were made around preferred actions, who would take responsibility for implementation and timeframes for completion. This workshop process helped to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the possible actions and facilitate the decision-making process. As a result of the workshops the following priorities were identified for programme and policy development: reviewing and building on current training procedures and materials; developing quality assurance protocols; engaging with a culturally competent Maori leader to provide national advice and guidance (with a view to using learnings to promote regional relationships with local *iwi*); identifying those currently within the organization who have the necessary cultural knowledge to advise on cultural safety policies and procedures and developing a de-brief process for addressing cultural issues that may arise.

Conclusions

While this study has focused on one programme and one indigenous population, we consider that there are wider lessons here. First, it appears possible for the approach of graded mastery coupled with team work and fun to produce positive outcomes. Second, with groups of young people who are vulnerable to negative social stereotypes, it may be particularly advantageous to be in an environment that has high expectations of them and that offers support in meeting these challenges. This has similarities to the approach of the Te Kotahitanga project to increase academic achievement in young Maori (Bishop et al. 2009).

Young people will find a way to be efficacious. Our participants described 'bad' behaviour prior to Project K that nevertheless brought its own social rewards. Interestingly, research with indigenous Native American youth identified greater self-efficacy with regard to social and leisure skills than with leadership and persistence (Turner et al. 2006). The Project K structure suggests how leadership and persistence can be developed in vulnerable young people.

Third, it is likely that young people in marginal social positions enjoy a break from the 'tales of terror' that surround them, but there may be ways to build cultural identity without this having to be the prime target of the programme concerned. We suggested that drawing parallels between programme processes and the culture of the participants and having instructors who were open to cultural input are useful components in addition to providing instructors with cultural knowledge.

Finally, our 'research into practice' workshop approach allowed the participation of key staff members in the development of a realistic action plan based on our research findings. The process supported the organization's commitment to change and facilitated the implementation and incorporation of suggested actions into programme design and policy.

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