Youth Development
LITERATURE REVIEW

Building Strength

A review of research on how to achieve good outcomes for young people
in their families, peer groups, schools, careers and communities

By Kaye McLaren

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Foreword

This review, *Youth Development Literature Review: Building Strength,* is an important piece of work that supports the implementation of *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa* that was released in February 2002. Much of the research reviewed in this report also informed the development of the Strategy.

The publication of this review contributes to achieving Goal 4 of the Strategy, which is 'Building knowledge on youth development through information and research'. It is essential that evidence-based research and information be used in applying the youth development approach outlined in the Strategy.

This review makes an important contribution to our understanding of how to contribute to achieving good outcomes for young people in their families, peer groups, schools, training, careers and communities. Although only a portion of the research reviewed is New Zealand-based, many of the findings identified in the review are applicable to the New Zealand context. What is needed now is more New Zealand research on aspects of youth development to further supplement the findings outlined in this review.

I am pleased that the Ministry of Youth Affairs was able to contribute to this work. We plan in the future to provide further information on other aspects of youth development research and its practical application.

I hope that this document will be a valuable resource that contributes to the knowledge of people working with and for young people in the development of youth policy and delivery of programmes and services.

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Chief Executive
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Youth Development *Literature Review: Building Strength*

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Executive Summary

This youth development literature review, *Building Strength,* is a review of research on how to achieve good outcomes for young people in their families, peer groups, schools, careers and neighbourhoods/communities.

It is closely linked with, and informs, the *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa* that was developed by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and released in February 2002.

Making a positive difference to the lives of young people

The research on youth development delivers some good news. Success for young people is not simply the result of chance or genes. The people who care about young people, or simply come into contact with them, can have a tremendous influence for good. These people include parents, extended family, friends, schoolmates, neighbours, school staff and community members, such as youth and church workers. The circumstances young people grow up in – such as the type of neighbourhood, family income and the way schools are run – can also have a positive impact.

Young people play a part in their own success

This is not to suggest that young people are passive in their own lives. Young people can make a tremendous difference to their own success by things such as the friends they choose, the attitude they have towards education and the decisions they make about who they are and where they want to go in life. Factors outside their control, such as their genetic inheritance, temperament and health as babies, also make a big difference to their success in life. However, this review does not focus on these individual factors, but on the impact of the people and circumstances that surround young people as they grow.

Positive youth development

Each young person has a number of key tasks to undertake on the path to adulthood. How well each of these is mastered affects the degree of success each of them will experience in their adult life. In positive youth development, we are interested in what is needed for young people to grow into constructive, autonomous individuals with a high level of well-being. So it makes sense to look at the research on what needs to happen in order to reach this goal.

What the research tells us

The implications of the research findings are heartening. The most up to date research tells us that parents, schools, peers and communities can make a big difference by providing certain conditions which make it more likely that young people will thrive. Downstream, there are even bigger implications. The whole country benefits when young people grow up to be mentally healthy, well-educated, employed and employable, non-violent, honest and law-abiding, drug free and to become parents only once they have finished their schooling and established careers.

Positive youth development is good for everyone

Young people who experience this type of life success bring many benefits to a nation – a good workforce, healthy population and capable caretakers of the next generation. Good youth development is, therefore, relevant to us all. When young people develop positively, they boost the country's earnings, increase the wealth of national knowledge and use less taxes on health care, prisons, police, welfare benefits and psychiatric services. These funds can then be diverted to education and other vital services. Successful young people function better in almost every sphere of life – as friends, parents, students, employees, spouses/partners, neighbours and community members. They bring a wealth to the community and country that cannot be counted simply in dollars.

The benefits for future generations

The positive implications of successful young people go on for many years. The benefits are inter-generational – young people who experience success and well-being themselves are more likely to be parents who bring up their children also to be successful and productive. Success is used here in the widest sense of the term – happy, stable, constructive and able to use their talents to the fullest, for their own benefit and that of the community.

How do we build strengths that create good outcomes for young people?

These are the benefits that positive youth development brings. But what does the research say about how to achieve them?

1. Surround young people with positive influences

The research makes it clear that different people have a different impact, depending on how close they are to the young person and how much time they spend with them from a young age. Parents, whether biological or adoptive, have the most impact. Peers and schools appear to come next and it is not clear whether one has a greater impact than the other. Peers may have a broader impact in the short-term, but schools have a significant impact on long-term well-being. Neighbourhoods and significant community members have the least impact, although they are still important.

2. Build abundant strengths into young people's lives

The more strengths there are in young people's lives – in their individual traits, parenting, schools, peer group, neighbourhood and community – the more success they are likely to achieve. For young people who are vulnerable to failure in some area of their life, whether because of genetic inheritance, poor parenting or some other factor, strengths in other areas of their lives become even more important.

3. Support young people with rich resources

One factor that makes it more likely that good outcomes will occur across the board is good resources – good family income, good income for most of the people in a neighbourhood, well-resourced schools and communities with rich resources such as libraries and community centres. Where income and resources are greater, young people tend to have better emotional well-being, more crime-free and drug-free behaviour and better educational achievement. Income seems to have an impact partly through reducing parental stress and conflict, thus making it easier for people to parent effectively. It is also associated with occupation and education, and these make it more likely parents will encourage and help their children with education and other key tasks.

4. Deliver optimum parenting

In families, a certain type of parenting makes good outcomes more likely, including educational achievement, emotional and psychological well-being and prosocial, crime- and drug- free behaviour. This is 'authoritative' (nurturing) parenting where parents are nurturing, warm and accepting while at the same time setting clear and firm limits and consequences for breaking them. Discipline is consistent but not harsh and change as young people mature to include them more in decision making.

Families where parents deal with conflict constructively also have better outcomes for young people, especially emotional and psychological. Stable families, whether one or two parent, biological or adoptive, are also better for young people, although two-parent families have better outcomes. This is possibly because they have higher income, but also because there are two parents to provide all the aspects of parenting that young people thrive on.

Families tend to act as a filter for every other type of influence. Parents have an impact on who young people make friends with, how often they see them and how much influence friends have. They also influence where young people live, as well as their access to community resources and the amount of contact they have with neighbours. Parents largely choose where young people go to school and influence their attitudes towards the value of education and choice of career. Effective parenting, therefore, has the potential to have an impact on every other part of a young person's life, enabling them to access strengths in every environment that make it even more likely they will succeed.

When families are strong, they protect young people against weaknesses in other parts of their world. Strong families protect against negative peer influence, badly run schools and poor neighbourhood circumstances, such as poverty and dangerousness. When parenting has weaknesses, strengths in other areas become more important, but weaknesses in other areas also become more powerful.

Overall, effective parenting and effective resolution of conflict between parents appear to have more impact on young people than other factors such as income and divorce. However, higher income helps reduce stress and conflict, so there is an interaction between the two factors.

5. Positive peer influence – the power of friends

Peers – whether friends, schoolmates or neighbours – can also have a positive impact. Other young people can enhance emotional well-being, crime and drug free lifestyles, academic success, recreational and sporting involvement, how much young people express their talents and safety at school. They do this largely by expressing positive behaviours and values which other young people then take up, even if they did not show these behaviours and values to start with.

Peers do not have as much impact as family, although when parenting is harsh or lax, peers can become far more influential than normal, both for good and bad. This is particularly true in the area of crime and drug use, where ineffective parenting means antisocial peer influence has much more impact.

6. Provide education that is accepting, sets limits and has high expectations

Schools can also have a positive impact, both through the way they are organised and the way staff relate to young people. Academic outcomes are better when there are high expectations for learning and behaviour, moderate classroom control and teachers treat young people with warmth, positive regard and support. This is especially important for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who may be under considerable stress through family poverty or violence. An emphasis on individual programmes rather than competition, smaller schools (whole schools not just classes), and mixed ability rather than

streamed classes also lead to better outcomes. Lastly, the fewer transitions from one school to another that young people go through in their school lives, the better the outcomes are, especially for young women.

Staying at school longer has positive effects on young people too. Young women are more likely to delay parenthood until they have finished their education and started a career, if they stay at school. Young men are less likely to become involved with antisocial friends and activities if they spend more years in education. More education also increases the chance of success at work, which has an effect on income and, as we know, can affect the next generation of young people. So overall, valuing education and getting actively involved in learning can have a large and long-lasting effect.

In the work world, part-time work while at school does not appear to make success more likely. But as long as it does not go beyond 20 hours per week, it appears to have no adverse outcomes. Parents again have a positive impact on what choices young people make about education and career by providing living examples and advice.

7. Place young people in well-resourced communities with supportive neighbours

Neighbours and significant adults in the community can also have a positive influence, but less so than families. Neighbourhoods and communities can aid success in education, crime and drug-free, prosocial lifestyles, emotional welll-being, and delayed parenthood. Their influence can be both direct and indirect. Direct influence is on the experiences and activities young people are exposed to. Indirect influences are by reducing parents' stress so they can parent more effectively. Close ties with neighbours, good income throughout the area, good community resources and help and support from local people all reduce parental stress. Another indirect impact is through supervision of peer groups. Neighbours who share values and work together to maintain local standards can ensure that groups of young people in the neighbourhood are an influence for good rather than ill.

The characteristics of neighbourhoods that appear most important include income, occupation and education levels of residents. People not moving often, close ties between people and working together for the common good are also helpful. The characteristics of buildings and land use also make a difference. The pathways by which these factors have an impact on young people are complex and are explored in more depth in this review.

Strong neighbourhoods can be protective when parenting is weak especially through support and supervision by neighbours and significant local adults. When neighbourhoods are strong, young people are protected by nurturant parenting with strong supervision, neighbours working together for good, residential stability and participation in organised activities.

8. Involve young people in constructive activities outside school and work

Participation by young people in out-of-school activities is a significant protective factor, although again not as strong as families. Young people who participate in extracurricular activities, whether at school or elsewhere, tend to stay longer at school, show less antisocial behaviour and drug use, drink more responsibly, attend school more often, show better attitudes to sex and have better academic and career success. This appears to be particularly the case when activities are organised and supervised by skilled adults and when their friends are also involved. Parents can encourage young people to participate in these activities by being involved in the community themselves, or showing warm support for their children when they get involved.

The good news about positive youth development

Overall, the news is good. Young people have a much better chance of success in many areas of their lives when the world they live in is full of strengths. This should give hope to parents, young people, educators and community members that they can make a positive difference – and a big one.

Strong blocks make strong walls, and strong walls make strong buildings

Each strength that is achieved by a young person is like adding a block to a strong wall, and provides a basis for achieving the next strength. When a certain strength or task is not achieved, then the wall has gaps in it that weaken it and make it vulnerable to stress. The more strengths there are in a young person's life, the stronger the life they build. When strengths are not present in any abundance, the foundations for the next stage of life are weaker and young people are more likely to build shaky lives. The key to good outcomes for young people then is building as many strengths into their lives as possible, so that they can build in strength as they move towards adulthood.

Introduction

This youth development literature review, *Building Strength,* focuses on the 12 to 24 inclusive age group. This is the age group covered by the Ministry of Youth Affairs. The review includes research on development throughout adolescence defined as stretching from 12 to 20 years and in the first five years of early adulthood. It is a review of research on how to achieve good outcomes for young people in their families, peer groups, schools, careers and neighbourhoods and communities.

Human development was once thought to end at adolescence with adulthood a plateau and old age a decline in development (Berk 2001). However, it is now accepted that development takes place throughout the lifespan, right up until the day of death. Development across these stages can be seen as continuous, where individuals build on and develop skills and abilities that were there from an early age. Or it can be seen as discontinuous, where the developing individual moves through stages, each of which has unique features, with their experiences at younger stages quite different in nature from those at later stages (Berk 2001).

This review takes the view that development involves some continuous aspects, where early skills are built on and some discontinuous aspects, where there is movement from one distinct stage to another with the emergence of new skills. While each period in life makes its own demands on an individual and brings with it unique opportunities, the timing and context of particular developments (such as child-bearing) differ from individual to individual and culture to culture. For the purposes of this review, development may be seen more as a tree than a staircase. Development in any individual could travel along quite a few different branches or pathways, depending on the characteristics that person inherits, the culture and family they grow up in and the events of the era they experience (Berk 2001).

Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa

This literature review is closely linked with, and informs, the *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa*[1] that was developed by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and released in February 2002.

> The *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa* is about how government and society can support young women and men aged 12 to 24 years. It's about how they develop the skills and attitudes they need to take a positive part in society, now and in the future.
>
> The Strategy promotes the application of a youth development approach as a way of understanding what needs to happen for, around and with young people in New Zealand. It consists of a vision, principles, aims and goals, and also suggests actions that can be taken to support the positive development of young people.

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[1] Copies of the *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa* are available from the Ministry of Youth Affairs by e-mailing **info@youthaffairs.govt.nz** or phoning or writing to us. An electronic copy is also available on the Ministry of Youth Affairs' website – **www.youthaffairs.govt.nz**. Reports summarising and analysing responses to the consultation documents and other resource material are also available on the site.

Public sector agencies are using the Strategy when developing youth policies and delivering services and programmes for young people. It is also a tool for individuals, groups and organisations that work at all levels with young people and deal with the issues facing them.

The Principles of Youth Development

These outline what the youth development approach is all about. They can be used as a checklist and a tool for developing youth policies and programmes and in working alongside young people. The principles are:

1. Youth development is shaped by the 'big picture'

By the 'big picture' we mean: the values and belief systems; the social, cultural, economic contexts and trends; the Treaty of Waitangi; and international obligations such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

2. Youth development is about young people being connected

Healthy development depends on young people having positive connections with others in society. This includes their family and whānau, their community, their school, training institution or workplace, and their peers.

3. Youth development is based on a consistent strengths-based approach

There are risk factors that can affect the healthy development of young people and there are also factors that are protective. 'Strengths-based' policies and programmes will build on young people's capacity to resist risk factors and enhance the protective factors in their lives.

4. Youth development happens through quality relationships

 It is important that everyone is supported and equipped to have successful, quality relationships with young people.

5. Youth development is triggered when young people fully participate

Young people need to be given opportunities to have greater control over what happens to them, through seeking their advice, participation and engagement.

6. Youth development needs good information

Effective research, evaluation, and information gathering and sharing is crucial.

Together, these six principles can help young people to gain a:

• sense of contributing something of value to society
• feeling of connectedness to others and to society
• belief that they have choices about their future
• feeling of being positive and comfortable with their own identity.

The literature reviewed

The information reviewed in this report is largely drawn from studies from outside New Zealand, including Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Jamaica, Hawaii, Italy and Australia. The majority of these studies were carried out in the United States. Wherever possible, research from New Zealand or by New Zealanders has been included, particularly the longitudinal studies of young people in Christchurch and Dunedin. However, there has been less research on the development of young people in New Zealand than in other countries because of the relatively small size of the population and limited resources available for funding research.

Where research has been available on New Zealand young people, it has not conflicted with overseas research. There may be some difficulties with translating from the United States education system to the New Zealand system, but this will not be clear until research on areas such as school transition is carried out in New Zealand. Data on young Māori has also been included where it was available or known of, but very little research has been carried out in this area.

This review has been written on the assumption that developmental processes in human beings are reasonably similar across different ethnicities, cultures and countries. This view was supported by the cross-cultural research included in the literature review. While patterns of upbringing and socialisation were somewhat different from culture to culture, overall cross-cultural studies indicated that broad parenting, peer, school and community approaches had much the same positive impact whichever culture they occurred in (Avenevoli, Sessa and Steinberg 1999, Claes 1998, Gillock and Reyes 1999, Gutman and Midgley 2000, McLoyd 1990, Stevenson 1998, Walker, Grantham-McGregor, Himes, Williams and Duff 1998). Where this was not the case, it was noted in the text.

While a wide variety of research has been used in this review, priority was given to research with high levels of rigour. The criteria used to judge this included: randomised assignment of different conditions to control or experimental group; statistically significant results established; use of multivariate analysis; longitudinal studies; use of long-term follow-ups (more than a year); use of large sample sizes; and replication of results in other studies. The text includes commentary on the rigour and reliability of the studies reviewed, noting when conclusions are more or less reliable.

PART 1:
Key stages of Young People's Development

❯ Adolescence

Two key transition points are usually used to signify the start of adolescence in Western society. These are going through puberty and starting secondary school (Jaffe 1998). Like most possible markers of this transition, both are not completely reliable – puberty occurs at different ages for different people, and is occurring earlier and earlier in the Western world (Berk 2001, Bird and Drewery 2000, Jaffe 1998). Entry to secondary school, while more reliable, does not occur for every young person. A small group, usually highly at risk of poor outcomes because they have lacked opportunities for positive development, simply leave primary or intermediate school and never attend school again. For these young people, the transition to adolescence may well be marked by 'adult' behaviours such as drinking, taking drugs, sexual activity, committing crimes, and court appearances.

Changes in several areas usually take place in adolescence (Berk 2001, Jaffe 1998). Physical appearance and functioning changes, thinking skills improve and morality becomes more sophisticated. Understanding of human motivation also deepens. Young people become closer to their peers and more distant from their parents, spending more time with people of the same age than they will at any other time in their lives (Jaffe 1998). Overall, adolescence in the Western world is the period where young people become more separate from their parents, formerly the most important people in their lives and become more independent and autonomous (Durkin 1995). While they will probably retain some kind of bond and interdependent relationship with their parents until one of them dies, their lives become more distinctly their own, including living apart from their family.

The end of adolescence is even less clear in Western culture. Unlike half of all societies, where transition from childhood to adulthood is marked by rites of passage from circumcision of boys in some African tribes to coming of age days in Japan, adulthood happens gradually in the West (Jaffe 1998). To a certain extent a person is an adult when they feel like one but adult status tends to be judged more by external factors such as graduation from secondary school or tertiary education, taking on a job, moving out of the family home, becoming financially independent or even early parenthood.

While early adulthood is generally accepted to start at age 20, young people may see themselves as adults when parents and teachers still see them as adolescents. When 113 American teenagers, both males and females with an average age of 16.7 years, were asked whether they considered themselves adults, over three-quarters said 'yes' (Jaffe 1998). Bird and Drewery (2000) make the point that in New Zealand, as in other Western countries, the divisions between 'adolescence', 'youth' and 'young adults' are blurring. For many young people two of the key aspects of growing up – that is, getting a job and moving out of home – are becoming more difficult.

Together with the earlier age of puberty and the extended years of study needed to get a job, the period of adolescence is being stretched further than ever before. As there is an expectation in New Zealand and many other countries that families, rather than the State, will support young people until they are ready to work, the period of forced financial dependence has also been extended (Bird and Drewery 2000). For many young people, adolescence lasts almost ten years, as they learn the complex set of skills they will use in adulthood and they remain largely financially dependent on their families during

this time (Berk 2001). For others, families may not be able to offer this support and they may need either to support themselves while studying, or start full-time work before their twenties.

Given the age range under study takes in only the first five years of early adulthood and that the tasks of adolescence are starting to stretch into that period – while transitions such as marriage (or cohabitation) and child-bearing take place on average later – the 12 to 25 age period will be treated as a seamless whole in this review.

However long it lasts, and whatever signposts one chooses to indicate that adolescence has either begun or ended, there is one thing that is clear: adolescence is the period into which one passes as a child and through which one is transformed into an adult, more or less prepared to take part in the adult world (Bird and Drewery 2000). The next section examines the key tasks young people undertake in making this remarkable transformation.

❯ The key tasks in adolescence and early adulthood

Key points:

- The key tasks of adolescence and early adulthood are coping with physical and sexual development, mastering more complex thinking, establishing emotional and financial independence, developing an individual identity, and learning to relate differently to peers and parents.
- Mastering these tasks is not only an individual effort, but involves support from family, friends, school and significant people in the neighbourhood and community.

The last section ended on an uncertain note, concluding that young people end adolescence 'more or less' prepared to take part in the adult world. There is no doubt that some are more prepared than others and this in turn relates to how well young people negotiate the challenges and changes they encounter between ages 11 and 20 years.

The basic tasks of adolescence include accustoming oneself to a physically and sexually maturing body, developing more complex ways of thinking, achieving emotional and financial independence, building an individual identity and learning how to relate to peers and parents in more adult ways (Berk 2001). How well each of these is mastered affects the degree of success each young person will experience in their adult life. In positive youth development, we are interested in what is needed for young people to grow into constructive, autonomous individuals with a high level of well-being, so it makes sense to start by looking at what needs to be achieved in order to reach this goal.

While labelling these 'tasks' may give the impression that young people are totally responsible for mastering them by themselves, this is not the case. The actions and support of parents, teachers, friends, schools, and other people that adolescents come into contact with can all help them master these tasks. For example, the way schools are structured can affect how well girls and low-achieving students cope with starting secondary school and succeeding there. The way parents and other key adults respond to early sexual development in girls, and which schools they send them to, can affect how well young women cope with maturing early and what impact it has for good or ill on their school performance. In fact, there are so many developmental tasks to get through in this stage and some are so complex, that it would be difficult for young people to master them all without a great deal of support.

The key point in this section is that failure to get on top of tasks in the years from 12 to 20 has serious repercussions for coping successfully with life. Later sections will examine what needs to happen in various areas of a young person's life to increase their chances of success in mastering these tasks or milestones.

RELATING WELL TO PEERS

Key points:

- As young people age they spend more time with friends than families, so learning how to interact effectively is a key task.
- Most peer relationships – whether with one person, a small group or a crowd – are based on mutual interests.
- Individual traits make relationships with peers more or less successful and lack of success with peers affects success in adulthood.
- Young people do not appear to replace their parents with close friends, but increase independence while maintaining closeness.
- Only when parents are distant or overly restrictive do peers take priority.
- Conformity to peers increases from early adolescence and then wanes going into early adulthood.
- Close friendships can help young people to cope with stress and help build skills.

Getting on well with people of the same age or developmental stage becomes more important in adolescence than it was in childhood (Durkin 1995, Jaffe 1998, Shaffer 1999). Even by early adolescence, young people are spending more time with their friends than with anyone else, including family members (Shaffer 1999). Relationships with peers fall into three groups – close friendships with one other person, cliques of five to seven young people who are all friends and crowds, which are collections of smaller groups who have something in common (Berk 2001, Durkin 1995). Most of these relationships come together through mutual interests, with fewer young people involved in formal groups under adult supervision (Durkin 1995). Within all these relationships, a great deal of learning takes place about what types of behaviours are effective or not in relationships (Shaffer 1999).

Young people who form relationships with peers who have significant problems do not move into adulthood as successfully as those whose friends are coping reasonably well. Likewise, those young people who themselves have skill deficits and personal traits that make it difficult to make friends, leaving them isolated and lonely, are less likely to move into adulthood successfully (Lipton and Derzon 1998 in Loeber and Farrington 1998, Parker and Ahser 1987 in Shaffer 1999). In fact, Durkin comments that while 'popular stereotypes represent adolescent peer relationships as potentially dangerous, it is the lack of peer involvement which is unusual at this age range and may perhaps place the individual at greater risk' (1995: 526). Learning to move beyond family and develop interdependent (rather than dependent) relationships prepares young people for autonomy and later relationships with other adults. Being able to enjoy closeness with peers also seems to protect young people from later anxiety and depression (Durkin 1995).

There is some debate over whether most young people distance themselves from their parents at the same time as they draw closer to their friends or whether only some young people do this as a result of poor relationships with their parents (Durkin 1995). In fact, the weight of the evidence suggests that young people who have fairly close relationships with their parents that are flexible enough to allow for their increasing independence do not replace their parents with their friends. Rather, they develop closer relationships with friends while maintaining good relationships with their parents. In other words, they develop 'interdependent' relationships with their parents. Those who feel distant from their parents to start with, or whose parents respond to their increasing maturity by placing more restrictions on them,

tend to seek closeness with their friends instead (Ary, Duncan, Duncan and Hops, 1999, Berk 2001, Durkin 1995, Fuligni and Eccles 1993).

Learning to think for themselves in the face of 'peer pressure' also appears to help prepare young people for adulthood. Conformity to pressure from other young people to behave *well* seems to peak around 11 to 12, whereas conformity to pressure to behave *badly* peaks around 14 to 15 (Durkin 1995). Surprisingly, as young people become less emotionally dependent on their parents and better at saying 'no' to them, they seem to decrease in their ability to say 'no' to their peers. Steinberg and Silverberg (1986 in Shaffer 1999) suggest that this conformity to peers actually provides the necessary security to allow young people to develop independence from their parents. Conformity to peer pressure tends to decrease as adolescents move towards early adulthood and they become both more able to stand up for what they want and believe and to admire others who do not 'act like sheep' (Berk 2001, Durkin 1995).

To summarise, adolescents are faced with the challenge of making friends mixing in small and large groups, maintaining closeness with their parents while developing closeness with friends and learning to think for themselves under pressure to conform. Doing well in these areas appears to prepare young people for successful entry into adult life. Are there any other key tasks or challenges with peers that need to be mastered to develop well?

One of the key aspects of relating to peers is the degree to which one is liked or accepted by the others. Young people who are actively rejected by their peers are at greater risk of antisocial behaviour and other adjustment problems later in life (Shaffer 1999). Learning how to get along well with peers is therefore important in achieving good outcomes later in life. Popularity with peers seems to be related to personal characteristics such as good role-taking skills, calmness, friendliness, an outgoing manner and supportiveness towards peers. In addition, popular young people are those who can initiate interactions with others, keep them going and resolve disputes. Very rarely are the 'social stars' aggressive or disruptive. Young people who are neglected or ignored by others tend to be those who do not talk much or make many attempts to interact with their peers.

Young people who are disruptive and aggressive, uncooperative and critical, dominating peer activities and misinterpreting neutral behaviour as hostility towards them tend to be rejected by their age group. The other group that often gets rejected is those who are withdrawn, socially awkward, behaving in immature or unusual ways, with little awareness of the unspoken norms and expectations of any group they are in. Young people who are rejected are likely to stay rejected throughout their school years and be at high risk of later psychological difficulties (Shaffer 1999). Thus, learning how to interact successfully with peers is a key task in adolescence.

There is some evidence that forming close friendships and greater social support helps young people cope with stressors such as parental divorce or rejection. Close friendships may also encourage social problem-solving skills as young people attempt to protect and mend the relationships that are of great value to them. Intimacy with peers also seems to prepare young people for successful intimacy with partners. Entering school with close friends appears to increase liking for school and positive involvement. For young people from families that do not nurture them or are clearly dysfunctional, truly close and supportive friendships appear to help them develop social skills that will stand them in good stead in the future (Shaffer 1999).

Relationships with younger adolescents or children also seem important in developing social competencies. Mixing with younger peers seems to encourage compassion, caregiving, assertiveness,

leadership skills and prosocial tendencies in older peers, all useful in successful adult life. Mixing with older peers provides younger adolescents with the opportunities to learn new skills, seek assistance and give way appropriately to those who are older (Shaffer 1999).

LIVING WITH THE FAMILY AND LEAVING THE FAMILY

Key points:

- Young people face two simultaneous tasks – living amicably with their family while becoming more independent and moving away sooner or later, depending on their culture.
- Independence is more likely when young people are autonomous, able to think for themselves, spend time away from home and develop adult-to-adult relationships with their parents.
- Close relationships with parents form a buffer against the pressures and problems of adolescence so that young people are interdependent rather than at an unhealthy extreme of independence.

Most adolescents face two key tasks – to live amicably with their family whilst separating and moving away from their family into an independent – or more properly 'interdependant' – living situation. Some young people may not leave home by age 20, when adolescence officially ends, because of the way adolescence is stretching out due to longer years in education and more difficulty obtaining work (Bird and Drewery 2000, Durkin 1995). Other young people may leave home in order to continue their education away from their family home (Jaffe 1998). Physically separating from parents is not a sign of successful development in every culture. Traditionally, separation from parents has not been an expectation in Māori and Pacific nation families, but in Western culture it is very much seen as a sign of being 'grown up' (Bird and Drewery 2000).

The term 'interdependent' is used rather than 'independent' because this is seen as a healthier outcome for young people. Interdependence involves maintaining close and mutually supportive relationships with parents, while developing a more separate way of life. For example, Canadian parents and adult children revealed in a survey that they provided a great deal of help to each other. Parents often lent their adult children money when needed and were more likely than other family members to lend them large sums of money (Wellman and Wortley 1990). Parents also helped with jobs such as home renovations. While young people are highly likely to move out of home, they are also likely to maintain links with parents that are mutually supportive.

Contrary to popular opinion, most adolescents do communicate and get on well with their parents quite a lot of the time and this is true across a number of different cultures (Offer et. al. 1988 in Durkin 1995). Less than 10 percent of families with adolescent children have relationships where there are ongoing and worsening conflict and arguments (Paikoff and Brooks-Gunn 1991 in Berk 2001). Most young people feel appreciated by their parents, seek their advice, respect them and are concerned about them (Hill 1985, Youniss and Letterlinus 1987 both in Jaffe 1998).

A higher level of independence and autonomy is likely when young people are more self-reliant (Delaney 1996, Moor 1987 both in Jaffe 1998). Autonomous, self-determined behaviour that does not rely on instructions from authority figures becomes more common as young people learn to think for themselves and spend time away from home at school, with friends or on trips (Fichman, Koestner and Zuroff 1997 in Jaffe 1998). Physically leaving the family for short periods of time seems to aid autonomy by helping

parents treat their children as more independent beings (Flanagan, Schulenberg and Fuligni 1993 in Jaffe 1998). Living away from home at university resulted in less attachment to parents in one study, while attending university while living at home made no difference to attachment (Berman and Sperling 1991 in Jaffe 1998). Living away from home also resulted in more mutual relationships with parents (Flanagan et. al. 1993 in Jaffe 1998). So becoming more able to think for themselves, spend time away from parents, and develop adult-to adult-relationships with their parents, are important tasks in adolescence.

While striving for this greater independence, however, most adolescents try to stay connected with their families, or interdependent (Delaney 1996; Silverberg and Gondoli 1996 both in Jaffe 1998). Ongoing conflict with parents is relatively unusual, as discussed above, but where it occurs it is associated with drug abuse, juvenile delinquency and school failure (Emery 1982, Hall 1987, Neighbors, Forehand and McVicar 1993 all in Jaffe 1998). On the other hand, a close relationship with parents, where a young person feels able to talk about themselves without exciting judgement or anger, and be accepted, forms a buffer against problems and pressures of adolescence (Bronstein et. al. 1993, Neighbors et. al. 1993 both in Jaffe 1998).

Leaving home, whether permanently or temporarily, is one of the most important transitions a young person can make, but surprisingly little has been written about it.

COPING POSITIVELY WITH PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Key points:
- While physical development is largely something that 'just happens', the way young people (and others) respond to it can affect their well-being.
- Early or late maturity can lead to problems in adjustment, particularly for young women.
- Early-maturing young women can lack confidence, suffer a fall in popularity and may also be 'hit on' by older males, although they tend to be reasonably well-adjusted as adults.
- Early-maturing males tend to be seen more positively by peers and adults but are prone to negative influence from older companions.
- The ill-effects of early maturing can be buffered by good communication with parents.

While physical development may seem to be a process that simply happens to people, rather than a task they actively achieve, the way young people cope with this process can have an impact on overall development (Berk 2001, Bird and Drewery 2000). Young women who mature neither early nor late tend to have more positive self-perceptions while early-maturing girls tend to lack self-confidence, fall below average in popularity, appear withdrawn and psychologically distressed (Berk 2001, Bird and Drewery 2000). Late-maturing girls tend to become more involved in deviant behaviour such as getting drunk and engaging in early sexual activity and achieve less well in school (the latter results are from research with New Zealand adolescents) (Caspi et. al. 1993 in Berk 2001). In addition, early-maturing girls often have to cope with other stresses such as 'come ons' from older males, sexual feelings and possibly over-protection by their parents at a time when their coping skills are not as well developed as that of older girls (Jaffe 1998). Furthermore, girls who are above the average weight range to start with are likely to feel dissatisfied with their early changes (Jaffe 1998). Early-maturing girls do not perform as well at school and are more likely to drop out, but long-term are admired by peers, sought after by boys and as well-adjusted in early adulthood as their peers (Shaffer 1999).

Those who mature late are also often uncomfortable about not conforming, but tend to develop 'normal pubertal behaviours' once they do mature, such as preoccupation with the sex they are oriented to and dating. Girls who are 'on time' with puberty report more positive reactions to it than do those who are late or early (Jaffe 1998).

In contrast, early-maturing boys tend to experience positive consequences. They are often seen as relaxed, independent, self-confident, and physically attractive by their age-mates and adults. Popularity, leadership positions and athletic success may well come more easily to them (Berk 2001). On the downside, early-maturing males tend to seek older companions who can involve them in activities they have not learnt the skills to cope with, such as drinking, sexual activity, drug use, and petty law breaking. Boys who mature late tend to feel dissatisfied with their bodies, much as late-maturing girls do (Berk 2001).

Most of the ill-effects of maturing outside the 'norm' seem to be related to not fitting in with the peer group, and being encouraged to mix with older peers who, while similar in appearance, are more advanced in other ways (Berk 2001). Those young women who have good communication with their parents seem to be less vulnerable to peer pressure when they mature early. In a New Zealand study attending all-girl schools also seems to reduce poor outcomes by reducing contact with older boys (Caspi et. al. 1993 in Berk 2001). Attending schools that went up only to age 11 or 12 rather than age 13 to 14 also seemed to reduce ill-effects for girls by reducing pressure to take on behaviours they were not ready for (Berk 2001).

DATING, SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS

Key points:
- Sexual changes in adolescence bring challenges and opportunities, including developing sexual identity for young people of an orientation different from the norm.
- Positive responses from others to 'coming out' and contact with peers with similar orientation can help success in developing identity.
- Deciding when to have sex and developing dating and relationship skills are also key tasks
- In New Zealand, sexual activity tends to start in late adolescence and romantic relationships a year or two later.
- A small group tends to start having sex earlier in adolescence, with consequent risk of sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy. The latter often having adverse effects on education, income and outcomes for children.
- Early dating does not tend to enhance social maturity.

Along with physical changes come sexual changes. These bring with them the tasks of coming to terms with one's sexuality, be it heterosexual, lesbian, gay, or bisexual; making decisions about when to first date or have sex and who to get involved with; and coping with the new experience of romantic and/or sexual relationships.

Developing a sexual identity outside the status quo – that is, gay, lesbian or bisexual – poses special challenges to young people, although sexual identity may form as early as 10 (Quinlivan 1996, Town 2000 both in Bird and Drewery 2000). Young people who discover they are different from their peers may try to 'pass' as heterosexual so that they are not rejected and ridiculed (Town 2000 in Bird and Drewery, 2000). Up to 85 percent of one group of gay adolescents tried to pretend for a time they were

heterosexual (Newman and Muzzonigro 1993 in Berk 2001). Others may quickly develop a gay or lesbian identity (Mondimore 1996 in Berk 2001).

Early gay dating experiences tend not to last and involve little emotional commitment because of the same fears of ostracism and harrassment (Sears 1991 in Berk 2001). When more committed relationships do develop, partners may place unreasonable demands on each other for all kinds of support because of a sense of isolation from gay and lesbian peers (Savin-Williams 1996 in Berk 2001).

Interviews with gay adolescents and adults suggest there are three phases in coming out to oneself and others: feeling different from other children; feeling confused around puberty once the full realisation of sexual feelings hits; and acceptance of who they really are. The decision to tell others is one of the most difficult to face – particularly whether to tell parents – and this may lead to the decision to 'pass' as straight with at least some people (Cohen and Savin-Williams 1996 in Berk). When reactions to 'coming out' are positive, young people may start to see their sexuality as valid, meaningful and fulfilling identity. Having contact with peers with the same feelings is important during adolescence and this may be easier in big cities (Anderson 1994, Edwards 1996 both in Berk).

New Zealand research shows that while some young people start having sex at the relatively young age of 15 (10.2 percent of girls and 6.8 percent of boys), the average age at which sexual activity begins is 18 years (Davis and Yee 1996, Lynskey and Fergsson 1993 both in Bird and Drewery 2000). Around a quarter of the New Zealand late adolescents studied in the Dunedin longitudinal research reported having two to four sexual partners in the previous twelve months, with 9.5 percent of young men and 6.9 percent of young women reporting more than five partners. Over 80 percent of the sexually active young people used contraception, most commonly condoms (Dickson 1996). Those young people who had three or more sexual partners and did not use condoms – in other words, who were having unsafe sex – tended to be thrill-seeking and impulsive, scoring higher on aggressiveness and social forcefulness (Dickson 1996). They also tended to have left school earlier, have fewer school qualifications, be living away from their parents and to be cut off from their peers and the rest of the world (Dickson 1996). While young men were slightly more likely to be part of this group, it also comprised a significant number (just under 40 percent) of young women. This suggests risky sexual behaviour is associated with less positive youth development, although not necessarily leading to it. Other New Zealand research suggests teenagers appreciate being able to discuss sex openly with their parents (Gray 1987 in Bird and Drewery 2000).

Getting into a serious relationship that lasts a year or more happens a little later than sexual experimentation in New Zealand – around 19 for young women and 20 for males (Davey 1998 in Bird and Drewery 2000). Exactly when young people start to date seems affected by what the peer group expects. In early adolescence, dating seems to have the aim of recreation and 'looking good' among friends. Later in adolescence it is more about intimacy with someone who has common interests, goals for the future and the potential for being a good partner (Roscoe, Diana and Brooks 1987 in Berk 2001). In a New Zealand study, most of the 2000 people surveyed ended up in a relationship that lasted on average 10 years (Davis and Yee 1996 in Bird and Drewery 2000).

Starting dating early does not increase social maturity, possibly because at this age boys and girls tend to communicate in shallow and stereotyped ways (Zani 1993 in Berk 2001). Of the relationships that start in secondary school, only around half survive the transition out of school and these tend to become less satisfying (Shaver, Furman and Buhrmester 1985 in Berk 2001).

When early dating is accompanied by sexual activity and poor contraception, it carries the risk of early pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including HIV/AIDS (Berk 2001). Early pregnancy

occurs in New Zealand for 50 per 1000 young women, as compared with 40 per thousand young women in Australia (Midland Health 1996 in Bird and Drewery 2000). For those young women who carry to full term, the consequences can be significant, both for them and their children.

Young women are more likely than ever before to keep and raise their children, rather than giving them up for adoption. Early parenthood reduces the likelihood of finishing school and that in turn reduces later income. It makes marriage less likely, but if the young women do marry, they are more likely to later divorce. Lastly, early child-bearing often results in low income with dependence on benefits or low-skill, low-pay jobs (Hotz, McElroy and Sanders 1997, Moore et. al. 1993 both in Berk 2001). Likewise, young fathers achieve less education and lower income possibly because they are working long hours to support a family (Brien and Willis 1997 in Berk 2001).

Children of teenage parents are also at risk of poor outcomes. Their parents are less likely to parent well and they are more likely to score low on intelligence tests, achieve poorly in school, and show disruptive social behaviour (Furstenberg, Hughes and Brooks-Gunn 1987, Moore, Morrison and Green 1997 both in Berk 2001).

This story does not need to end badly. However, there is research to show that young mothers often return to school, gain qualifications, find stable work and become financially independent (Furstenberg and Hughes 1995). If young parents manage to finish high school, do not have further children and find a stable, long-term partner, their first child is likely to develop more positively (Furstenberg et. al. 1987 in Berk 2001). Social support in returning to school while bringing up a young baby is also likely to have more positive outcomes for both parents and children (Baragwanath 1998).

SCHOOL SUCCESS

Key points:

- Coping with school and associated transitions are major tasks, as is coping with increased academic demands.
- Making school personally relevant and finding ways of succeeding are also key tasks, particularly for those who have previously done poorly or whose parents are unsupportive.
- Failure to master tasks can lead to school dropout with the risk of lower income and less satisfying and irregular employment.
- Underachievement is also a risk with consequent barriers to higher education.

School forms a significant part of the life of those adolescents who attend regularly. Not only is it the place where they learn, but it is most likely the place they make friends, possibly meet dating partners, pursue hobbies and sports and perhaps meet supportive adults who can help guide them through adolescence. So school holds enormous potential for learning of all kinds and succeeding at tasks associated with it is crucial for moving successfully into early adulthood.

In New Zealand there are generally two or three transitions associated with school – entering secondary school, moving into tertiary education (polytechnic or university) and/or moving into the permanent workforce. Research shows that with the transition from one school system to another, grades and self-esteem can drop. This appears to be worst for girls and for young people who are from low-income backgrounds or are not achieving well before they move. This is particularly marked where there is a transition from primary to intermediate and then to secondary school. Protective factors such as key

teachers and supportive friends are disrupted with each move at a developmental stage when this support is most needed (Berk 2001). Academic demands are also higher in secondary school while teachers are less sympathetic and have less time to spend with students (Eccles et. al. 1991 in Jaffe 1998). Managing these transitions well is a key task in adolescence.

Being involved in school, attending regularly, learning basic skills and acquiring basic qualifications are also important to well-being, both during adolescence and in later life. Young people have before them the challenge of making school relevant to them and finding ways of succeeding. This is particularly a challenge for young people who have not done well in earlier education, or whose families do not place a high value on education or support them at school and some of these young people drop out.

Leaving school early without qualifications can result in employment difficulties such as becoming stuck in a cycle of menial, poorly-paid jobs with occasional periods of unemployment (Berk 2001). It also means coping with more time alone – as most other young people are in school – or being vulnerable to mixing with antisocial youth, if only for company (Fisher 1992 in Jaffe 1998). Those most likely to drop out include students from ethnic minorities, those from low-income families, girls who become pregnant (and their boyfriends), students who do not have English as a first language and those with drug and alcohol problems (Jaffe 1998). Reasons for leaving school include poor grades, dislike of school (because it is seen as boring and a waste of time), expulsion, financial difficulties and the desire to work, home responsibilities, pregnancy and marriage (Borus et. al. 1980, Tidwell 1988, US Department of Education 1994 all in Jaffe 1998).

Young people who drop out usually feel rootless, hopeless and estranged from school, home, neighbourhood and society in general (Tidwell 1988 in Jaffe 1998). Simply staying at school long enough to gain skills and qualifications is therefore a big task in itself. In order to stay in school, learning how to motivate oneself, persist and plan are all useful skills – again, important tasks to achieve in adolescence. This is covered in more depth in the following section on cognitive development. The ability to plan and particularly use time gradually improves for most adolescents from age 13 to 17 (Anderssen et. al. 1992 in Jaffe 1998). Learning to set goals for school and outside interests and assign time to both are also skills useful in later life.

As well as those who leave school early, there is another group of 'underachievers' who achieve much less than they are capable of, are less likely to complete high school or attend university and are less likely to graduate from university. After leaving school they are more likely to hold low-status jobs, earn less money, change jobs less frequently and divorce than young people who are engaged and succeed in the school system (McCall et. al. 1992 in Jaffe 1998). For each year a student manages to stay in school, they earn an average of 8 percent more, whether they attend secondary school, university or other post-graduate study (Applebome 1995 in Jaffe 1998). Clearly, managing to attend school for longer has some real benefits in terms of income and later choices made possible by income. However, what happens while young people are at school is crucial to whether they leave early or stay on, as we saw in the previous section.

For all those who stay at high school (and this means the majority of students) and decide to gain further qualifications, the transition to tertiary education is another key task of adolescence. For some this can involve physically separating from families in order to attend school in another place. As separating from parents to live an independent life is one of the key tasks in late adolescence and early adulthood, such separation may speed up the process and there is some evidence that this is the case (Berman and Sperling 1991 in Jaffe 1998). For students who stay at home, the process may take longer.

Key points:

- Key tasks in adolescence include developing thinking skills and abilities, particularly abstract thinking.
- Abstract reasoning and the ability to work through hypothetical situations aid success in other tasks, such as relating well to others, achieving at school and work success.
- Another task is learning self-regulation or the ability to discipline oneself to achieve goals at school and outside.
- Developing decision making skills and a personal set of values are other key tasks in the area of effective thinking.
- All of the above skills support young people's evolving capacity to exert an influence on their life by setting goals and planning.

While attending school is one of the obvious tasks of adolescence, less obvious but just as important is the development in thinking skills and abilities that is going on under the surface. Chief among these is the ability to think in abstract terms – to think about ideas that are not simply images of concrete objects. Examples are ideas like morality, fairness, and inequality. This includes the ability to think about the self as a separate person who changes over time and with different circumstances (Bird and Drewery 2000).

The growth in abstract reasoning allows other important types of thinking or cognition, to take place which aid young people in achieving other goals such as good relationships, good marks at school and work success. The two types of abstract thinking most often seen involve the ability to start with a general theory of how some aspect of the world works and then break that down into smaller, specific theories which can be tested to see which is true. For instance, the general theory might be that after - school jobs are hard to get. The specific hypothesis might be that jobs at takeaway outlets are the easiest to get and this could be tested by applying for jobs at a number of different places, including takeaway outlets. The second type of thinking is the ability to evaluate the logic of statements. So, when faced with the statements 'the marble in my hand is blue *or* not blue' and 'the marble in my hand is blue *and* is not blue', adolescents can work out that the first statement is always true and the second always false without having to see the marbles (Berk 2001). This type of thought is difficult for children under 11 and improves steadily from age 11 onwards.

Obviously, there are real benefits to being able to work through hypothetical situations. Thinking about what to do regarding contraception when becoming sexually active, whether or not to take drugs when offered them and the wisdom of drinking and driving are all decisions that will be made easier using hypothetical thinking and logic. Knowing how to reason could make a huge difference to how well a young person copes with a whole raft of situations, many of which they will not have much or any personal experience of.

Especially important is metacognition or the ability to analyse one's thinking (Kuhn 1993 in Berk 2001). Skills in this area improve with years in school, a related key task of adolescence (Kuhn 1993 in Berk 2001). School offers opportunities in different courses of study to reflect on current strategies, revise them and become more aware of the rules of logic and how to use them effectively (Kuhn et. al. 1995 in Berk 2001). Developing these thinking skills can lead to argumentativeness with family and friends which can further expand skills, as long as the focus is on logic and not 'who is right' (Alessandri and

Wozniak 1987 in Berk 2001). While going through development of cognitive skills, adolescents may live their lives in front of an imaginary audience, seeing themselves as the focus of everyone else's attention (Elkind and Bowen 1979 in Berk 2001). They may also see themselves as unique and invulnerable, which can lead to some risky behaviour such as driving too fast or failing to use contraceptives (Elkind 1994 in Berk 2001). As abstract reasoning becomes better, these tendencies decrease. This suggests that failing to master these cognitive skills can lead to self-destructive or dangerous behaviour. Indeed, there is evidence that young people who fail to learn how to think about their thinking, use logic and solve hypothetical problems are more likely to become involved in antisocial behaviour (Larson 1988).

One of the other important aspects of cognitive development is self-regulation or the ability to discipline and control oneself in order to reach particular goals. Completing homework, passing exams, and learning sports all involve planning the steps needed to succeed in. Young people also need to learn to be aware of what has been done and what still needs to be done and by when, and work out what to do when the planned steps do not work (Berk, 2001). Failing to master self-regulation can have an impact not only on academic outcomes, but also on the ability to control mood, temper and unacceptable behaviour, making positive outcomes less likely (Metcalfe and Mischel 1999, Mischel 1996).

Decision-making skills also improve during adolescence and are important for choosing a career, a course of study or for various day-to-day actions (Galotti and Kozberg 1996 in Jaffe 1998). In order to make good decisions, it is important to develop thinking skills such as thinking about possibilities, distinguishing what is real from what is possible, testing hypotheses and thinking about one's own thinking ('am I considering all the factors here?') (Jaffe 1998). Better thinking skills also help young people understand how the world looks through other people's eyes ('social perspective taking'), which helps them get along with others and avoid conflict (Selman 1976 and 1980 in Jaffe 1998).

Developing a personal set of morals or values is an ongoing process, some of which takes place in adolescence. Kohlberg's research on moral development established six stages, starting with simple obedience to the rules and ending with a personal set of ethics to live by (Durkin 1995). There is considerable support for all six stages and for the idea that people across many cultures move through each in sequence (Durkin 1995). There is some evidence that boys tend to think in terms of principles and universals whereas girls look at the impact of context and circumstances on moral decisions, seeing morality as more relative to the situation a person is in (Gilligan 1982 in Bird and Drewery 2000). What is less clear from the research is the impact that moving through stages of morality has on life, both in adolescence and adulthood.

This increased capacity to think is beneficial not only to young people but also to wider society. Adolescents become more able to develop solutions to not only their own problems, but also those of the people around them. They become able to develop visions for new ways of doing things and innovative solutions to social problems.

WORK SUCCESS

Key points:

- Work provides autonomy and financial freedom but it can take years to select and train for a career.
- Developing interests and pursuits outside school is a key task and one that can have positive spin-offs for work.
- There is mixed evidence about whether starting paid work while in high school adversely affects academic success.
- Tasks associated with mastering the world of work are developing interpersonal skills, conscientiousness, ambition, creativity, leadership and integrity. All of these aid success at work.
- Under or unemployment can have an adverse affect on well-being and law-abiding behaviour.

One of the key developmental tasks of adolescence is organising plans and activities in order to develop a career and feeling able to make a living (Havighurst 1972 in Jaffe 1998). Work is important for achieving autonomy from parents, providing as it does financial freedom (Durkin 1995). Choosing an occupation is a process that can take several years and most students apparently feel ill-prepared for making decisions about what career to study for (Murray 1996 in Jaffe 1998). Even in recent years, choices made by males and females in adolescence tend to be stereotyped by gender.

Engaging in work part-time while still at school can lead to improvements in skills such as self-management and reliability, but can also lead to acceptance of cynical attitudes towards work and of unethical work practices (Durkin 1995). Involvement in school and family also decreased for these young people, as did the quality of their friendships. There is some evidence the young people most likely to seek extended hours of part-time work are those who are already experiencing difficulties, but the extra workload appears to make bad situations worse, particularly reduced involvement in school and poor attitudes to education (Durkin 1995).

There is some evidence that leisure choices outside school will predict later career choices (Hong et. al. 1993 in Jaffe 1998). Volunteer work helps young people learn good work habits, make contacts for work in the future, increase their self-confidence and learn skills they could use in jobs (Lambert and Mounce 1987 in Jaffe 1998). Another task in adolescence then is developing interests and pursuits outside school that will develop strengths and skills.

Working more than 15 hours per week can result in poorer school attendance, lower grades and less time for extracurricular activities (Barling et. al. 1995, Steinberg et. al. 1993 both in Berk 2001). However, work programmes designed to complement study plans tend to have more positive outcomes in terms of attitudes to school and work and improved achievement among low-achieving students from poor families (Owens 1982, Steinberg 1984 both in Berk 2001).

The transition to full-time work appears to bring with it a shift in attitudes from idealistic expectations about the fulfilment of work to more down-to-earth concerns about job security and the constraints involved (Durkin 1995). In addition, psychological stress in the final years of high school has been found to be as high as that in young unemployed people (Ullah and Brotherton 1989 in Durkin 1995), so not only the transition, but also the lead up to that transition can be a challenge. In terms of both employability and job satisfaction, developing interpersonal skills, conscientiousness, ambition, creativity, leadership,

cooperation and integrity are all important (Azar 1995 in Jaffe 1998). This suggests attaining at least some of these skills and characteristics is another important task in adolescence and early adulthood.

For those young people who have difficulty in obtaining work, unemployment has been found to be associated with negative consequences for mental health (Durkin 1995, Fergusson, Horwood and Lynskey 1997). Distress scores for young unemployed people were much higher on a health questionnaire (the General Health Questionnaire) than for employed young people. This appeared to be associated with perceived financial strain rather than objective income levels (Ullah 1990 in Durkin 1995). For New Zealand young people, the longer they were unemployed after leaving school the more likely they were to show anxiety disorder and abuse alcohol and drugs (Fergusson et. al. 1997).

Settling for a job below the individual's expectations or abilities can also lead to problems. Jobs that involve boring and repetitive tasks lead to depression, low expectations of being able to do well and other signs of maladjustment (O'Brien 1990 in Durkin 1995). One Australian study found that young people in low-skilled and low-status jobs were no better off psychologically than those with no jobs at all (Winefield and Winefield 1992 in Durkin 1995). Lastly, young people without a job feel excluded from the adult world (Durkin 1995). This can lead to hostility, a feeling the adult world has no place for them and subversive activity (Breakwell 1986, Palmonari 1980 in Durkin 1995). For example, New Zealand research found that young people who were unemployed for ongoing periods after leaving school were more likely to get involved in crime, particularly property crime (Fergusson et. al. 1997a). Apathy can also result from unemployment and is possibly worse for those who have been without a job for a long period of time (Hendry 1989, O'Brien 1990 in Durkin 1995).

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER – BUILDING A UNIQUE IDENTITY

Key points:
- Answering the questions 'who am I?' and 'where am I going?' is one of the key tasks of adolescence.
- The answers to these questions form identity, which is thought to be developed through exploring different options for occupation, religious belief and attitudes to sexuality (crisis) and becoming committed to one in particular .
- There is evidence that young people go through stages of non-exploration, followed by exploration, achieving identity as they go from early adolescence to early adulthood.
- Young people who decide on a clear identity show better outcomes in many ways, but there is no evidence that this is due to having developed a stable identity.

'Who am I?' and 'what am I going to be when I grow up?' are common questions for young people. Several theorists have suggested that successfully answering these questions is a key task – if not the most important task – of adolescence (Muuss 1988). In answering such questions, or attempting to, young people bring together many of the strands explored above. These include who their friends are, how much of their family values and lifestyles they retain, what their physical attributes are, who they get romantically involved with, how they relate sexually to others, what education they pursue, and what careers they see as possible or desirable. They knit them together into a whole that fits them more or less comfortably and helps them decide how to deal with the world.

Early theory on identity suggested that the outstanding characteristic of adolescence was the identity crisis (Erickson 1950 in Muuss 1988). The identity crisis centred around concerns about who a young

person was and who he or she wanted to become. The role of the peer group was emphasised in developing identity because adult role models were seen as inadequate or likely to be rejected (a theory disproved by later research such as the study on Very Important Adults by Greenberger, Chen and Beam (1981)). However, interactions with any significant other could potentially help with identity development, as long as these involved feedback about others' perceptions of the young person, so helping shape their idea of who they were (Erickson 1950 in Muuss 1988).

Later theorists developed the ideas of crisis and commitment (Marcia 1967 in Muuss 1988). Crisis in this sense is actively choosing between alternative occupations and beliefs. Commitment is the degree of investment in any one occupation or belief. A young person may become involved in sports and performing arts, do a mix of science and languages at school, attend several different churches for a while and date several people in succession. The crisis would come when they had to decide whether they were a 'skatey' or 'arty' type, were going to pursue a career in science or join a rap group, whether they were Christian, New Age or Rastafarian, and whether they wanted to go steady with their latest partner. Commitment would occur when they dropped skateboarding, decided to be an artist, became an atheist and moved into a serious relationship. In fact, young people are often in crisis in one part of their lives while they are committed in another part (Muuss 1988). They might be quite clear on their spiritual beliefs but still not sure whether they are gay or not.

Marcia (1967) came up with four identity stages: diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium and identity achievement. They are defined as follows:
- **Identity diffusion:** not yet having had an identity crisis or made a commitment to a vocation or set of beliefs.
- **Foreclosure:** making a commitment to an identity handed down by others, often parents, without having a crisis that resulted in asking questions and trying various options.
- **Moratorium:** living in an acute state of crisis, exploring and actively searching for personal values, struggling to find an identity but with no firm commitment to one.
- **Identity-achievement:** after experiencing crises, a resolution resulting in commitment to religious beliefs, occupation and a personal value system and attitudes towards sexuality.

Each stage is associated with a certain age group and is thought to lead to particular outcomes, depending on which stage a person is at by age 24. Identity diffusion was seen by Marcia as the least mature or youngest stage and identity achievement as the most mature or oldest stage.

Research has broadly confirmed this. More young people have been found to have a diffused or untested identity around age 12 (Meilman 1979 in Muuss 1988). Around two-thirds are diffused and one-third are foreclosed. By age 24 over half (56 percent) have achieved an identity, 24 percent are still identity diffused or untested, 12 percent in moratorium or still testing and only eight percent have foreclosed or taken on an imposed identity. Over the four years of an undergraduate degree (from age 18 to 22 roughly), the number of young people who had not gone through an identity crisis decreased and those who had achieved an identity increased (Constantinople 1969, Marcia 1967 both in Muuss 1988). Longitudinal studies show movement from diffusion and foreclosure to moratorium and identity achievement from early through to late adolescence (Archer 1982, Fitch and Adams 1983, Kroger and Haslett 1988 all in Kroger 1989). Those in a state of moratorium tend to move quite quickly from searching for to deciding on an identity, presumably because being uncertain is an uncomfortable state of affairs (Kroger and Haslett 1998 in Kroger 1989).

A stable identity (that is, a clear and lasting idea of who a person is) is not often achieved before 18 years of age. The years 18 to 21 are usually when identity is clarified and differences in identity stages are most often seen between groups at this age (Marcia 1980, in Steinberg 2000). The aspect of identity often settled first is occupation (Waterman, Geary and Waterman 1974, Waterman and Goldman 1976, both in Steinberg 2000). For young people who go to university, by the time they leave their religious and political views may be up in the air as the debate and ideas they are exposed to shake up their beliefs but do not provide them with new ones (Markstrom-Adams, Hofstra and Dougher 1999, Montemayor, Brown and Adams 1985 both in Steinberg 2000). There is also evidence that young people go through stages of being more or less certain of their identity as life goes on, even when they had appeared completely certain at an earlier stage (Kroger 1996, Waterman and Goldman 1976 both in Steinberg 2000). While little is known about what sets off a new cycle of identity exploration, it may be due to internal factors such as discontent with their life rather than specific life events or a change in life circumstances like the loss of a job (Kroger and Green 1996 in Steinberg 2000).

There is some consistent evidence that young people do go through stages of exploring and deciding on identities. But the evidence about the consequences of not successfully achieving this is less consistent. Erickson (1950), predicts those who have still not started exploring their identity and having crises about who they are and who they want to be by age 24, will start to show signs of disturbance such as delinquency, drug use or suicide attempts (in Muuss, 1988). But there is little direct evidence of this and what evidence there is suggests that those who have achieved an identity sometimes have better outcomes, while those who have not sometimes do better (Cross and Allen 1970, Donovan 1971, Howard 1975, Orlofsky 1978 all in Muuss 1988).

One clear trend from early research was that young people in their late teens and early twenties who had achieved an identity were better at a number of thinking skills, such as problem solving and advanced moral judgement (Rowe and Marica 1980, Waterman and Waterman 1974 both in Muuss 1988). However, this does not mean that they were better thinkers because they had achieved an identity – it could well be they achieved an identity because they were better thinkers.

Those who achieved an identity by this stage also showed a tendency to see themselves as in control rather than as the victims of circumstance (Howard 1975, Waterman, Beubel and Waterman 1970 both in Muuss 1988). They were less likely to be swayed by false sketches of their personality, feeling secure in their knowledge of who they were and where they were going (Gruen 1960, Marcia 1967 both in Muuss 1988). They were more independent and the young women were better adjusted psychologically (Andrews 1973, Josselson 1973 both in Muuss 1988).

Women who had reached an identity were happier than those who had not, but so were those who had settled on an identity without searching (Toder and Marcia 1973 in Muuss 1988). They also performed better under stress (Bob 1968 in Muuss 1988). Identity achieved young adults showed more intimacy with peers and greater career maturity than those at other stages (Adams, Bullotta and Montemayor 1992, Fulton 1997, Meeus 1996, Wallace-Broscious, Serafica and Osipow 1994 all in Steinberg 2000). Again, there is no evidence any of this was as the result of having achieved an identity.

Evidence on what types of family background each identity stage is likely to come from is also inconsistent but there are some points of agreement (Muuss 1988). These are:

Identity diffused: those at this stage saw their parents as detached, distant, uninvolved and unconcerned and either feared them or did not respect them. Sons particularly felt this way about their fathers (Donovan 1975 in Muus 1988). They were particularly likely to come from divorced families and males who grew up

without a father or stepfather were particularly likely to not be moving towards an identity (Muuss 1988). The absence of parental warmth was also associated with difficulty in making a commitment to beliefs or occupations (Campbell, Adams and Dobson 1984 in Steinberg 2000).

Foreclosed: Young people at this stage felt close to and valued by their parents, and saw their fathers as moderately controlling (Cross and Allen 1969 in Muuss 1988). They experienced their parents as loving, accepting, and supportive and had internalised their parents' goals for them (Donovan 1975 in Muuss 1988). But an absence of encouragement from their parents to be individuals held them back from exploring different options from those handed down to them (Campbell, Adams and Dobson 1984 in Steinberg 2000).

Moratorium: parents of young people at this stage were seen as ambivalent, inconsistent, both rejecting and accepting. There was a great discrepancy between what these young people and their parents thought, which is understandable given the degree of questioning they were going through (LaVoie 1976 in Muuss 1988).

Identity achieved: while this group also saw their parents as inconsistent, they had a more relaxed and moderate relationship with them. They perceived less distance between themselves and their parents than the other groups (LaVoie 1976 in Muuss 1988). Their parents also tended to support adolescent autonomy and encouraged them to assert their individuality (Grotevant and Cooper 1985, Jordan 1971 both in Kroger 1989). They had warm but not overly constraining relationships with their parents and remained connected to their families while exploring their identity (Campbell, Adams and Dobson 1984, Perosa, Perosa and Tam 1996 both in Steinberg 2000).

While the references are not clear on this point, this research presumably refers to young people who are at the identity achieved stage in their early twenties since so many are identity diffused at a younger age and it is unlikely they would all have had the same type of family. What this research does suggest is that some kinds of parenting may make forming an identity easier. Interestingly, young people who had foreclosed into identities chosen for them tended to be more authoritarian and conventional than other young people. This suggests their parents may have been authoritarian too, albeit in a benign way (Breuer 1973, Marcia 1966 and 1967, Marcia and Friedman 1970, Matteson 1974, Schenkel and Marcia 1972 all in Muuss 1988). This is one of the strongest findings. Young people in a state of, moratorium where they were investigating possible identities, showed low levels of authoritarianism (Muuss 1988)

Overall, it is possible the speed at which young people move through the stages, and the stage they end up at in early adulthood may be influenced by the type of parenting they experience. Other positive outcomes, such as thinking skills and positive mood, are also likely to be influenced by parenting style. They are also somewhat likely to be influenced by friends, schools and adults outside the family. It may be that parenting style explains both how well young people think and function and how likely they are to work out a stable identity. Young people who grow up with acceptance, consistency and fair limits and who are able to make joint decisions with their parents as they mature, may simply be more equipped to explore identity. The jury is out as to whether achieving identity actually leads to positive outcomes or is simply another positive outcome of good parenting. However, it does appear to be one of the tasks young people commonly undertake in adolescence, and some positive outcomes appear associated with success in developing a stable identity, for whatever reason.

OVERALL KEY POINTS SUMMARY FOR DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES AND TASKS

Key points summary:

- Key tasks in adolescence and early adulthood include coping with physical and sexual development, mastering complex thinking, establishing emotional and financial independence, relating well to peers and parents and achieving at school and work.
- Success in mastering these tasks can affect success in adulthood.
- While succeeding in these tasks requires individual effort, help from others, such as parents, friends, schools and significant people in the community also enhances outcomes.
- Success in relating to peers affects how well young people get on with others in adulthood, and also helps young people to build skills and cope with stress.
- In families, the tasks are living amicably while becoming more independent and moving away from the family.
- Independence is more likely when young people are able to think for themselves, spend time away from home and develop adult relationships with their parents.
- Physical development affects how well young people develop overall with early maturing young people prone to sexual or antisocial pressure from older companions.
- Parents can help young people cope with stress in adolescence, including early physical development and growing independence by forming close relationships with their children through good communication.
- Positive responses to a 'different' sexual identity can lead to more success in developing sexual identity but, other than this, early dating and sex do not appear to enhance positive outcomes.
- Success at school affects later employment, academic achievement and income, and can be increased by young people seeing school as personally relevant and finding ways to succeed.
- Mastering more complex ways of thinking, such as abstract thinking, self-regulation and decision making, can help in achieving success socially, academically and at work.
- Success at work is aided by good social skills, ambition, creativity and leadership as well as having interests and pursuits outside school.
- Being fully employed after leaving school enhances well-being.
- Answering the questions 'who am I' and 'where am I going' are key tasks for young people and bring together experiences with other key tasks.
- Most young people go through stages of developing a continuous sense of who they are (that is, identity) based on their experiences but doing so is not necessarily linked to good outcomes.

PART 2:
Key influences on good outcomes for young people

◐ Family influences

PARENTING STYLE AND GOOD OUTCOMES

Key points:

- Young people who grow up with parents who score high on warmth and also high on setting reasonable boundaries (authoritative (nurturing)) are most likely to experience positive outcomes in their emotional well-being, school success, self-esteem and in avoiding drug use and illegal acts.
- Young people who grow up in families where there is little warmth and little discipline show the greatest all-round poor outcomes.
- Parenting which is low on warmth and flexibility (authoritarian) has the worst impact on distress whereas warm, accepting styles have the best impact.
- Parenting where there are few limits, rules and consequences (permissive and neglectful) has the worst impact on delinquency, including drug use, whereas parenting which combines warmth with limits has the best impact.

Most people assume that parents influence their children in some way, if only by passing down a collection of genes. This assumption has been questioned recently in a book *The Nurture Assumption,* which suggests parents have very little influence at all and young people are mostly influenced by their peers. In response to this suggestion, a group of leading developmental psychologists looked long and hard at the research on what impact, if any, parents have on their children. They found that parents do have a significant impact on their offspring, along with genes, peer group and neighbourhood (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington and Bornstein 2000). What is most exciting about the recent research on how parents influence their children is that it shows us some very specific things that parents and other caregivers can do to help young people develop well.

It seems that parents influence their children in a number of ways. Firstly, they pass on some of their genes, thus giving them some tendencies towards particular strengths or vulnerabilities (Collins et. al. 2000). Secondly, they provide experiences that affect how the child expresses those genes. For instance, a young woman who has inherited tendencies towards depression may never experience clinical depression if she has grown up in a warm, secure family with clear limits. Another young woman, with just the same level of genetic inheritance but with a less secure family circumstances, may develop clinical depression in her teens.

New Zealand research shows that the more young people are attached to their parents at age 15, the greater their well-being (Nada-Raja and Stanton 1992 in Pryor and Woodward 1996). This does not mean being emotionally dependent on parents, but having a close, secure relationship. Where young people were not attached to their parents, close relationships to their friends were not enough to compensate. Another New Zealand study showed that parents were still important in the lives of their adolescent children, particularly in areas such as career choice (Paterson et. al. 1995 in Pryor and Woodward 1996).

While parent figures have a great deal of impact on how young people turn out, they are not the only people who do. Peers also have an influence, as do schools, significant adults other than parents and neighbours. However, it seems that parents have the earliest, and most lasting impact on young people, provided that they are parenting in the most powerful ways (Collins et. al. 2000). While peers affect moment-to-moment behaviour and attitudes, adolescents tend to become more similar to their parents as they age, even if they seemed very different from them as teenagers. So, a young person who has been brought up to be honest, not to swear or drink excessively may appear to be wasting his life in his teen years as he parties, tells lies and drinks copious amounts of alcohol in the company of friends. As the young person ages, however, they are likely to end up acting far more like their parents than anyone expected. However, if that young person has grown up in a home where parents either let them away with almost anything, or where parents were harsh, restrictive and punitive, they will be far more susceptible to the influence of peers than a young person whose parents are warm, accepting and set clear limits with reasonable consequences for breaking the rules (Conger 1971 in Collins et. al. 2000).

TYPES OF PARENTING STYLE DEFINED

Key points:

- Research has identified four main parenting styles – authoritative (nurturing), permissive, authoritarian and neglectful.
- Authoritative (nurturing) parenting combines warmth with firm limits and flexibility as young people age and become more autonomous.
- Permissive parenting veers from warmth to actual neglect, with few firm rules or limits.
- Authoritarian parenting can swing from warmth to coldness and rejection, with rigid rules and harsh, inflexible punishment.
- Neglectful parenting tends to be cold and distant, with parents taking little interest in young people or their needs.

All this brings up the fascinating question of what types of parenting lead to the best outcomes for young people. One recent piece of research that sheds light on this was carried out by Shelli Avenevoli and Frances Sessa together with Laurence Steinberg, the latter one of the gurus of adolescent development. They looked at the effects of four different styles of parenting – authoritative (nurturing), authoritarian, permissive and neglectful – on emotional distress, self-esteem, school results, delinquency and substance use in adolescence (Avenevoli et. al. 1999). Before discussing what they found, it may be useful to define the different types of parenting style. Readers should bear in mind that in the real world, most parents show aspects of two or more styles of parenting, rather than always falling true to one particular style. And it goes without saying that there is no such thing as a perfect parent.

Authoritative (nurturing) – authoritative (nurturing) parenting means being warm and accepting towards children, but also expecting mature behaviour to the extent to which they are capable. In authoritative (nurturing) families, parents build relationships with their children where they regularly have positive times together and make sure their children feel safe in talking to them about anything that is on their mind. They discuss rules and give reasons for them, explaining why certain behaviours are expected and how they will benefit the young person and others. Authoritative (nurturing) parents reserve the right to make the final decision. Rules and expectations are appropriate to the age of the children or young people and what they are capable of at each age. Enforcement of rules is consistent but not harsh, using loss of privileges rather than physical punishment or verbal abuse. Authoritative (nurturing)

parenting means that children get opportunities to make their own decisions, where appropriate, and these opportunities are increased as they get older. Young people also have a chance to make decisions jointly with their parents. Mistakes are treated as opportunities to learn rather than making the young person feel 'bad'. Overall, this parenting style can be described as a mix of warmth, flexibility and firmness.

Authoritarian – authoritarian parenting can swing from warmth and acceptance to coldness and rejection. Rules tend to be dictated without discussion or reasons, and strictly enforced with harsh punishment. The rules in authoritarian households are not necessarily appropriate to the age of the children – they may be too demanding for their developmental stage, or not demanding enough. For instance, young children may be punished for not knowing how to do things they are not yet developmentally capable of, such as using the toilet. Children get few opportunities to make decisions or explore and mistakes are seen as a failure by either the child or parents rather than as an opportunity to learn. Overall, this style can be described as inconsistent, inflexible and harsh.

Permissive – in the permissive household parents may veer from warm to actually neglectful behaviour. There are few rules for children to follow and few demands are made of them. Although the rules are discussed and reasons for them may be given, they are inconsistently enforced. The rules tend to demand less of the young person than they are actually capable of and, in the end, the young person rather than their parents has the final say in what they do. Young people are given opportunities to explore possible behaviours and make decisions but few guidelines are given as to how to go about this. Any mistakes they make are either ignored or treated harshly, rather than being used as opportunities to learn. Overall, this style can be described as inconsistent with regard to both warmth and discipline, with low levels of parental control.

Neglectful – in families with a neglectful parenting style, young people receive little warmth or control. The household is focused on the needs of the parents rather than the young people and parents tend to have little involvement with their children. There is little or no monitoring by parents of where their children are, who they are with or what they are doing, which means young people can be out on the street at all hours roaming quite freely. Parents in neglectful households take little responsibility for their behaviour towards their children. Overall, this parenting style is low in warmth, discipline and control.

THE IMPACT OF DIFFERENT PARENTING STYLES

Key points:
- Authoritative (nurturing) parenting (high warmth and reasonable limits) is associated with the best outcomes emotionally, academically, socially and with regard to antisocial behaviour.
- Authoritarian parenting (inconsistent warmth and rigid, harsh control) is associated with greater psychological distress and lower self-esteem, adequate school grades and low antisocial behaviour.
- Permissive parenting (inconsistent warmth and few limits) is associated with more substance abuse, but low psychological distress and high self-esteem and variable school marks and delinquency.
- Neglectful parenting (low warmth and control) is associated solely with poor outcomes, emotionally, academically and for antisocial behaviour.

The next question is what impact each type of parenting has on how young people turn out. In the Avenevoli et. al. (1999) study mentioned above, 4471 high school students from nine different high schools were asked to indicate what sort of parenting style they experienced at home. They were also asked to indicate how well they were doing on emotional distress (including depression, anxiety and tension), self-esteem, school performance (grade point average), delinquency (such as theft, carrying a weapon and vandalism) and substance use. Overall, the researchers found that authoritative (nurturing) parenting (high warmth and high control) was associated with less psychological distress, higher self-esteem, higher school marks, lower levels of minor delinquency and less substance use. In other words, showing young people high warmth and firm boundaries resulted in positive outcomes all around.

In contrast, authoritarian parenting (inconsistent warmth, high control, harsh discipline) was associated with greater psychological distress and lower self-esteem. It was also associated with slightly lower marks at school, but appeared to have a moderately positive effect on substance abuse and no great relationship with delinquency. None of the effects of authoritarian parenting were as great – whether negative or positive – as those of authoritative (nurturing) parenting and the good results it produced (Avenevoli et. al. 1999). In other words, the positive effects of authoritative (nurturing) parenting outweighed any impact of authoritarian parenting, making authoritative (nurturing) parenting more beneficial overall for good outcomes for young people.

Permissive parenting (inconsistent warmth with few limits) was associated with some good outcomes and some poor outcomes. Psychological distress was lower and self-esteem higher in families with permissive styles. On the down side, substance use was higher. The impact on marks at school and delinquency varied with other characteristics of parents, such as ethnicity, income and family structure (for example, single parent, two parents, or divorced) (Avenevoli et. al. 1999). These issues are looked at further on in this section. Again, the positive impact of authoritative (nurturing) parenting was greater than any effect of permissive parenting, suggesting that, although permissive parenting has some positive outcomes, authoritative (nurturing) parenting is better for young people overall.

Neglectful parenting (little warmth and few limits) was the only parenting style which was associated solely with bad outcomes. For young people in neglectful families, emotional distress was higher, self-esteem lower, school marks lower, delinquency more frequent and drug use higher (Avenevoli et. al. 1999).

Thus, in authoritarian families where discipline and strictness are high, delinquency is less likely but psychological distress more likely. But in permissive families, where warmth may be high but discipline is low, psychological distress is less likely but delinquency more likely. And in the neglectful family, where both warmth and discipline are low, there are problems with both delinquency and psychological distress. Only in authoritative (nurturing) families are both types of problems avoided. It, therefore, appears that young people need both warmth and reasonable discipline in order to flourish.

To summarise, Avenevoli et. al. (1999) found that the best style of parenting for young people in terms of their emotional well-being, academic achievement and illegal or dangerous activities, was authoritative (nurturing). Parents who were warm and accepting while setting clear limits with firm but fair consequences were more likely to achieve positive youth development for their adolescent children.

Avenevoli et. al. (1999) are not the only ones to have found this outcome. Other researchers have found, time and time again, authoritative (nurturing) parenting is associated with the greatest, all-round positive outcomes for young people (Baumrind 1989, Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts and Fraleigh 1987, Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg and Dornbush 1991, Steinberg, Elmen and Mounts 1989, Steinberg, Mounts,

Lamborn and Dornbusch 1991). Diana Baumrind (1989) first documented the trend, but identified as many as nine different styles of parenting. Later studies refined this down to the four main types discussed here.

Of the studies quoted, one found more positive outcomes for authoritative (nurturing) parenting than the other three styles across the outcomes of social competence, work orientation, self-reliance, academic competence, internalised distress and problem behaviour (school misconduct, drug use and delinquency) (Lamborn et. al. 1991). Another found authoritative (nurturing) parenting resulted in better academic grades across the board, although Asian adolescents also did well with authoritarian parenting (Dornbusch et. al. 1987). A later study also looked at ecological niches (what difference income, ethnicity and family structure made) and found that the positive effects of authoritative (nurturing) parenting outweighed all of these in importance. This was true for four positive outcomes – school grades, self-reliance, lower anxiety and depression, and delinquent behaviour (Steinberg et. al. 1991). All of these studies are limited by looking only at a 'snapshot' at one point in time, rather than examining how parenting affects outcomes downstream. However, they indicate that something very important may be going on here.

WHY IS AUTHORITATIVE (NURTURING) PARENTING SO EFFECTIVE?

Key points:
- Three dimensions of authoritative (nurturing) parenting appear important – acceptance, involvement and granting psychological autonomy (the right to think for oneself and be taken seriously) and behavioural control (monitoring, supervision, rules and consequences).
- Each is related to different types of positive outcomes for young people.
- The more parents know and care where their children are and set firm limits, the more young people will show self-control and discipline and not get involved in drug use, crime and early sexual activity.
- Behavioural control needs to be flexible to allow young people to develop autonomy.
- The more young people feel their parents accept and love them, want to spend time with them, are willing to let them think for themselves and set firm limits, the more likely they are to develop good study habits and do well in school.
- When young people feel loved, accepted, engaged with and allowed to have their own views, they are more likely to develop self-reliance, self-esteem and work orientation and the less likely to feel depressed or anxious.

The components of authoritative (nurturing) parenting

There is no doubt parenting with high warmth and clear but flexible boundaries is effective. What is not immediately clear is what makes it so effective. An early study casts some light on this. Steinberg, Elmen and Mounts (1989) investigated the impact of authoritative (nurturing) parenting on school success. They looked at three aspects of this parenting style – acceptance of young people, democratic treatment and setting limits on behaviour. Each aspect of parenting was found to be associated with school success. This appears to happen because of the impact this style of parenting has on young people's autonomy and their positive attitudes to work and achievement. Parents who treat young people warmly, democratically and firmly seem to give them more opportunity to develop self-reliance and a desire to work and achieve (Steinberg et. al. 1989). The strengths of this research are that it measures the impact of parenting style over time and investigates whether young people are responding well to their parents, or parents are responding well to positive young people. It establishes that parenting is having a positive

impact on young people, mainly through firm control and the other aspects (acceptance and democracy) have effects that run both ways (Steinberg et. al. 1989).

A later study by Gray and Steinberg (1999) extended this inquiry to look not only at academic competence but also at behaviour problems (including cheating, copying homework, being late, vulnerability to antisocial peer influence, drug and alcohol use, carrying a weapon, stealing and trouble with the police), psychosocial development (work orientation, self-reliance, and self-esteem) and internal distress (anxiety, tension, somatic symptoms). They measured how well 8700 students aged 14 to 18 years were doing in each of these areas and related it back to the parenting style they experienced at home. Three dimensions of parenting were investigated. The first was how accepting of, and involved with, their children parents were. This relates to how loving, responsive and involved young people perceive their parents as being (for example, knowing they can count on their parents to help them when they have a problem, or doing fun things together as a family). The second dimension was the extent of monitoring and setting of limits by parents (for example, whether parents try to know where their children go at night and how much they know about what young people do with their free time). The third was how much psychological autonomy or freedom parents give adolescents or the degree to which they use non-coercive, democratic discipline and encourage the young person to express their individuality in the family. For instance, do parents encourage young people to think for themselves or insist that parental ideas are correct and must not be questioned? Are young people's arguments about a point dismissed by saying they'll know better when they grow up, or treated seriously?

Aspects of parenting related to specific adolescent problems
Gray and Steinberg (1999) found that behavioural and antisocial problems tended to be associated with the degree of behavioural control, or strictness and supervision. The more behavioural control parents exerted, the less likelihood there was that young people would, for example, lie, steal, cheat or use drugs. Psychosocial development was associated with two aspects of parenting – acceptance, involvement and psychological autonomy granting. When both of these dimensions were high, young people were more likely to show better self-reliance, self-esteem and work orientation. Internal distress was associated with the same two dimensions, which tended to compensate for each other. When acceptance and involvement were low, autonomy granting tended to protect against depression and anxiety and vice versa. Finally, academic competence was associated with all three dimensions. When acceptance, involvement and autonomy granting were high and behavioural control moderate, academic self-image and grades were at their best.

Each aspect of authoritative (nurturing) parenting, therefore, had a specific role to play in producing good outcomes. The authors concluded that young people who perceive high levels of behavioural control developed a strong sense of self-control and discipline, as shown by their good study habits and ability to avoid drug use, school absences and antisocial behaviour. Young people who are granted the right to think for themselves by parents (psychological autonomy) seem to feel more self-competence and self-confidence in both academic and social pursuits, as well as a desire and confidence to succeed. Autonomy granting also increases feelings of self-worth, providing a buffer against depression and anxiety. Having parents who are involved with them leads to greater all round well-being, and better outcomes in all areas. This has implications for the participation of young people, as suggested in the *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa*.

The positive impact of monitoring young people
One of the key aspects of authoritative (nurturing) parenting is monitoring young people – knowing where they are, what they are doing and who they are with (Jacobson and Crockett 2000). This is particularly important for preventing delinquency, but also has a positive impact on school marks, sexual

activity and depression. The exception to this is depression in boys. Monitoring has no affect on their levels of depression, but does have a positive effect on girls who are depressed (Jacobson and Crockett 2000). This may be because girls tend to mature earlier, or because warmth and acceptance are more important predictors of outcome for depression, as discussed above. Overall, it is clear that monitoring young people is important for good outcomes, although this needs to be flexible to allow opportunities for decision making and greater independence as young people age. There is some indication that parents who do not relax their power and restrictiveness as adolescents age and become ready to make more of their own decisions can push young people to seek more advice from their peers and to show extreme orientation to their peers. This in turn makes them more vulnerable to influence by antisocial behaviour which peaks around 14-15 years (Fuligni and Eccles 1993). Thus, monitoring needs to take place in a context of increased opportunities for adolescents to make their own decisions and learn from their own mistakes, which is another aspect of authoritative (nurturing) parenting.

Inductive discipline – teaching young people through enforcing rules
Another key aspect of authoritative (nurturing) parenting is inductive discipline. This means that when rules and consequences are enforced, parents do not just say 'do as I tell you and don't ask why'. They explain the reasons for the rules and point out the consequences of not keeping to rules, above and beyond being punished (Steinberg 2000). For instance, when a young person hits a schoolmate, their parent would not only make sure there was a consequence, such as no Playstation for the weekend, but would explain to their child that hitting people leads to being rejected and disliked. They would also encourage the young person to put themselves in the victim's shoes and think how it would feel to be hit. The parent might also show the young person some ways to get on with others without hitting them, especially in disagreements or when they are angry.

This level of discussion means that young people learn while they are being disciplined, instead of just feeling miserable and being none the wiser as to why it was wrong or how to act differently. Discipline becomes a way of learning, rather than just being punished. In the process of these discussions, intellectual development is assisted. Young people learn more about empathy with others, problem solving, thinking about the consequences of their actions and making difficult moral judgements (Baumring 1978, Krevan and Gibbs 1996 both in Steinberg 2000).

Possible reasons for good outcomes other than parenting style
It is fair to question whether the Avenevoli et. al. (1999) findings were due just to parenting style, or possibly some other factor such as level of income, or whether there were two parents or one doing most of the parenting. The researchers looked at this and found that in general authoritative (nurturing) parenting was associated with good outcomes for families of varying income, from low to high, to families of varying ethnicity, including white American, African American, Asian and Hispanic, and whether families had two parents or one (Avenevoli et. al. 1999). The main exception was that of middle-class, African American adolescents, who seem to benefit less from this type of parenting than all other adolescents (Avenevoli et. al. 1999). In fact, there are some indications the young people who benefit most from authoritative (nurturing) parenting are white American but this does not alter the findings that authoritative (nurturing) parenting has more positive effects than other styles for most ethnic groups (Dornbusch et. al. 1987).

While it is exciting to discover that a certain type of parenting is most likely to lead to good youth development, it is important to look at the quality of the evidence. On the plus side, this piece of research looked at a large number of young people making the results more reliable. It also used a range of

measures and looked at variables other than parenting that could explain outcomes. On the down side, it used self-report by adolescents that could be biased and a 'snapshot' design where parenting style and outcomes were considered at the same time. This makes it impossible to say what led to what. Youth development in authoritative (nurturing) families might be better because of some other factor that has not been measured here and which accounts for both parenting style and well-being. The best way to establish whether authoritative (nurturing) parenting actually leads to good outcomes is to look at longitudinal studies – where it is possible to see which came first – and also at the results of interventions to encourage more authoritive, nurturing parenting styles (Farrington 2000).

LONGITUDINAL STUDIES – MAKING A REAL CONNECTION BETWEEN PARENTING AND OUTCOMES

Key points:
- When parents are warm, accepting, firm, low in hostility and keep a close eye on their children, outcomes for young people are better.
- Young women are less likely to become anxious and depressed during adolescence and young men less likely to behave antisocially when receiving this type of parenting than young people growing up with other styles of parenting.
- Good results from this 'authoritative (nurturing)' style of parenting become even better over time, whereas poor results from neglectful and/or abusive parenting become even worse over time.

Longitudinal studies measure parenting at an early stage in children's lives and then follow up later to see how young people did in life. The beauty of this approach is that it allows us to say 'this came before that'. We still have to run some checks to make sure that parents were having an influence on their children rather than the other way around, or that it was not all due to some other external factor. Longitudinal studies are a good place to start, even though they do not give comprehensive indications of what caused what.

Laurence Steinberg, one of the foremost researchers in adolescent development in the United States, led a study that looked at what impact parenting style had over time. While the follow-up was only one year later, the results are interesting. Authoritative (nurturing) parenting had been associated with better outcomes in the first study for school achievement and satisfaction, psychological distress, social competence, positive work orientation and delinquency (including school misconduct and drug use). Results for neglectful parenting had been much worse than other parenting styles, and authoritarian and permissive had mixed results. Over one year, the good results of authoritative (nurturing) parenting got better and the already bad results of neglectful, authoritarian and permissive parenting worsened (Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts and Dornbusch 1994). In particular, delinquency went up with neglectful parenting but stayed stable or went down with other styles, psychological distress went up markedly with authoritarian parenting and academic achievement did not increase as much with neglectful or authoritarian parenting as with the other styles. This suggests the effects of good parenting cumulate over time to become even better, whereas the effects of poor parenting lead to worse and worse outcomes with each passing year. The particularly bad results for neglectful parenting style show that simply not having much input into young people's lives is enough to lead to poor outcomes.

Another longitudinal study found that parenting practices over the first five years of adolescence could help offset depression, anxiety and other aspects of internalising disorders (Scaramella, Conger and

Simons 1999). Effective parents were high in warmth, skilled at managing their children's behaviour, used consistent discipline, knew where their children were and what they were doing and showed little or no hostility to them. Normally, rates of antisocial behaviour for young men and depression and anxiety in young women would increase from early to late adolescence but in these families this trend occurred to a much lower degree.

New Zealand has two very good longitudinal studies to draw on, one in Dunedin and the other in Christchurch. Almost 30 years ago, Dr. Phil Silva and his colleagues started a study looking at the development of 1037 Dunedin three-year-old children. Over 97 percent of those original children are still in the study today and some of them now have their own children (Silva and Stanton 1996). One of the aspects of development looked at in the study was families and parenting. They found that when parents were inconsistent in the way they disciplined children and not very strict, young people at age 15 tended to show externalising problems (aggressiveness, dishonesty, violence) whether or not they had shown behaviour problems earlier in life (Feehan et. al. 1991 in Pryor and Woodward 1996). Disagreement among parents was also predictive of later antisocial behaviour (Henry et. al. 1993 in Pryor and Woodward 1996). So on at least one indicator of well-being, poor disciplinary practices were associated with later problems. This accords with the Avenevoli et. al. (1999) finding that families with low discipline (permissive) were more likely to have children involved in delinquency, whereas this was less likely in families with higher levels of discipline (authoritative (nurturing) and authoritarian).

Another interesting finding is that when family members showed high levels of commitment, help and support for each other, results were more positive. When family members were encouraged to express their feelings directly and act openly and had low levels of conflict, there was a much lower chance of young people showing either a behavioural or emotional disorder (McGee et. al. 1990, Williams et. al. 1990 both in Pryor and Woodward 1996). This indicates some of the qualities important in families if young people are to develop positively.

The Christchurch study, with its 18 or more years of data on young people, clearly showed that harsh and abusive treatment by parents was associated with more risk of offending by young people (Fergusson and Lynskey 1997). This was true even after social and contextual factors such as income, living standards, parental conflict, changes of parent and negative life events were taken into account. These factors explained a great deal of the increase in risk of offending, but even when they were factored in to results, abusive and harsh parenting continued to be a predictor for violent offending, suicide attempts, alcohol abuse and being a victim of violence. This kind of treatment by parents is more likely with authoritarian (inconsistent warmth and rigid control) parenting, but is particularly true of the neglectful style of parenting. Parenting in moderate and caring ways is, therefore, a protective factor against offending, even when the lives of families include many weaknesses.

TABLE 1: OUTCOMES OF DIFFERENT PARENTING STYLES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

AUTHORITATIVE (NURTURING) – *warmth, flexible control, moderate discipline*	AUTHORITARIAN – *inconsistent warmth, high harsh discipline*	PERMISSIVE – inconsistent warmth, *low control/ discipline*	NEGLECTFUL – low warmth, low *control and discipline*
• High social competence in childhood and adolescence • High self-esteem • High independence • High resourcefulness • Internalised control of self and emotions • Popular with peers	• Lack of social competence with peers • Low self-esteem • Shyness • Sometimes aggressive and hostile	• Immaturity • Lack of impulse control • Lack of independence • Socially competent and self-confident • Unengaged at school • Prone to drug and alcohol use	• Disturbed attachments to parents • Problems in psychological functioning (worse than abused children) • Low competence • Low self-esteem • High levels of behaviour problems and psychological distress

HAPPY FAMILIES – THE IMPACT OF PARENTAL MOOD, CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND DRINKING STYLE

Key points:

- In families where parents discuss differences constructively, rather than having hostile disagreements in front of their children, young people tend to grow up happier and better behaved.
- Families where parents do not engage in violence towards each other have children with less risk of anxiety, substance abuse, conduct disorder and property crime.
- In families where both parents are reasonably happy, young people are less likely to be depressed themselves, as well as less likely to show behaviour problems and Attention Deficit behaviours.
- When parents drink moderately, young people are less likely to grow up with psychological problems, including depression, anxiety, substance abuse and antisocial behaviour.

Conflict resolution style

Does growing up in a family where one or both parents are reasonably happy and parents are able to work out their differences without starting world war three make any difference to how young people develop? Recent research suggests it does. While conflict between parents is normal in families, when fighting is severe and extreme young people are likely to develop emotional and behavioural problems (Harold, Pryor and Reynolds 2001). These can include aggression, hostility and other antisocial behaviour and depression, anxiety, sadness and social withdrawal. Living with parental conflict can also lead to difficulties in forming relationships with others, problems at school and health problems (Harold et. al. 2001). New Zealand research shows that being exposed to conflict between parents in early and middle childhood increased the risk of involvement in crime in adolescence (Fergusson, Horwood and Lynskey

1992). This was particulary true for young people with a history of conduct problems as children. So, parents who relate harmoniously and disagree with each other constructively are a strength in young people's lives, particularly with regard to helping them behave responsibly towards others and the law.

Physical and verbal aggression by parents is particularly difficult for children and young people to cope with and are highly likely to lead to poor outcomes. However, some laboratory research suggests that 'silent violence' such as sulking and not talking to each other, also has a bad effect. Though in order to have any solid merit, this needs to be further tested in more realistic settings and over a longer time period. Severe fights and physical withdrawal, including walking out, also greatly concern children. Contrary to what might be expected, children become more sensitive and vulnerable to conflict with time, not less so.

New Zealand research has found that violence by parents towards each other has different effects on children depending on which parent initiates it (Fergusson and Horwood 1998). When the father initiates violence, the results for young people by age 18 are likely to be increased risk of anxiety, conduct disorder (such as bullying, lying and stealing) and property crime. When the mother initiates the violence, young people are at increased risk of substance abuse in adolescence. This is even after taking into account social and contextual factors that tend to occur with exposure to interpersonal violence.

Like money worries, conflict between parents affects young people because it results in a worsening parenting style (Fauber, Forehand, Thomas and Wierson 1990). Longitudinal research shows that conflict between parents about their relationship had an adverse impact on family functioning and led to depression in young people, especially for girls. But conflict between parents about adolescents did not have this impact (Shagle and Barber 1995). Other research contradicts this, suggesting that conflict about the child has the most harmful impact (Harold et. al. 2001). In particular, conflict can interfere with the ability of parents to discipline effectively and consistently, as well as reducing their capability to be nurturing and emotionally responsive. Anyone who has ever had a bad day in their life can remember how little energy they had for other people at that time. If the child blames him or herself for the conflict there can also be damage. Research with young people found that family conflict, including parent-child conflict, predicted self-disparaging or critical and suicidal thoughts at ages 10, 13 and 15 (Shagle and Barber 1995). For this reason it is important to assure children that they are not to blame for their parents' fighting (Harold et. al. 2001).

Not all conflict is created equal, however. When parents can discuss differences openly, without agressiveness or hostility, young people may learn from the conflict. Turning the bad news about conflict on its head, the good news is that parents who manage conflict constructively increase the chances of their children being happy, healthy and successful. Parents' support for each other during times of stress can also result in more positive outcomes. Parents who show warmth, look for compromises to end the conflict, negotiate and can find something to laugh about in the situation are likely to see better outcomes with their children (Harold et. al. 2001).

Parental happiness
It also appears that happier, less depressed parents are associated with better outcomes for young people, particularly lower levels of depression in adolescents. Depression in mothers is associated with depression in both older and younger offspring, and one study found that this was not the result of poorer parenting (Tarrullo, DeMulder, Ronsaville, Brown and Radke-Yarrow 1995). This is backed up by New Zealand research. A longitudinal study found that while depressed mothers were somewhat more likely to report child problems than mothers who were not depressed, their low mood was making a

small but significant difference to outcomes (Fergusson, Lynskey and Horwood 1993). Mothers who were depressed were somewhat more likely to bring up children who showed conduct problems in childhood and Attention Deficit Disorder behaviour. Parents and young people can influence each other's moods as well, making each other feel more distressed. This appears to happen between fathers and daughters, and mothers and sons, but not between parents and children of the same sex (Ge, Conger, Lorenz, Shanahan and Elder 1995).

Alcohol use by parents

The amount of alcohol parents drink also has an impact on young people, for better or worse. New Zealand longitudinal research carried out in Christchurch showed that young people whose parents did not report problem drinking were much more likely to develop positively (Lynskey, Fergusson and Horwood 1994). They were less likely to experience mood disorders (such as, depression) and anxiety, as well as substance abuse, antisocial behaviour and attention deficit disorder by age 15. As this is a high-risk age for all these problems, this finding is significant.

Even once other factors that influenced outcomes for young people were taken into account (including family social background, parent criminality and substance use during pregnancy) parental alcohol use still had a strong impact. After excluding the influence of these factors, young people whose parents self-reported problem drinking or actual alcoholism were around 1.6 to 3 times as likely to experience mood, antisocial behaviour and substance abuse problems in adolescence as young people whose parents drank moderately. The fact that parents reported their own levels of alcohol consumption means that these figures might well underestimate the actual impact of alcohol, given that parents may have been tempted to play down the severity of their drinking when talking to researchers (Lynskey et. al. 1994).

**GROWING POSITIVELY WITHIN DIFFERENT FAMILY STRUCTURES –
DUAL PARENT, SINGLE PARENT AND STEPFAMILIES**

Key points:

- Families with the greatest number of strengths and supports have the greatest chance of staying together.
- Young people whose parents stay married have the greatest chance of school and work success, relationship success and feeling satisfied across many areas of their lives.
- There is a small but significantly higher chance that young people with divorced or separated parents will experience more problems. Although some young people are affected more than others depending on the amount of resources they have (individual, interpersonal, school, work, neighbourhood).
- Poor outcomes after divorce appear largely due to risks in the family that exist well before divorce and divorce increases the overall risk of poor outcomes only slightly, both overseas and in New Zealand.
- Conflict between parents has more of an impact on young people's well-being than divorce.
- The majority of young people are not adversely affected by divorce.
- Young people whose parents fought bitterly and openly before divorce but not afterwards seem to do better when their parents separate, although this finding has been debated.
- Young people do best after divorce when they: did not have significant problems before divorce; get good support from friends; have good problem solving skills, and have custodial and non-custodial parents who both use good parenting skills.

- There are ways of managing divorce that make positive outcomes for young people more likely. These are: maintaining stable and adequate incomes for custodial parents; minimising conflict between divorced parents, or at least hiding it from children; both custodial and non-custodial parents using authoritative (nurturing) parenting styles; teaching young people problem solving skills; encouraging young people to seek social support from their friends; and making available therapeutic interventions to help young people (and possibly parents) cope with divorce.
- Little is known about the negative impact on young people of parents staying in marriages where they are deeply unhappy but not in serious open conflict and this needs more research.
- Step-families do not necessarily lead to better outcomes than stable single parent families, but can lead to some good outcomes when step-parents show warmth but do not attempt to discipline their stepchildren.
- Any poor outcomes from step-families also appear due to problems that existed before remarriage.
- When young people grow up in single parent families, they are less likely to finish high school, but more likely to leave home and take on adult roles after age 18 than those who move from single parent to other types of families.
- Young people experience better outcomes when they grow up in stable families with low levels of change in family structure, whether two parent or single parent, with best outcomes for stable two-parent families, whether biological or adoptive.

Almost a quarter of New Zealand children who were born into two parent families experienced divorce by age nine. Families in New Zealand are more likely to break down when there are a higher number of negative factors connected with family establishment – for example, young mother, brief marriage, de facto relationship and unplanned pregnancy). Lower income and lack of church attendance is also associated with family breakdown. Those families with most of these factors had a 99 percent chance of breaking down within five years, whereas those with fewest of these factors had a one percent chance of breaking down within five years. (Fergusson, Horwood and Shannon 1984).

Paul Amato, one of the leading researchers on divorce, concluded in 2000 that the end of a marriage has the potential to create some difficulties for those children and young people affected by it. In the big picture, children from divorced families score significantly lower on a range of outcomes, from success at school, good conduct, psychological adjustment, how positively they see themselves, long-term health and how skilled they are socially (Amato 2000). While the differences in well-being for young people with divorced versus still-married parents were quite small, they were significant in statistical terms. But not everyone is affected to the same extent, with some young people doing better after divorce, some experiencing a temporary nosedive but then recovering, and others forced into 'a downward trajectory from which they might never recover fully' (Amato 2000: 1269). The majority of young people who experience divorce will still have good outcomes, provided their parent's income and parenting skills are not too adversely affected.

Possible positive outcomes of divorce include closer relationships between some young women and their mothers. Outcomes for young people were also better if their parents had been caught up in intense, chronic and open fighting that their children could not help but be aware of (Amato 2000, Harold, Pryor and Reynolds 2001). However, there is some debate among researchers about how seriously to take this finding. But as only a small proportion of divorces seem to be the result of this kind of conflict, Amato concludes that divorce probably hurts more children than it helps.

However, there is a body of evidence that at least some of the poor outcomes put down to divorce were actually in existence as much as 8 to 12 years before the divorce. In this case, young people's problems would likely be worsened but not in any sense caused by the divorce. There is also evidence that for other young people, problems appear after divorce that were not evident before the divorce (Amato, 2000). One English study followed large numbers of children over a period of time. It found that even controlling for behavioural and academic problems before divorce, the risk of psychological problems in young adulthood – the 20 to 25 year old stage – increased after divorce (Chase-Lansdale, Cherlin and Kiernan 1995 in Amato 1999).

On the other hand, New Zealand research again suggests that adverse effects of divorce or separation are often due to difficulties that exist before the family splits up (Fergusson 1998). A longitudinal study set in Christchurch found that families that were likely to end as single parent or divorced families often had difficulties such as low income, stress and compromised parenting to start with that increased the risk of poor outcomes. These difficulties existing pre-divorce explained the higher risk for young people from divorced families more than the actual divorce did. Fergusson concluded that exposure to separation or divorce may be associated with a small increase in academic underachievement and difficulties in adjustment, but other factors explain the poorer outcomes more powerfully.

Overall, it appears while young people whose parents divorce show slightly worse outcomes than those from stable families, a great deal of this increased risk is due to pre-existing problems in the family rather than the actual divorce.

When is divorce more likely to lead to poor outcomes for young people?

A number of studies show that after divorce, the parent with custody of the children tends to show a decline in parenting quality (Amato 2000). Compared with parents who are still married, custodial parents tend to have fewer rules, harsher discipline, provide less supervision, invest less time, be less supportive of and more in conflict with their children. As we have seen, the quality of parenting is a big predictor of well-being and good outcomes for young people. So it stands to reason that when parenting slips after divorce, good outcomes become less likely. Not only this, but it appears that gaps in outcomes such as school success, work success and earning power get larger as young people get older (Amato 2000). The upside of this is that if custodial parents receive practical and social support to help them parent more effectively, the gap between well-being for young people from separated versus intact families should become less significant. There are also indications that therapeutic interventions with young people helps them avoid some long-term consequences.

So what are the things that make it more likely that divorce will result in poor outcomes for young people, and what are the things that make it less likely? According to Amato (2000) the circumstances which make poor outcomes more likely are:

- hostility and lack of cooperation between divorced parents
- direct conflict between parents which is witnessed by their children
- physical violence between parents
- making children feel caught in the middle between parents
- economic hardship in the family after divorce, with unstable and/or low income;
- low levels of conflict in the family before the divorce, although this conclusion is open to debate
- fathers failing to pay child support
- children blaming themselves for the divorce (this tends to lead to more depression and antisocial behaviour)

- children being exposed to a greater number of negative life events, particularly moving house (often to a poorer neighbourhood) and changing schools.

Buffers against the adverse effects of divorce

Looking for some hope in this gloomy situation, what does the research say about the factors that might buffer young people from the negative effects of divorce? The following circumstances seem to increase the chance of good outcomes despite divorce:

- Good parenting from non-custodial fathers. When divorced fathers use authoritative parenting (warm and accepting, with firm, clear boundaries) their children are consistently more likely to do better at school and show fewer problems such as depression, anxiety and delinquency.
- Joint custody of children (it is not entirely clear, however, whether this is due to the custody arrangement or the cooperative relationship between the parents).
- When young people use active coping skills, such as problem solving skills and gathering social support they tend to adapt to divorce more quickly.
- When young people have good social support from peers.
- When young people have access to therapeutic interventions, such as school-based support programmes. It is less clear whether programmes for divorcing parents have a positive effect on outcomes for children.

It does not seem to make any difference to outcomes whether the mother or father has custody. In mother-headed households young people tend to be disadvantaged financially whereas in father-headed households they tend to be disadvantaged by a lack of interpersonal resources, such as low father involvement in school activities. But Amato (2000) concludes that this adds up to roughly equal amounts of disadvantage wherever a young person lives. It also does not appear to make a difference to outcomes whether young people live with the same-sex parent or opposite-sex parent.

The research reviewed above is about both formally married couples and de facto couples, although married couples form the bulk of the subjects. Research on de facto couples is only just starting to take off, but it appears that results so far are pretty similar to married couples. In New Zealand, having a de facto marriage was a risk factor for separating in 1984, but this may be changing as a wider cross-section of society enters de facto relationships (Fergusson et. al. 1984).

The relationship between conflict and the effects of divorce

One recent review concluded that conflict is a major predictor of how well young people will do after divorce (Pryor and Rogers 2001). Family processes, such as conflict, better explain young people's psychological health than does family structure, according to this review. Conflict during divorce has its impact on young people's well-being mainly by adversely affecting how well parents do their job, and how well children and parents get on with each other (Pryor and Rogers 2001). Conflict which focuses on the children has been found to be particularly harmful. One researcher concluded that if conflict between parents is not going to be stopped by divorce, it is better for young people to stay in a two-parent home with conflict than live in a single-parent home with conflict. However, if divorcing means less arguments, then there are some benefits for children (Pryor and Rogers 2001).

Making sure that young people are not personally exposed to fighting also helps outcomes after divorce. Even after marriages have ended, conflict between parents can still have an adverse impact on young people when it is ongoing, centred on them and carried out in their presence (Pryor and Rogers 2001).

This finding is replicated by New Zealand research (Fergusson et. al. 1992). A longitudinal study over 13 years of young people's lives showed that conflict between parents had more impact on whether young people started offending than whether the parents had split up or reconciled during that time. Remarriage and stepparents also did not predict risk of offending as much as conflict between parents. Parents who could communicate constructively about disagreements were a strength in their children's lives even when divorce or remarriage occurred.

What positive results are associated with parents who do not divorce?

Key points:
- There are four major positive life outcomes that are more likely for young people who grow up in families that do not divorce. These are: higher income (associated with more years in school); happy, harmonious relationships in adult life; strong affection for their parents; and happiness and satisfaction with multiple areas of their lives.
- Less positive outcomes for young people from families that divorce can be explained by lower educational success, increased probability of marriages failing in adulthood and weakening of ties with parents.
- As indicated above, many of these results could be explained by problems in the family before divorce (including conflict) rather than divorce itself.

Long-term research by Amato (1999) shows that four major positive outcomes occur for people who grew up in intact families as opposed to those whose parents divorced before the children turned 19. The first is income that in turn is associated with more years at school. The United States individuals Paul Amato followed into adulthood earned on average $4000 more each per year for males, and $2000 more each per year for females, both white and black. The net assets of the white men from intact families were twice that of those from divorced families, with a similar but slightly smaller gap for all women, and similar but not significant differences for black men.

Adults who had grown up with happily married parents were also more likely to have happy, harmonious, stable relationships compared with those who came from unhappy, intact homes or divorced homes. The trend was greater for the divorced backgrounds. While couples who both grew up in happy, intact homes had a 10 percent likelihood of divorce, couples who both came from divorced families had a 30 percent likelihood. When Amato (1999) investigated the reasons for this further he found it was largely due to the fact that adults from divorced backgrounds were more likely to use behaviours that undermined the quality of the relationship. These included becoming jealous easily, difficulty controlling anger, communicating poorly about problems and having affairs. All of these increase the risk of divorce. Amato concluded that "children from divorced families have fewer opportunities to learn interpersonal skills – such as building trust, managing their emotions, and communicating effectively – that strengthen intimate relationships" (Amato 1999:154). However, these problems could well be the result of poor parenting and conflict in parents' relationships rather than divorce per se.

Adults who had grown up in happy, intact families had the strongest affection for their parents, followed by those from unhappy, intact families. Those from divorced families showed the worst outcomes, particularly for fathers. This may be because fathers are very often the non-custodial parent, meaning that relationships with them are weakened more than with mothers. Again, this could arguably occur in a conflict-ridden or high problem families even when divorce did not occur.

While it may seem a relatively trivial measure, closeness with parents is a resource that can help boost resilience in the face of life stress. It also gives access to material help – such as subsidising study fees – that may have an impact on other outcomes. Level of education is closely associated with earning power and net worth, as the previous section showed. Adults from divorced families received significantly less help from their fathers, whether the father remarried or stayed single, in areas such as money, transportation, housework, home repairs and emotional support. Single mothers were also less likely to give assistance than married parents, although once mothers remarried the level of assistance rose to almost the married level (Amato 1999).

In the last sphere of subjective well-being, those who grew up in happy, intact families had the highest levels of happiness and satisfaction with multiple areas of their lives, such as job, home, neighbourhood and leisure activities.

Amato (1999) concluded that the relationship between having divorced parents and lower levels of subjective well-being in adult life can be explained by three impacts that divorce has on young people. It lowers their educational success, increases the probability of their own marriages failing and weakens their ties with their parents. All three factors are significantly associated with subjective well-being and together explain the effects of divorce.

Stepfamilies

Key points:
- Outcomes for children in stepfamilies are no better than in single-parent families, and under some circumstances may be worse.
- There can also be positive impacts on depression and interpersonal problems in young people when parents remarry.
- As the new relationship progresses, the quality of the parent's and step-parent's relationship has more impact on young people, suggesting that high quality remarriages will lead to better outcomes for young people.
- Step-parents appear most effective when they use a parenting style where they show high warmth and acceptance for young people, but leave discipline and supervision to the original parent.

In New Zealand nearly three-quarters of children in single-parent families will become part of two-parent families within a period of five years (Fergusson et. al. 1984). It is easy to assume that as soon as a divorced or separated parent remarries, the outlook automatically gets rosier for their children. The research, however, does not paint nearly as optimistic a picture.

Studies suggest that outcomes for young people in stepfamilies are no better than in single parent homes and under some circumstances may be worse (Aquilino 1996, Fergusson et. al. 1984). Young people do not become more likely to finish school, and may be less likely to seek education or training beyond high school than children who grow up with both their original parents or who are adopted into a two-parent home. One reason for this may be confusion about how involved with young people's lives step-parents should be (Aquilino 1996). Within five years, most New Zealand stepfamilies will fail, leading to more family transitions, which put young people at greater risk (Aquilino 1996, Fergusson et. al. 1984). However, more recent research suggests that there may be positive impacts on depression and interpersonal problems when single parents re-partner (Amato 2000).

Later New Zealand research shows that when young people live in a stepfamily for the first time between ages six and 16, they have greater risks of poor outcomes (Nicolson, Fergusson and Horwood 1999). But these risks become insignificant when family circumstances like income, occupation, family instability, adversity, conflict and pre-existing child problems are taken into account. There was also no difference between boys and girls for these outcomes. This suggests that much of the risk associated with living in stepfamilies is actually due to factors that existed before the parent moved into the new relationship. So living in a stepfamily is not in itself the issue. The important thing is to ensure that all the other conditions needed for young people to thrive are met within the new family.

It appears that children in stepfamilies are exposed to higher levels of conflict overall, once the combination of any conflict between their parent and step-parent and between their original parents is taken into account (Harold et. al. 2001). However, the quality of their original parent's relationship with the step-parent does not appear as important to the young person's well-being as the parent's relationship was in intact families. Conflict or hostility between the new couple simply does not seem to have the impact it would have had in the original family. It also seems that young people are more likely to have an impact on the family's behaviour, including how the step-parent behaves, than the new couple or the step parent is likely to have on them. However, how the couple gets on has more impact on children and young people in the family over time (Harold et. al. 2001). This suggests that remarriages where there is a good quality relationship will help bring about better outcomes for young people.

What impact the marital relationship has also seems to differ from boys to girls. Young women are more likely to show behaviour problems when the new couple's relationship is harmonious, possibly because it affects their closer relationship with their mother since the divorce. Young men, in contrast, do not react badly to a good marital relationship next time around (Harold et. al. 2001).

It also appears that the style of parenting that has the best impact differs in the reconstituted family, at least for the step-parent. Young people are more likely to feel happy, close and supported when the step-parent adopts a 'permissive' parenting style of high warmth and acceptance combined with few attempts to control the young people's behaviour (Harold et. al. 2001). This is in contrast to the authoritative style of high warmth and high control that is most effective with original parents.

Long-term single parents

Key points:

- Single-parenthood is increasingly common in New Zealand and overseas, particularly for young (often teenage) mothers.
- It is associated with a lower chance of stable, long-term relationships and lower incomes for mothers.
- Despite this, many young single mothers improve their own circumstances and those of their children, getting off benefits, improving their education, and getting stable work, although few form a stable relationship with a partner.
- Children of long-term single parents thrive reasonably well on the whole, although not quite as well as those from stable two-parent families, with a substantial minority struggling with key developmental tasks.
- Young people do better in stable single-parent families than when there are transitions to stepfamilies, or moves to live with other relatives, and when they have few or no siblings.

Single-parenthood from the birth of the first child or for a significant period of a child's life is an increasingly common phenomenon, both in New Zealand and overseas. The parents are usually mothers, including those who had children young, often as teenagers (Fergusson et. al. 1984). Women who have children as teenagers are much less likely to form a stable, long-term relationship and are also likely to have a low income. One study followed 404 pregnant teenagers for 20 years, making it possible to find out how their children fared under these circumstances (Furstenberg and Hughes 1995).

Most of the young women were black, poor and had their first baby before age 18. Most lived in single-parent households at the time of the study and a quarter were on public assistance (a benefit). Most had parents who had not graduated from high school, many had had teenage mothers themselves and half came from families of five or more. On the face of it, their life circumstances were not rich in resources, either personal or environmental, to bring up children who would prosper (Furstenberg and Hughes 1995).

So how did the mothers fare? Firstly, many of the mothers improved their own circumstances considerably. Seventeen years after the study started, two-thirds had graduated from high school or received a grade equivalency diploma (GED) – a qualification for young people who have left school without a high school diploma, but signifying they have reached an equivalent level. Most of those who had been on a benefit no longer required one and most of the mothers were working in stable jobs. Only a third were married and of these, only one-sixth were married to the father of their child. Few of the mothers were receiving child support from the fathers of their children (Furstenberg and Hughes 1995).

What was the effect on their children of growing up in a single-parent household for a good part of their lives? At the 17-year follow-up, young people from these families were not doing quite as well on measures such as educational attainment, delinquency, teenage parenthood and emotional adjustment as those from stable, dual parent families. But the majority were doing reasonably well.

At the 20-year follow-up, 252 young people were interviewed. Most were coping, but a substantial minority were struggling to succeed at key developmental tasks. Most of the youth wanted to achieve high educational goals, well-paid and secure work and to put off having children until they were adults, goals their parents were in agreement with.

Aquilino (1996) looked at outcomes for over 500 young people in the United States who were born to unmarried mothers. The majority had lived in a single-parent family, and more than one-third had lived in a stepfamily by age 16. A substantial minority (around 15 percent) had also lived in extended families with grandparents or a relative at some point in their lives. Those who lived in single-parent families only tended to have mothers with the lowest levels of education and half the families in single-parent-only situations were on welfare benefits at some point before the eldest reached 16. Thus, single-parent-only families were somewhat more disadvantaged than other families.

Compared with those who went on to live with two biological parents or an adoptive family, the young people brought up in single-parent families were significantly less likely to finish high school. Nearly everyone in two-parent or adoptive families completed high school compared to three-quarters of those raised in single-parent-only families. Single-parent families where there were more than one child or large numbers of children had fewer children completing high school than single-parent families with only one child. When young people lived in a stable, single-parent family with no transitions to stepfamilies or other family arrangements they were likely to leave home later than those who went through many changes in family structure (Aquilino 1996).

In the New Zealand context, young people who were adopted from birth into two-parent families had somewhat better outcomes than those who grew up in single-parent families (Fergusson, Lynskey and Horwood 1995). These outcomes were to do with self-esteem, poor behaviour, attention deficit/ hyperactivity disorder, cannabis use and cigarette smoking, rather than depression, anxiety, and suicidal feelings. Those who grew up with both their biological parents had in turn somewhat better outcomes than adopted young people. This was true even when their adopted families had many strengths, such as good standards of health care, good living standards, family stability and positive mother-child interactions and when the two-parent, biological families had similar or even lower levels of strengths. So both New Zealand and overseas research suggests that growing up with two biological parents who are reasonably effective as parents is protective and likely to lead to better outcomes for young people, particularly for behavioural and drug-taking issues.

One thing that should be considered here is that single parents had lower overall strengths than both adoptive and biological two-parent families (Fergusson et. al. 1995). This was in terms of age and education level of mothers, standard of living, health care standards and family stability. These could well have explained the better outcomes for young people rather than having two parents. But even when these differences were taken into account, young people from both types of two-parent families had better outcomes than those from single parent families. This suggests that some aspect of parenting which is important for preventing antisocial behaviour was missing from single-parent families. As we saw earlier, the aspect of parenting most related to antisocial behaviour is behavioural control through monitoring and supervision (Gray and Steinberg 1999). Single parents have been found to do less supervision and monitoring compared to two-parent families (Weatherburn and Lind, 1998). This is probably due partly to a simple lack of time and the fact two parents have more time to carry out all the tasks needed for effective parenting.

The finding of slightly worse outcomes for young people from two-parent adoptive homes, despite somewhat better family conditions than biological two-parent families, is puzzling. On further analysis, the researchers found that results for young people adopted into two-parent families were better than they would probably have been had they stayed with their young, single mothers. So, although, they had slightly worse outcomes than would be expected based on their upbringing, the outcomes were slightly better than if they had not been adopted into a two-parent family (Fergusson, Lynskey and Horwood 1995).

These findings should be considered in the context that most young people from stable, single-parent families do reasonably well and evidence that problems in adolescence in adoptive families tend to reverse once adulthood is reached (Collins et. al. 2000, Furstenberg and Hughes 1995). We shoud also bear in mind that if parents are abusive, neglectful or ineffective in other ways, being brought up by two biological parents does not guarantee good outcomes. Probably the more important factor is what skills parents have for caring for and setting limits for children, and what other strengths exist in their world – supportive friends, neighbourhood, schools and good income. This subject is discussed in more detail in the section on neighbourhood and community influences.

These findings should also be looked at in the light of factors other than simply having one parent, that disadvantage children from single-parent families. New Zealand research shows that many single-parent families have disadvantages such as low income, family dysfunction and stress that exist before any separation or divorce occurs (Fergusson 1998). So, higher risk of poor outcomes are due not so much to having just one parent as to a range of other factors that are more likely to apply to single-parent families.

Multiple changes in family structure

Key points:
- Growing up in a stable family, whether two parent or one parent, increases the likelihood of good outcomes for young people.
- Growing up in a stable two-parent family, whether biological or adoptive, gives the greatest chance of good outcomes.

There is evidence that young people who experienced many changes in family structure – from dual parent to single parent, single parent to stepfamily, and informal adoption by relatives – means young people are more likely to leave home earlier. Those young people raised in a stable two-parent or one-parent family were more likely to leave home after age 18 (Aquilino 1996). In New Zealand, there is evidence that when a family becomes a single-parent family it is likely to go through a number of changes since subsequent stepfamilies have a high risk of failure. Children who experience these multiple transitions from one type of family to another are at higher risk of antisocial and aggressive behaviour (Fergusson et. al. 1984).

New Zealand research on different types of family structure

Key points:
- Young people show the best outcomes for good behaviour in childhood, law-abiding behaviour in adolescence and responsible use of alcohol when they grow up with two biological parents.
- Outcomes are somewhat less positive for adoptive, two-parent families, and somewhat less positive again for single-parent families.
- These aspects of family structure are unlikely to outweigh the importance of the number of strengths a young person has in their lives, across parenting, income, neighbourhood, schooling and supportive friendships.

Looking at young people over a 16-year period, one New Zealand study concluded that young people did best when growing up with two biological parents (Fergusson et. al. 1995). This particular family background made it less likely that they would have conduct problems as children, offend as adolescents and use alcohol and drugs. Interestingly, young people who were adopted by two-parent families with even more strengths such as good health care, good income, family stability and positive mother-child interactions, did not do quite as well as those growing up with two biological parents. Growing up with a single parent increased the level of risk for childhood misbehaviour, adolescent offending and substance use. These results held true even when poorer family circumstances for single-parent families were taken into account in the analysis.

This should not be taken as meaning that every young person growing up without two biological parents is at risk, or that family structure is the most important, over-riding factor. Risk increases somewhat with each different family structure, although not enormously. Other New Zealand research showed that young people were most at risk of a range of problems in adolescence when their families lacked many strengths, such as education, work skills, good income, community support, good health care and stability (Fergusson, Horwood and Lynskey 1994).

It is unlikely family structure could outweigh all these factors. That is, if a family had many of these weaknesses, even growing up with two biological parents would be unlikely to protect a young person

from poor outcomes. Thus, too much weight should not be put on the importance of two-parent biological families. Rather the emphasis needs to be on quality of parenting, and the number of other strengths in the young person's life, such as family and community support, education, work skills, employment, income, neighbourhood, schooling and positive friends. The preceding section on family influences and following sections on peer influence, influences of school and work and of neighbourhood and community all make it clear that it is the number of strengths across all environments that is most important rather than the presence or absence of one particular strength.

THE EFFECT OF PARTICIPATION BY YOUNG PEOPLE IN FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Key points:

- Participating in family activities, particularly those that show concern for other people, may promote good outcomes later in life, including prosocial behaviour.

Participation by young people in all aspects of their lives – the family, school, peer group and wider community – is one of the cornerstones of the youth development approach around the world. Unfortunately, there is a dire lack of research into the impact of participation. Of the small group of studies available, one found that children who participated in prosocial activities (such as sharing, listening, showing consideration for others) seemed more likely to behave prosocially later in life (Staub, 1979 and 1992 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998). This includes participation in household chores and perhaps, in particular, those chores that are of benefit to others (Rehberg and Richman 1989, Whiting and Whiting 1973 both in Damon and Eisenberg 1998). A study in Hawaii found that young people who rose above difficult and at times dangerous family circumstances to make a success of their lives had participated in assigned chores as part of their family experience (Werner and Smith 1992).

Other research showed that when parents granted to young people the right to hold their own opinions and think for themselves, those young people developed in more positive ways (Gray and Steinberg 1999). So, participating in family life by expressing views and joining in the decision making, which is part of psychological autonomy, also aids positive development.

HOW IMPORTANT IS MONEY TO GOOD OUTCOMES?

Key points:

- Financial pressure puts pressure on parenting skills, and can lead to poor outcomes for young people.
- Adequate, reliable and stable income is important to good outcomes for young people, particularly in families where parenting skills may be limited or under stress (for instance, through parental separation or disadvantage).
- Regular payment of child support by non-custodial parents increases the likelihood of school success and good behaviour .
- When funds are available within the family for schooling a young person may spend more years in education, which increases the chance of work success and higher income during their lifetime.

Popular wisdom has it that while money does not buy happiness, it certainly makes being happier a lot easier and this seems to apply to families as well. One model that is well-supported by research suggests that when parents come under economic pressure they get depressed, then start fighting, which leads to difficulties in parenting well. This in turn leads to psychological problems in children and young people (Harold, Pryor and Reynolds 2001). Low family income is also a predictor of depression in mothers, setting off a negative chain of events (Windle and Dumenci 1998). Another study found that higher income in a family was associated with lower levels of depression (Jacobson and Crockett 2000).

Certainly, poverty and economic pressures affect parental distress and upset parents tend to find it harder to parent well (Amato 2000, McLoyd 1990). Economic hardship after divorce is associated with negative outcomes for children. A stable income more than total incomes has been found to be associated with children's well-being (Goldber, Greenberger, Hamill and O'Neill 1992 in Amato 2000). Payment of child support by fathers increases the likelihood that children will do well at school and behave well (Amato 2000). The availability of money to pay for schooling, particularly tertiary education at university or polytechnic, has a significant impact on work success and income for young people later in life (Amato 1999). Children who are poor are twice as likely to repeat grades at school and drop out as those who are not poor. They are also 1.3 times more likely to suffer emotional or behaviour problems, 3.1 times more likely to experience out-of-wedlock teenage birth, and 2.2 times more likely to experience violent crime than children who are not poor (Duncan and Brooks-Gun 2000). Poverty, particularly in single-parent families, increases the risk of neglect and abuse of children which in turn increases the risk of delinquency (Weatherburn and Lind 1998). Poor children are 6.8 times more likely to be reported as experiencing abuse and neglect than children who are not poor.

Persistent poverty appears more of a problem than on-and-off or brief periods of poverty, particularly when low income goes on for several years (Duncan and Brooks-Gun 2000). So, while poverty is a key factor in poor outcomes, it seems to work by making it harder for people to parent well, especially if they are bringing up children on their own.

It is also easy to get money issues mixed up with questions of ethnicity. Some of the poor results for young people from Maori and Pacific families in New Zealand were found to be due to factors such as family income and living standards (Fergusson, Horwood and Lynskey 1993). Maternal age and education – which could be linked to income levels – were also found to be significant. As a result, what might appear at first glance to be 'cultural' problems may in fact be the fact that education and income are insufficient to allow good parenting.

OVERALL KEY POINTS SUMMARY FOR FAMILY INFLUENCES

Key points summary:
- Out of four main parenting styles, parenting that is high on warmth and on setting reasonable boundaries (authoritative, nurturing) has the best impact on most young people. This applies to social, academic, emotional and antisocial outcomes.
- Authoritative (nurturing) parenting is effective because parents accept and are involved with young people, give them the right to think for themselves, and make sure they know where they are and who they are with.
- The good results of this parenting style become even better over time, whereas poor results of neglectful parenting become even worse.

- Happy parents who handle conflict constructively and drink only moderately tend to have happier and better-behaved offspring.
- Stable marriages lead to better outcomes for some young people, although the majority of young people are not adversely affected by divorce.
- When parents get on amicably after divorce, have adequate income, both use authoritative (nurturing) parenting styles and young people have access to peer and other support, young people do better than when divorced parents fight.
- Young people in stepfamilies are no better off, on average, than those in stable single-parent families.
- The more stable families of any description are, the better for young people – frequent changes and moves lead to worse outcomes.

◐ Peer influences

'Getting in with the wrong crowd' has been blamed for any number of youth problems by parents down through the ages. What is less often heard is the idea of 'getting in with the right crowd'. This is not in the sense of the 'in crowd', but friends and acquaintances who have a positive influence on each other. Research is now growing that indicates that 'getting in with the right crowd' has a positive effect on the way young people develop. This section looks at that research and investigates exactly what it is about peer relationships that helps bring about good outcomes, and what kind of good outcomes they help bring about.

Before the question of positive peer influence is explored, there are two questions that need to be answered. These are:

- is what appears to be influence by young people actually the result of influence by families?
- are young people in groups alike because they are influenced by each other, or are they there simply because they are attracted to similar individuals?

Only once these questions have been investigated can the positive impact young people have on each other be discussed. Before looking at these issues, we need to take a brief look at the kinds of relationships young people have.

TYPES OF RELATIONSHIP IN ADOLESCENCE AND EARLY ADULTHOOD

Key points:
- Young people have varying types of relationship with each other, from close friend to acquaintance, enemy to romantic partner.
- Many of these relationships occur in the context of small groups of like-minded people (cliques) or larger groups (crowds).
- Cliques have been changing over the last 40 years so that young people now often belong to several cliques.

While older people tend to talk about 'peer influence' as if all peers were the same, it is important to realise young people have a variety of relationships with each other, from true lovers to enemies, best friends to partners in crime. Peer relationships among young people include acquaintances (who are not friends but not disliked), classmates, disliked age mates, friends and romantic partners. Friendships can be mutual, or based on only one person within a pair wanting to be friends with the other (Newcomb and Bagwell 1995). In the United States and Canada, young people spend increasing amounts of time with their peers as adolescence proceeds – peaking at up to 29 percent of their waking hours. This is twice the amount of time they spend with parents and other adults (Csikszentmihalyi and Larson 1984 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998).

Relationships between young people take place in a number of contexts. An Australian, Dunphy, found 40 years ago that Australian teenagers started by socialising in single sex cliques (small groups), then

moved into mixed sex cliques (Dunphy 1963 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998). However, this pattern may have changed with time.

In the past 11 to 18 years, researchers have noticed a decline in the number of students involved in cliques. Instead, young people have tended to have ties to a number of small groups, or with one or two people on the margin of a particular clique (Shrum and Cheek 1987 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998). The importance of belonging to a group, as well as antagonism across different groups, declined in high school years (Brown, Eicher and Petrie 1986, Gavin and Furman 1989 both in Damon and Eisenberg 1998).

As well as small groups or cliques, young people also socialise in bigger groups, known as crowds. A crowd is a group of young people whose reputations suggest they conform to a similar stereotype, whether or not they spend much time together. Among high school students in the United States, common crowd labels include jocks, brains, eggheads, loners, burnouts, druggies, populars, nerds and greasers (Brown 1990 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998).

A lot of socialising in adolescence and early adulthood takes place in groups but it is possible that close friends are more of an influence than the oft-quoted 'peer group'. The next section takes a look at young people's close friendships.

THE NATURE OF FRIENDSHIP IN ADOLESCENCE

Key points:

- Friendship becomes increasingly important with age.
- Friendships in adolescence become less exclusive and more allowing of autonomy and independence than in childhood.
- Despite this, parents remain important sources of support throughout adolescence.
- The centrality of friendships with peers differs across cultures – for example Italian young people are often closer to family than friends, while Canadian young people are often closer to their friends.
- Friendships differ from other peer relationships in being closer, warmer, more focused on resolving conflict, more loyal and equal.

The importance of friendship increases as young people move into and through adolescence (Helsen, Vollebergh and Meeus 2000, Newcomb and Bagwell 1995). For Dutch boys the support they get from their friends has been found to increase from age 12 to age 17 until it is equal to the amount of support they receive from their parents, remaining stable after that. For Dutch girls, support from friends has been found to increase from ages 12 to 15, levelling off after age 18 at a higher level than the support they receive from parents (Helsen et. al. 2000).

While friendship is understood and considered important by preadolescents, in adolescence friends become less exclusive, allowing for the establishment of relationships with others outside the friendship and the development of autonomy and independence (Selman and Schultz 1990 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998).

But friendship with peers does not necessarily hold the same level of importance across different cultures. In one study, Italian young people showed a higher level of contact and intimacy with family members than friends, while Canadian young people were closer to their friends. Belgian young people were at a mid-point between the two extremes (Claes 1998).

What makes a friendship different from other sorts of peer relationships? Most of the answers to this question are common sense, but the point of research is that it separates out the common sense that is right from the common sense that is wrong.

A review of 82 studies discovered that mutual friends were more likely than non-mutual friends, acquaintances and strangers to say four things about their relationship. First, they reported that their friendships were characterised by positive engagement where friends spent time in social contact, talking, cooperating, and expressing positive emotions by smiling, looking, laughing and touching. Secondly, while friends sometimes get into conflict they are more likely to try to resolve disagreements than other types of peers. Thirdly, friends perform more effectively in tasks and reach goals more successfully. Lastly, friends experience mutual liking, closeness, loyalty and (to a lesser degree) similarity, equality and dominance. Friends see themselves as more equal than other peers, although they also try to exert some dominance over each other. However, they do not try to dominate each other as much as non-friends do. Friends are more similar to each other than non-friends are, and see themselves as closer and more loyal to each other than to other peers (Newcomb and Bagwell 1995). The authors speculate that mutual friendships provide a safe place to develop social and emotional skills that can be carried into adulthood.

Not all young people have friends. One United States study found around 15 percent of all the young people in one grade at a school had no mutual friends. The author cautioned that not all of these young people were necessarily friendless – some may have had friends at the school who did not take part in the study, or friends outside school (Ryan 2001). But for those who do have them, friends can play an important role and we come back to this in later sections. Let us examine the first of the big questions – are young people more influenced by parents or peers?

PARENT INFLUENCE OR PEER INFLUENCE?

Key points:
- Both parents and peers have an influence on young people.
- Parents influence who young people meet and mix with, as well as how well equipped they are to form peer relationships.
- Peer influence can be short-lived compared with parental influence.
- Peer support increases well-being in young people only when combined with parental support, whereas parental support has a positive impact on its own.
- The best outcomes appear to be when young people are influenced by both positive parenting and positive peers.
- Offspring of authoritative (nurturing) parents are more likely to be accepted by peers and so less vulnerable to negative peer influence and more vulnerable to positive.
- Offspring of authoritarian or permissive parents are more likely to be rejected by peers and so are more vulnerable to negative peer influence and less vulnerable to positive influence.

One thing parents, teachers and other people in positions of responsibility tend to worry about is the influence young people have on each other, particularly the risk of 'bad influences'. One researcher has even suggested young people are more influenced by their friends and acquaintances than anyone else, including their parents (Harris 1998). There is convincing evidence, however, that both parents and peers have an influence on young people. When families are functioning well, parents generally have

more influence on young people than peers and when families encounter problems, peers may become more influential (Collins et. al. 2000, Helson et. al. 2000).

When peers do influence each other, the impact is often short-lived, with young people reverting to become more similar to their parents once they reach early adulthood (Collins et. al. 2000). From early childhood on, parents influence who their children meet and form friendships with, managing their social activities by encouraging some friendships and discouraging others (Collins et. al. 2000, Damon and Eisenberg 1998). In adolescence, parents have most impact on peer relationships by monitoring where their offspring are, setting rules and approving or disapproving adolescents' choices of social activities, settings and friends (Damon and Eisenberg 1998). Parents also provide an interface between young people and organisations or institutions such as clubs, Guides, Scouts and sports organisations, influencing who their children will have the opportunity to get to know and be influenced by. Involvement in structured activities provided by sponsored organisations increases with age, so the role of parents in this regard becomes more important until young people have the means to be more independent (Damon and Eisenberg 1998).

Some young people are also more vulnerable to influence by their peers (for good or bad) than others. Young people from authoritative (nurturing) families (with good monitoring and good support) are less open to pressure to misbehave than those from permissive or authoritarian families. They are more responsive to pressure to do well in school, but not to the pressure to take drugs and indulge in other antisocial behaviour (Collins et. al. 2000).

Even though support by peers increases over adolescence, parents remain a major support. For Dutch young people peer support, even at its highest point, only ever equals parental support for boys, although it does overtake parental support for girls. But what is the actual impact of this increase in support by peers? In the Dutch study cited there is no impact. While parental support increased adolescents' feelings of well-being, peer support had no such affect. Only when combined with parental support did peer support have an influence. Young people who received support from both parents and peers showed twice the impact from parental support of those who did not also get support from their age mates (Helsen, Vollebergh and Meeus 1999).

In a New Zealand study, Nada-Raja et. al. (1992 in Pryor and Woodward 1996) found that young people with good attachment to parents showed the best levels of well-being. Where young people did not have good levels of attachment to their parents, closeness to friends did not seem to compensate in terms of their mental health. An overseas study found the highest levels of adjustment for young people when they were closely attached to both family and friends and the worst adjustment when they were low in attachment to both (Laible, Carlo and Raffaeli 2000). The weakness of these studies is that they do not prove that closeness to family leads to greater well-being – it may be that greater well-being leads to more closeness to families. Nonetheless, they suggest that the impact of parents is greater than that of peers and the best outcomes occur when a young person has positive relationships with both parents and peers.

Another New Zealand study found that 42 percent of the 194 young people surveyed listed their parents and families as their main source of help and information. Friends were seen as a source of help by 34 percent, but mothers by a further 20 percent and fathers by 15 percent. This suggests that for New Zealand young people families, particularly parents, are more likely to be a source of support than friends, at least in provincial areas like the West Coast (Hamilton 2001).

The way parents relate to their children, bring them up, relate to each other and to other adults all have an impact on peer relationships (Doyle and Markiewicz 1996). Children with more secure attachment to parents tend to show greater social competence and higher quality relationships with more companionship. Children whose parents elicit positive feelings from them in play are also more likely to be socially competent. Couples with a stable, intact marriage are more likely to have children who are socially competent and have close friendships marked by companionship, help, support and closeness.

Not only does the way parents relate to their offspring affect young people's relationships, so does the way parents relate to other adults (Doyle and Markiewicz 1996). Parents who have dependable friends who they are in regular contact with, and who have affiliations with formal organisations (such as Maori Women's Welfare League, Rotary, iwi organisations or school boards) tend to have children with better friendships. In addition, young people whose mothers see their closest friends as a source of interesting ideas and activities are more likely to be involved in friendships as preadolescents (Doyle and Markiewicz 1996). The number and closeness of friends young people have is related to the number of close friends their mothers have. The degree of positive emotions in the young person's friendship and the mutual help given is in turn related to how fathers relate to their social networks (Oliveri and Reiss 1987 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998).

When parents and their children are both acquainted with other parents and their children, a phenomenon known as 'network closure' occurs, where both parents and children share a circle of friends. This means that values are more likely to be shared and social control is easier. Overall, having a shared circle of friends leads to positive social and academic outcomes, provided families live in low risk neighbourhoods (Damon and Eisenberg 1998).

It is possible to trace a cycle of influence from families through to friends, both negative and positive. Parents who tend to use negative discipline and have not learned good parenting skills, are much more likely to bring up children who behave antisocially and fail at school. This in turn means that young people are more likely to be rejected by their peers, which we know makes them more vulnerable to antisocial influences (Dishion 1990 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998).

On the positive cycle, parents who use warmth an authoritative (nurturing) style tend to bring up children who are socially competent, succeed at school and are accepted by their peers. We know this in turn makes them less vulnerable to antisocial influence and more vulnerable to peer pressure to do well at school (Chen and Rubin 1994 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998). The fact the study on the negative cycle was conducted with American young people and both the negative and positive cycles were found with Chinese young people suggests, these processes may hold true across cultures.

It is possible that young people whose friends have authoritative (nurturing) parents are less likely to experience psychological distress (depression, anxiety, tension, insomnia and physical problems) than those who mix with friends from non-authoritative (nurturing) families (Fletcher, Darling, Steinberg and Dornbusch 1995). However, research over several years is needed to check whether it is the friends, and the way they are brought up that is making the difference, or whether well-adjusted young people are simply drawn to friends from well functioning homes.

Clearly, the answer to the question 'which is more important – peer influence or parental influence?' is 'both'. Young people are influenced by both their friends and their families over the course of adolescence and early adulthood. But parents appear to have somewhat more influence, in part because their parenting practices and social organising/monitoring role affect how well liked young people are, and the kind of peers they meet and are likely to be influenced by. When parents fail to provide the kind of

parenting that meets young people's needs, peers become far more influential, and the next section looks at this point in more detail.

WHEN DO FRIENDS HAVE MORE INFLUENCE THAN PARENTS?

Key points:
- When parental influence wanes, peer influence gains.
- The influence of peers can be negative, as in antisocial peers who encourage violence, drug use and theft, or positive, as in close friends who build up feelings of self-worth and competence.
- Young people who are not receiving enough support and monitoring at home are more vulnerable to negative influences and are more adversely affected by breakdowns in their positive friendships.
- While peers can buffer the effects of low support at home, young people have better outcomes with positive influence from parents and peers.

Recent studies provide some insight into the process by which peers become more influential than parents. The first followed families and friends of young people over a two-year period (Ary, Duncan, Duncan and Hops 1999). They found that in families with high levels of conflict, parents and children were less likely to have positive relationships marked by mutual support, feelings of togetherness and harmonious interactions. This led to parents failing to keep a good eye on their children and letting them go places and do things without asking or telling their parents when they would be back. This in turn increased the likelihood that the young person would spend time with peers who were involved in physical fighting, drugs, alcohol and getting into trouble.

The second study found that spending time after school 'hanging out' with friends without adult supervision was associated with problem behaviours later on in adolescence (Pettit, Bates, Dodge and Meece 1999). But this was only true when parents failed to monitor where their children were and what they were doing, and when young people lived in unsafe neighbourhoods and had high levels of problem behaviour to start with.

A third study found adolescents sought more advice from their friends and showed extreme closeness to them when their parents did not relax rules and restrictions so that the young people could make more of their own decisions (Fuligni and Eccles 1993). Taken together, these studies suggest peers become more influential when parents are – for whatever reason – not able to provide sufficient warmth, closeness, supervision and flexibility to remain a key influence in their children's lives. Until parents take the steps that put them in the background, it is they and not peers who are the main influence. Even when antisocial peers become more influential, parents can reduce their influence by showing the young person that they care for, esteem and value him or her (Frauenglass, Routh, Pantin and Mason 1997). In this study, parents who increased warmth and acceptance towards their children at a time when they were were mixing with antisocial friends found their offspring reduced their drug and alcohol use. Other studies show that when parents increase monitoring and supervision, delinquency is also reduced (Henggeler 1997, Henggeler, Melton and Smith 1992).

Generally these results indicate that when parental influence wanes, peer influence increases. Rather than being totally separate, influence by parents and influence by peers seem intricately interconnected. This is further illustrated by research on the impact of close friendships, rather than 'crowds'. Gauze,

Bukowski, Aquan-Assee and Sippola (1996) looked at whether strengths in family relationships buffered the impact of shortfalls in friendships on well-being and adjustment in young people and vice versa. The longitudinal design and rigorous analysis in this study make its findings particularly worth noting.

The authors found when preadoloescents from families that were low in adaptability lost their close friendships over a nine-month period, they were far more likely to suffer damage to their feelings of self-worth and competence than children from adaptable families who lost friendships. On the other hand, when young people from low-adaptive families gained close friends over the same period, they were more likely to feel more worthy and competent than young people whose families had greater strengths and who gained a friendship. This suggests that what young people are not getting at home to boost their good feelings about themselves can be gained from their close friendships. In the words of the authors, young people are '"active consumers of social support" who may turn to any of a number of sources for the fulfillment of their interpersonal needs'. On the downside, when their friendships fail, these young people become vulnerable to decreases in well-being in a way that young people who are having their needs better met at home, do not.

This section provides the final answer to the first big question – do parents or peers have more influence? Parents have more influence in general, although this wanes as young people approach adulthood. But both have an impact on how young people develop, with peers increasing in importance when parents are not able to fully meet their children's needs. Next we turn to the second big question – are friends like each other because similar people tend to flock together, or because they change each other once they start mingling?

DO FRIENDS BECOME FRIENDS BECAUSE THEY ARE LIKE EACH OTHER, OR DO THEY BECOME LIKE EACH OTHER BECAUSE THEY ARE FRIENDS?

Key points:
- Young people tend to mix with other young people who are similar to them, both in positive and negative traits (for example, motivation to study, drug use).
- Young people tend to become more like their friends over time.
- The degree of influence by peers varies depending on the behaviour, with influence particularly strong for drug use.

There is no argument about the fact young people can usually be found in groups with individuals who are like them in some way, whether in positive attitudes to education, aspirations to further study, involvement in dating, or drug use (Ryan 2001). This tendency to form bonds with like others is known as 'homophily', meaning roughly 'liking the same'. The question is whether young people are attracted to get to know each other because they are similar, or become alike because they get to know each other (Collins et. al. 2000, Ryan 2001). Choosing friends because they are similar is known as 'selection' while growing similar to friends is termed 'socialisation'.

There is evidence young people tend to select friends who are already like them more often than they are influenced by their friends to become like them (Collins et. al. 2000, Hogue and Steinberg 1995). However, there is also some evidence young people are influenced by the people they grow close to (Hogue and Steinberg, Ryan 2001). For young men who were emotionally distressed, socialising more with a group of less distressed friends led to lower levels of distress over one year. They also showed an even stronger tendency to show more distress at the end of the year if they had mixed with other distressed adolescents

(Hogue and Steinberg 1995). Following this group of young men over one year provides a much clearer picture of whether any socialisation or peer influence took place, as much research in this area takes only a snapshot at one point in time.

Several large-scale studies followed young people over varying periods of time and found both selection and socialisation at work. This was in domains as diverse as school achievement, drug use, mental health and delinquency (Steinberg 2000). While teenagers were more likely to select friends who were similar to them, they also changed to become more like them over time – for instance, drinking more or becoming more depressed. Friends came and went over the course of the studies and cliques broke up and reformed, but the common interests or activities tended to stay the same.

Just how much the similarity of the people involved was due to selection and how much to socialisation tended to depend on the type of behaviour being looked at. For delinquency, selection may be stronger than actual peer influence, although both are taking place. For drug use, group members appear to be more strongly influenced by the group once they are members (Steinberg 2000).

So the answer to the second big question about peer influence – is the similarity of peer groups due to young people choosing similar friends or is it actually due to influence by friends? is – both are true. Young people select friends who are like them and then are influenced, more or less, to become even more like them. Having established that young people actually do influence each other, we move on to find out what sort of positive impact they have.

THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF PEERS

Key points:
- Friendships have been shown to help improve grades, reduce the impact of divorce, possibly decrease emotional problems, and enhance cognitive skills.
- Some studies show young people with poor adjustment are less likely to have friends, rather than that not having friends causing poor adjustment.
- Young people appear more likely to stay involved in areas of talent when it leads to contact with peers and social opportunities.
- The quality of friendships is important and close friends are more likely to prevent loneliness and feelings of social unacceptability than non-mutual friends.
- Peer relationships appear more promising places to practice prosocial behaviours such as sharing and empathy, than families.
- Peers model and reward prosocial behaviour, but it is not clear whether this leads to more prosocial behaviour.
- Resilient young people who avoid offending, alcohol and drugs, and school problems, are less likely to have delinquent peers.
- Young people who are rejected are often aggressive and are more likely to experience delinquency and mental illness. Although, it is not clear that one leads to the other.
- The longer the rejection goes on for, the worse the outcomes are.
- Young people who are neglected by peers are not at greater risk, although those who passively withdraw are at risk of depression.

While parents and selection of similar friends have an impact, there is definite evidence that peers do influence each other. So, what is it about the nature of young people's relationships that leads to good outcomes and what sort of good outcomes do peer relationships lead to?

Social support from friends buffers young people from adverse effects of divorce. Young people who are able to gather social support from peers tend to adjust to divorce more quickly than those who use avoidance or distraction to cope (Amato 2000). Other research suggests improving peer support for adolescents could also decrease emotional problems such as depression, suicidal thinking and suicide attempts (Garnefski and Diekstra 1996). Unfortunately, the latter study uses only a snapshot at one point in time, meaning that it is not clear what leads to what. Studies spanning several years are needed to check whether peer support does reduce the risk of emotional problems, or whether low peer support simply is a part of generally feeling unhappy.

There are indications that peers can influence young people to stay in sports or arts activities for which they have particular talent, or influence them to decrease their involvement, even to the point of quitting. Young people report that when they are getting access to social opportunities, fun and close friendships through sports or arts, they are more likely to stay involved. But when they feel that training and performing is interfering with their social life they may cut down hours, or move to a less demanding or more social activity. For example, in the United States, they may move from dance to cheerleading. In extreme cases they simply quit. These problems seemed to arise especially in individual pursuits and activities that took place outside school. Interestingly, those young people who reported getting a hard time from their peers (such as a musician being called an 'orch dork'), did not seem influenced to quit as long as they had a supportive group of peers who were equally involved in and passionate about, their area of interest (Patrick, Ryan, Alfold-Liro, Fredericks, Hruda and Eccles 1999).

These findings strongly suggest peers can influence motivation to develop talents, not so much by liking or rejection, but in terms of their presence or absence. The value put on contact with peers in adolescence means opportunities for social activities and close friendships are highly valuable and influence decisions about use of time. This research is limited in a number of ways, however. Firstly it is qualitative, meaning there may be factors that have not been taken into account, or interact in ways not able to be explored by this technique. Secondly, the group of young people interviewed is small and all are white, middle-class adolescents, meaning it is difficult to generalise findings to other groups.

Another study also failed to find that close friendship had any significant effects on life outcomes in young adulthood. This study spanning 12 years concluded that whether or not a young person had close friendships seemed to be more of a marker for poor outcomes scholastically, socially and emotionally than a cause. All the young people who had few or no friends at the start showed poor adjustment from the beginning of the study. The question here would appear to be 'Did friendship prove any kind of protective factor for young people with poor adjustment?' Unfortunately, this was not examined, but research covered in an earlier section showed young people from families with poor adaptibility did better when they gained a friend. A more promising approach than simply looking at outcomes for young people with friends versus no friends would be to look at outcomes for young people with poor adjustment who have or find friends versus those who do not.

The nature of close friendships amongst young people makes them potentially ideal places to learn cognitive skills such as communication, problem solving and creativity (Hartup 1996). When carrying out tasks together – such as writing essays or solving problems – friends tend to use talk, suggestions, support, criticism, mutuality, positive feelings, equal balance, task orientation, cooperation, altruism, and concern for equity more than non-friends do.

These qualities are theoretically ideal for facilitating cognitive development. Unfortunately, there has been limited research into whether close friendships aid cognitive development. In his review of the literature in this area, Hartup (1996) finds that in some cases friendship leads to better outcomes in cognitive tasks, but in others simply makes the process more socially interactive. Young people who worked with friends remembered more items in one task than those working with non-friends, although they had more and longer-lasting disagreements. Small groups of friends were efficient in obtaining more time with a scarce resource than non-friends, and also better at solving more difficult problems. Lastly, friends working together wrote more complex and creative stories than nonfriends. Overall, the characteristics of working with friends noted above seemed to enhance cognitive performance and development. Longer-term studies which look at the impact friends have on cognitive development over months or years would be helpful in this area.

It is not only the presence of friends but the quality of the friendship that seem important. High-quality friendships have been shown to ward off potential loneliness more than friendships that are not mutual – in other words, where only one person sees the relationship as a friendship (Bukowski, Hoza and Boivin 1993 in Newcomb and Bagwell 1996). Close friendships also have a protective quality, making it less likely a young person will see themselves as socially unacceptable after they have been rejected by their peers (Vernberg 1990 in Newcomb and Bagwell 1996).

There is some evidence peers help each other develop prosocial behaviour. In this context, prosocial can be defined as positive towards others, helpful, sociable, responsible, showing caring for others and empathy. Young people aged six to 13 years reported using social rules in their relationships that reflected themes of reciprocity (doing things for each other), sincerity, trust, helping, sensitivity and solving problems (Tesson, Lewko and Bigelow 1987 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998). The obvious question is whether they learnt these skills from each other, or were merely reflecting what they learnt at home and this is not made clear.

Other research revealed that young people aged six to 14 years felt differing motivations to be kind to adults as opposed to their peers. Kindness to adults was motivated by obedience and concerns with authority and tended to involve being compliant. In contrast, kindness to peers was motivated by concern for others and involved things like sharing, giving and understanding (Youniss 1980 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998). Younger children also tend to cry in empathy when they see peers crying more than when they see adults crying and act prosocially more often towards distressed children than adults (Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, Wagner and Chapman 1982 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998). This suggests that even if young people are reflecting skills they learnt at home, peer relationships are an important context for developing a prosocial orientation to others, including such skills as empathy and sympathy. It seems relationships with peers may offer opportunities for practising and refining skills that families do not.

Peers also act as role models for each other, although there is not much research on what impact this has on behaviour. In the laboratory setting, peers set off prosocial behaviour in each other, although some researchers have found this holds true for boys but not for girls (Ascione and Sanok 1991, Bryan and Walbek 1970 both in Damon and Eisenberg 1998). Another study found young people regularly rewarded the prosocial actions of others, such as empathy or sharing, by smiling, playing with or talking to the person, or saying thank you. It is not clear whether this leads to more prosocial behaviour or not (Eisenberg, Cameron, Tryan and Dodez 1981 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998).

Peer relationships also have an impact on psychological problems, both antisocial and delinquent behaviour – which are more likely in males – and depression, anxiety and other internalising disorders more often found in young women. One extended long-term study found that for adolescent males identified by a teacher as failing to get along with their peers, a number of poor outcomes were predicted in adulthood (Janes, Hesselbrock, Myers and Penniman 1979 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998). These included being fired, being in trouble with the law and being hospitalised for a psychiatric disorder. Neither aggressiveness nor shyness predicted any of these outcomes. It should be borne in mind that this does not mean that not getting on with others caused the problems. As with school problems, it is most likely the young people had characteristics that made them harder to like (such as aggressiveness) which put them at risk of becoming antisocial, and being rejected increased that risk.

Other longitudinal studies replicate this finding, showing time and time again that young people who were rejected by their peers were at higher risk of delinquency, as were young people seen as controversial by their peers (Damon and Eisenberg 1998). Young people who were rejected again tended to be aggressive, which increased their risk of rejection (Bierman and Wargo 1995, Kupersmidt and Coie 1990 both in Damon and Eisenberg 1998). When young people who have been rejected do make friends it can make their problems worse if the friends are also aggressive and rejected.

New Zealand research casts some light on these results. The Christchurch longitudinal study found children with significant problems in relating to other children were more likely to end up involved in crime and drug use in adolescence, although they were not more likely to be more anxious or depressed. However, the study suggests the latter behaviours were largely explained by problems experienced earlier by the child and the family. These included coming from a socially disadvantaged background, having a less emotionally responsive and more punitive mother and having early conduct problems, such as aggression, cruelty, stealing and lying. Of these, early conduct problems were the most influential. So, rejection by peers was a sympton of earlier problems, rather than a cause of those problems (Woodward and Fergusson 1999). There is still a possibility that rejection by peers does play a role in later offending but the researchers did not carry out analyses that would show this. The authors of the study suggested that if a young person was rejected by peers but did not have these early behavioural and family difficulties, they would be unlikely to get involved in crime later.

Interestingly, young people who were neglected by their peers (not popular but not rejected) did not show these kinds of poor outcomes. Clearly one does not need to be the most popular person in the class to do well, but must simply not act in such an unappealingly way as to be rejected. However, passive withdrawal is associated with later depression, loneliness, feelings of low self-worth and a negative view of one's social competence (Damon and Eisenberg 1998). The longer the rejection by peers goes one, the worse the resulting problems tend to be. Chronic rejection – for two consecutive years – results in even poorer outcomes (DeRosier et. al. 1994 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998).

New Zealand longitudinal research confirms the importance of peers in the development (or not) of antisocial behaviour. The Christchurch School of Medicine study found that while a good deal of risk of offending in adolescence was predicted by how well adjusted young people were in childhood, there was also significant peer influence (Fergusson and Horwood 1996). When young people had friends who reinforced and sustained their earlier tendencies towards lying, stealing and other bad behaviour, they were more likely to offend in adolescence. Conversely, the study also found that when young people turned out positively despite a high level of family adversity during childhood (such as low income, marital conflict and parental separation) they were much less likely to have mixed with friends involved in delinquent behaviour (Fergusson and Lynskey 1996). While they were protected by having a high IQ

and a low desire for novelty, these resilient young people were also less likely to misuse alcohol and drugs, offend and have problems at school simply because they did not mix with peers who were involved in these kinds of activities. Not having friends who are into dubious activities is in fact a protective factor for good outcomes.

Looking on the bright side, all of these findings suggest young people who have good social skills and are not aggressive will be less likely to experience poor life outcomes such as delinquency, depression and psychiatric hospitalisation. However, much of the research focuses on risk factors for poor outcomes, so it is difficult to find studies that confirm this reasonable hypothesis.

PEER RELATIONSHIPS AND SCHOOL OUTCOMES

Key points:

- Friendships with young people who like school, are motivated and are doing well tend to influence young people to become like them.
- Friends who relate negatively to one another (with fights or teasing) can become more disruptive at school.
- Being rejected by peers at school increases the risk of poor grades, being held back a year, truanting and dropping out.
- The risk becomes higher when a young person is also aggressive, has academic problems and mixes with similar peers who think school is neither useful nor important.
- Being neglected by peers does not increase the risk of poor outcomes.
- Being liked and accepted does enhance the overall likelihood of staying at school and doing well.

There is evidence friendships can have a positive impact on grades in school (Epstein 1983 in Newcomb and Bagwell 1996). At the end of one year, middle and high school students who had high-scoring friends tended to score better than they had at the beginning of the year. This was true whether they had started with low or high scores.

Looking at peer influence on school results, Ryan (2001) found that while students tended to congregate in groups with people who had similar attitudes and achievements to themselves, they were also influenced by their friends over the school year to increase or decrease their positive feelings about school and achievement. Almost half the changes in feelings about school were explained by peer influence rather than peer similarity and a massive 96 percent of changes in achievement was explained by the influence of friends. This finding replicated that of Kindermann (1993 in Ryan 2001) that young people's motivation toward school at the end of the year matched that of the peer group they were part of at the beginning of the year. This suggests one way for young people to do better at school is to choose friends who are serious about doing well themselves.

Ryan (2001) controlled for initial similarity of early adolescents in liking and enjoyment of school, achievement over the school year, beliefs about the importance of school and expectancies of success over the year. The study ran over the whole school year, allowing her to examine changes in peer groups from one end of the year to the next. The sex, ethnicity and stability of peer groups did not have any impact on results. Due to the longitudinal design and stringent analysis of data, this is a very reliable finding.

In the New Zealand setting, one study found that of 194 young people aged 10 to 18 in the West Coast region of the South Island, 81 percent saw education as very important, and 65 percent planned to go on to some kind of tertiary study. This suggests that they had very positive attitudes to education and would be a positive influence on each other (Hamilton 2001).

On the topic of the impact of close friendships on self-esteem and school adjustment, Berndt (1996) found the quality of friendships did not significantly affect either outcome over a six-month period. The exceptions to this trend were findings that friends who had more negative interactions with each other over the six months were more likely to show disruption in school by the end of the study. Berndt suggests this is explained by friends developing negative ways of relating to each other – for instance teasing, arguing and dominating – which then influence how they relate to teachers and other young people. The second finding was that more positive friendships were associated with a later decline in athletic competence, although, Berndt argued that this result was spurious. This study does not show support for any positive impact of friendship. Berndt suggests that this is partly because most of the things measured do not change much over six months and it might pay to focus on other variables that are more likely to change.

There seems to be a link between individual characteristics (such as being friendly or aggressive), being liked at school and doing well or missing school (Damon and Eisenberg 1998). Children and young people who act aggressively and are disruptive tend to be rejected by their peers and are seen as inconsiderate, noncompliant and prone to causing trouble in school. This in turn tends to lead to failing a grade, poor school adjustment, absenteeism and 'dropping out' (Coie, Lochman, Terry and Hyman 1992, DeRosier, Kupersmidt and Patterson 1994, Wentzel and Asher 1995 all in Damon and Eisenberg, 1998). There are also indications that young people who are aggressive or have academic difficulties are highly likely to drop out even when they are not rejected, particularly when they experience both. So the effects of peer rejection could be explained by factoring in aggression and academic performance. Alternatively, and more likely, the addition of each factor could increase the risk of poor outcomes. Hence aggression would create some risk, academic problems would increase that risk, and the addition of rejection would create an even greater risk of failing, skipping school and 'dropping out'.

Mixing with young people who think school is not useful or important is also linked with 'dropping out' (Hymel, Comfort, Schonert-Reichl and McDougall (1998 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998). So, while school outcomes are much better when young people are liked and accepted by their peers, being liked is linked to how young people behave towards their peers – whether they show fairness, friendliness and reciprocity, or aggression, bullying and teasing. Poor school outcomes are also linked to who one has as friends and how they feel about school. It could well be that having been rejected by their popular and successful peers, aggressive young people turn to other rejected classmates for friendships, who then negatively influence them to miss more school and drop out. Aggressive, disruptive behaviour in young people is linked to the kind of upbringing they have received, and the amount of warmth and firm limits they have experienced at home.

The implication of this research is that in order to keep young people in school and improve their academic achievements, it may be very helpful to coach them in how to become less aggressive and get on better with their peers. It may also be helpful to 'buddy' them with someone they can relate to who is motivated and doing well, and make sure they spend less time with aggressive, demotivated friends.

PEER SUPPORT BUFFERS AGAINST VICTIMISATION

Key points:

- Victimisation by peers is associated with negative outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and loneliness.
- There is some evidence young people with friends are much less likely to be victimised, especially where friendships have little conflict and betrayal.
- There is also evidence social support from classmates is associated with reduced harm to mental health when victimisation occurs, although parental support appears more significant.
- It is not currently clear whether victimisation causes poor outcomes, or whether other characteristics of young people make victimisation and poor outcomes more likely.
- It is not clear whether friendship buffers the effects of victimisation, or whether young people who are more likely to make friends are also less vulnerable to the effects of bullying for other reasons.

From research to date, it seems adolescents who are victimised by their peers are more likely to show signs of low self-esteem, depression, loneliness and anxiety. A number of studies show young people who have no friends are far more likely to be bullied, whether socially or physically (Boulton, Trueman, Chau, Whitehand and Amatya 1999).

In an Australian study, adolescent students were tested to find out whether having social support meant they were less likely to feel depressed, anxious and so forth when they were bullied. Modest support was found for this idea, with emotional support from family proving most important. However, young people who felt supported by their classmates seemed to cope with bullying with less distress, whether they were bullied occasionally or frequently (less than or more than once a week). Interestingly, while significantly more of the males were bullied than the females and females had more social support than the males, the young women seemed to be more hurt by the bullying. On a positive note, they also showed a better response to social support than the males (Rigby 2000).

Unfortunately, the 'snapshot' design of this study means bullying can not be shown to lead to distress, or friendship proven to reduce distress. It could be young people who are already depressed or anxious are more likely to be bullied, and that both having friends and coping better with bullying are due to some other factor, like good parenting, rather than friendship itself. Previous research cited by Rigby found bullying preceded psychological distress, which suggests a causal link. But more long-term research is needed, both on the effects of bullying and the impact of peer support programmes on bullying and psychological distress. These studies also need to rule out other possible influences, such as the quality of family life.

A study looking at whether changes in close friendship affected bullying levels over a six-month period found some interesting results. In common with previous studies, it found individuals who had mutual 'best friends' were less likely to be bullied than those who did not. Individuals who still had this friendship at the end of the study were the least likely to be bullied. Those who had lost their friend by the time the study ended were slightly more likely to be bullied. Contrary to intuition, those who started out friendless but found a mutual friend during the study were more likely to be bullied than the previous group who lost their friend. But the group most likely to be bullied was of young people who were unfortunate enough not to have a best friend at the start and end of the study (Boulton et. al. 1999). These results were equally true for males and females.

The quality of the friendships also seemed to make a difference. Both male and female friends who managed to experience less conflict and betray each other less often by the end of the six-month period were less likely to be victimised.

This is another tantalising study. It suggests very strongly that friendship is a buffer against bullying, but we cannot definitely conclude this. Some other factor, such as social skills, could be making it more likely both that young people make friends and that they are less likely to be bullied. Future studies looking at other factors and exploring whether these explain the relationship between friendship and bullying are needed before firm conclusions can be drawn.

Overall, it appears likely having friends helps young people cope with bullying and victimisation with less distress. However, finding out whether factors like social skills or aggression are involved in the equation will make it easier to know what to target in order to reduce bullying and whether friendship on its own is enough.

PEER INFLUENCE ON ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Key points:
- Friends seem to have more impact on the development of romantic relationships than parents, particularly opposite sex friends.
- The wider the network of friends of the opposite sex a young person has, the more likely they will get involved in a romantic relationship earlier.
- Young women with large networks of other-sex friends tend to have earlier, longer-lasting and more emotionally intimate relationships.
- Little research has been carried out on the impact of peers on same-sex romantic relationships and more is needed.

Romantic relationships appear to be an area where parents have less direct influence than friends (Connolly, Furman and Konarski 2000). Two long-term studies have documented the impact friends, particularly friends of the opposite sex, have on romantic relationships. The first study looked at young people at ages nine, 13 and 18, all white and middle class, which means findings cannot be generalised to other groups. The author found the more friends of the opposite sex a young woman had, the more likely she was to have longer relationships. In contrast, young men tended to have longer relationships when they knew fewer women. Both males and females with larger groups of opposite sex friends tended to start relationships earlier than those with smaller networks. But the number of friends of the same sex appeared to make no difference to romantic relationship trends. Young people who had large networks of friends of the opposite sex at 13 years were more likely to describe their later relationships in affiliative terms such as compatibility, self-disclosure, friendship, love, romance, reciprocity and trust and this was particularly so far young women (Feiring 1999).

The second study found that the number of people of the opposite sex that a young person knew was related to whether they had a relationship in the year in question, and predicted whether they would be in a relationship three years later (Connolly et. al. 2000). Once again, it found that the number of same-sex close friends a person had made no difference to romantic relationships. But having lots of same-sex friends did increase the odds of knowing more people of both the same and opposite sex. So, as might be expected, having friends seemed to lead to new social contacts. The new finding was that the quality of close friendships was related to the quality of romantic relationships. If a young person's

close friendships were marked by negative interactions, this tended to be true of their romances as well, both currently and three years later. If, on the other hand, they saw their friendships as supportive, that was the way current and future romantic relationships also tended to be seen. The analyses in the study showed friendships affected current romances, which then went on to affect later romances.

While it is clear peers have a definite influence on romance, it is open to debate whether this is a positive or negative influence, depending on one's views of early relationships. Longer lasting and more emotionally intimate relationships would probably be seen as a positive outcome by many people, compared to brief and casual encounters which may damage self-esteem and fail to build good relationship skills. But it could be argued that starting romantic relationships early is not necessarily the most desirable trend, given the potential for teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and the potential for the emotional demands of relationships to interfere with academic and vocational goals.

Having reviewed the potential positive impact of peers on a range of outcomes, we now move to look at what makes good peer relationships more, or less, likely.

WHAT HELPS AND HINDERS YOUNG PEOPLE IN BUILDING POSITIVE PEER RELATIONSHIPS?

Key points:
- Crucial skills for relating well to peers are learnt in both childhood and adolescence and will need to be taught later if they are not learned then.
- In childhood, communicating and resolving conflict enhance liking, as does prosocial behaviour – sharing, empathy, and fairness.
- Parents have an impact on how well their children get on with their peers through their parenting style, own peer relationships, coaching and supervision.
- In adolescence, self disclosure and problem solving are important skills for making friends.
- The single biggest factor that leads to children and young people being disliked and rejected is aggressiveness – bullying, hitting, hostility, nasty teasing.
- Antisocial behaviour, such as lying, stealing, not sharing, lack of empathy and remorse, also makes it difficult to make friends and be accepted.

What helps build positive peer relationships?
Clearly, getting on well with peers has the potential to be extremely helpful in a number of ways so it is timely to look briefly at what makes it more likely a young person will know how to relate well to their age mates. This section looks at the earlier years through to adolescence, because if young people have missed out on developing skills at this stage they will need to develop them later in order to relate well to others.

In preschool and primary school years, children are more likely to make friends if they are able to express their emotions and communicate clearly and relevantly, exchanging information with other children. Resolving conflict is also an important skill, as is establishing common ground and activities, such as the type of game they are going to play. In middle childhood, being respectful and nice to other children makes friendships more likely, as does knowing how to initiate interactions with other children. At this age, managing conflict remains important, as does exhibiting prosocial behaviours, such as honesty, generosity and helpfulness (Doyle and Markiewicz 1996).

Even at these young ages, providing social support to each other has an impact on friendship. On a less positive note, negative gossip enhances popularity, provided common ground has been established, although this is probably not a skill that most people would want to teach young children.

Parents have an impact on how well their offspring get on with others. Mothers who perceive their friends as sources of interesting ideas and activities are more likely to have children who participate in friendships in preadolescence (Doyle and Markiewicz 1996). In addition, when parents are well-informed about who their children are mixing with and what they are doing, children tend to have closer, more stable and less problem-ridden friendships (Krappman 1986 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998). Obviously this ties in with the beneficial effects of authoritative (nurturing) parenting styles overall.

Younger children are more popular when their parents coach them in how to deal with difficulties with their peers. Having parents supervise activities with peers and provide opportunities for children to mix socially are also correlated with positive peer relationships. Parents who use reasoning, talk about others' feelings and explain consequences of actions and who also praise and encourage their children are also likely to see their offspring make friends (Damon and Eisenberg 1998). This style of parenting is known as inductive discipline.

Once young people reach adolescence, self-disclosure becomes more important as individuals learn to tell others about themselves at a level appropriate to the closeness of their relationship. Problem solving also enhances friendship development in adolescence, as does the ability to explore differences and similarities with other people (Doyle and Markiewicz 1996).

What hinders the development of positive peer relationships?
Possibly the single most detrimental characteristic when it comes to forming friendships is aggressiveness, both verbal and physical. Many studies document that aggressive children and young people alienate their peers and find it very hard to make friends (Coie and Kupersmidt 1983 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998, Doyle and Markiewicz 1996, Wentzel and Asher 1995 in Damon and Eisenberg).

Aggressiveness tends to be associated with authoritarian parenting, which can be cold, rejecting, inconsistent and use physical punishment. Permissive or indulgent parenting is also associated with aggression in children (Damon and Eisenberg 1998). Children who were both rejected by their peers and aggressive were seen by peers and teachers as inconsiderate, non-compliant and prone to causing trouble in school (Wentzel and Asher 1995 in Damon and Eisenberg).

Being psychologically aggressive or indulging in social bullying (taunting, threatening, blackmailing, excluding others from activities) also decreases a young person's chances of making friends, for fairly obvious reasons. Lying puts other young people off, as does negative self-presentation (putting oneself down).

Antisocial behaviour, including fighting and lying, also makes friendships and popularity less likely. Low parental monitoring of where young people are and what they are doing, along with inconsistent, harsh punishment and discipline, also put young people at a disadvantage socially (Dishion 1990 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998). Once again, authoritarian (high control, low warmth) parenting leads to adverse outcomes compared with authoritative (nurturing) parenting (high, flexible control; high warmth). No research was found in this review that identified poor social skills as a factor hindering making friends. However, the fact that children and young people are more likely to be liked when they show good social skills such as empathy, sharing and fairness suggests that those who do not show these skills will be less likely to make friends and be accepted by the peer group.

DIFFERENT FOR YOUNG WOMEN AND FOR YOUNG MEN?

Key points:

- While there are some differences between the way young women and young men relate to peers, these do not appear to be significant.
- Young women may receive more negative feedback regarding their talents.
- Young women have more support from their friends than males by mid-adolescence and by late adolescence this support outstrips support from parents.
- Young women with large groups of friends at high school are more likely to have a romance, whereas young men with small groups of friends are more likely to do so.

There is very little research on whether the effects of peer relationships on young women differ from those on young men. A few of the studies reviewed here noted some different patterns for females and these are covered in this section, but no firm conclusions should be drawn from them. Much more research is needed before clear and definite differences can be stated with confidence.

In a qualitative study on involvement in areas of talent such as art or sport, Patrick et. al. (1999) found young women received more negative feedback about their continued involvement in their interests than young men. This significantly contributed to decreased involvement in areas of talent and quitting things they enjoyed and were good at, such as dance or playing an instrument.

With regard to peer support, females had more support from friends than males did in mid-adolescence (Helsen et. al. 1999). By late adolescence the support they received from peers exceeded that of parents, whereas it did not for males. The relationship between parental support and emotional problems was also stronger for males than females. In the laboratory setting, peer behaviour elicited prosocial responses such as sympathy or sharing from young men but not young women (Ascione and Sanok 1991 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998). Finally, in the area of romance, males with small groups of opposite sex friends are more likely to get involved in long-term, intimate romances than males with larger groups of opposite sex friends. In contrast, young women with larger groups of opposite sex friends are more likely to enter such relationships than those with fewer friends (Feiring 1999).

As can be seen from this small collection of findings, gender differences in peer relations are not a highly-studied phenomenon.

OVERALL KEY POINTS SUMMARY FOR PEER INFLUENCES

Key points summary:

- Young people have a variety of relationships with each other, often in the context of more than one small group of friends.
- While friendship becomes more important with age, parental support continues to matter into adulthood.
- Peers are considered more important by young people in some cultures and families than in others.
- Both parents and peers influence young people but parental influence affects who young people mix with and tends to last longer.
- The best outcomes occur when young people have positive relationships with both parents and peers, particularly authoritarian parents.
- Peer influence increases when parent influence is weak, particularly negative peer influence.
- Friendships can buffer the effects of low support from parents, but young people who are not being supported and monitored at home are particularly affected by breakdowns in friendships.
- Young people tend to mix with people who are similar to themselves, and also tend to become more like the people they mix with over time, whether for better or worse.
- Positive influences of peers include helping improve grades, softening the impact of divorce, enhancing cognitive skills, staying involved in areas of talents (for example, arts and sports) and reducing the emotional impact of bullying.
- Close friendships are important for preventing loneliness, aiding coping with rejection by other peers, and providing a place to practice prosocial behaviours (sharing, empathy, fairness).
- Being rejected by peers is associated with problems (for example, doing poorly at school) and the risk of poor outcomes later in life, but it is not clear to what extent it is a causal factor.
- Young people are more likely to be rejected and find it hard to make prosocial friends when they are aggressive, bullying, disruptive at school, lie, steal and do not show remorse and empathy or other social skills.
- Young people can be a positive influence on each other at school, helping to increase motivation to study and grades.
- Friends help the development of stable, emotionally-close romantic relationships more than parents, particularly large groups of opposite sex friends.
- Young people are more likely to be liked, accepted and make friends if they communicate and resolve conflict well, show empathy, sharing and fairness, disclose information about themselves appropriately and solve problems.
- Young women and young men show some differences in the way they relate to peers, but these are not major.

◊ School influences

THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE

Key points:

- Warm school climates help young people achieve good outcomes and cool climates make it harder to achieve and develop, particularly for vulnerable and high-risk young people.
- Positive teacher regard, caring and support for students is associated with better mental health, higher motivation to learn and better marks.
- Higher teacher expectations slightly but significantly increase student achievements, particularly for young people from poor, ethnic minority families or with weaker performance.
- An emphasis on individual effort and progress rather than competition and providing subjects meaningful to students lead to better motivation to learn and achievement.
- A combination of high standards for learning and behaviour, moderate classroom control and staff warmth lead to best results in school, just as they do in families, with less truancy and delinquency and better motivation and achievement.
- Young people who feel their teachers care about them are less likely to use alcohol and drugs, be involved in violence or be sexually active at a young age.

School climate refers to the way teachers relate to students and teach and the way students experience the school. In this context a warm climate is one that supports students across the school to develop to the best of their abilities. A cool climate is one where vulnerable students tend to underachieve or leave and even competent students experience emotional or motivational problems.

One of the key components of school climates is the way teachers relate to students. Students who perceive teachers as having a positive regard for them tend to show better mental health, higher motivation to learn and better academic achievements (Roeser, Eccles and Sameroff 2000). Not only this, but they are less likely to use alcohol and drugs, act violently, or start sex at a young age (McNeely, Nonnemaker and Blum 2002). This last finding is based on a survey of 83,000 U.S. students. However, the use of a survey at one point in time only poses the possibility that students who are experiencing problems have a different response to (or experience of) school, rather than those school factors increasing or reducing problems.

Students who see teachers as emotionally supportive also tend to be more motivated. In contrast, students who think they are being treated negatively by teachers on the basis of their gender or race tend to show worse mental health and lower academic motivation (Roeser et. al. 2000). The students in this study with the most positive adjustment saw teachers as having caring relationships with them, while the multi-problem group saw themselves as mistreated on the basis of race and gender and felt they had the least emotional support and lowest regard from teachers. Young people at risk of poor outcomes benefit, especially from a school where teachers are engaged with them (Bryk and Thum 1989 in Manlove 1998). While it could be that teachers responded differently to well adjusted as opposed to

multi-problem young people, it could also be that treatment by teachers enhanced existing strengths or worsened existing problems.

Students at a New Zealand school who were judged to be medium to high-risk of poor outcomes provide some insight into this. They attended a programme run by youth workers who they related to very positively. When asked what they liked about the tutors, many noted that it was that they were different from teachers. Specifically, the youth workers listened to them and tried to help. In contrast, the teachers appeared to them to think the worst right away and simply yell at them. The young people in the programme noted 'feeling listened to' as very important (Martin 1998).

The researcher in this study suggested that in fact the young people might be interpreting attempts by the teacher to sort a situation out as a direct attack on them. But the fact remains that these vulnerable young people did not feel listened to or cared for by the education staff. Once involved with the youth workers, who they felt were prepared to help them, they reported that they were turning up to school more often because they now had something to look forward to. While changes in school attendance were not assessed rigorously, teaching staff reported a similar perception that these students were now turning up at class more often.

These results do not settle the question of whether caring teachers lead to better outcomes for students, or whether students who are having problems simply perceive teachers as less caring (possibly because their main interactions with them are over rule-breaking) than students who are coping well do. More research is needed to clarify this relationship.

Teacher expectations also matter. When teachers expect more of students, they learn more. When teachers expect less, they get just that. Less successful or able students are particularly vulnerable to the impact of teacher expectations, doing much better when teachers expect more and worse when teachers expect little of them (Madon, Jussim and Eccles 1997 in Steinberg 2000). There are some suggestions in research that teachers' expectations are influenced by the ethnicity and family income of a particular student, with young people from poorer families not of the dominant culture more likely to meet with low expectations (Good and Brophy 1984 in Steinberg 2000). Looking at the influence of teacher expectations on student performance over an eighteen-month period, researchers Jussim and Eccles (1992 in Steinberg) found a cyclic relationship. Teacher expectations reflected actual performance at an earlier point, but also influenced how much the student's performance changed over the year. About 80 percent of the connection between teacher expectations and performance was related to teacher's accurate perceptions of performance and about 20 percent to the effect of teacher's expectations. As noted earlier, weaker students tended to be more affected by teacher's expectations. Over the years of compulsory schooling, low expectations could make a huge dent in confidence and performance for less confident or able students, who are more likely to come from poor families and ethnic minority groups (Steinberg 2000).

Other aspects of climate looked at by Roeser, Eccles and Sameroff (2000) were an emphasis on mastery and effort, which was associated with higher motivation to learn and meaningful curricula. That was further linked not only with higher motivation but also with better achievement. Overall, positively-adjusted students said they saw their schools as not comparing one student with another, as non-competitive and focused on encouraging improvement and mastery of topics. They also saw their schools as encouraging them to think for themselves and become their own person and offering work they found personally meaningful. In complete contrast, multi-problem students – those with lowest achievement and worst mental health problems who put the lowest value on school – perceived their schools as

unsupportive, competitive, emphasising relative ability in students, disrespectful of gender and race and offering few opportunities for meaningful work or becoming one's own person. The authors concluded that this research suggests when schools meet students' needs, successful development is enhanced.

Reviewing several studies, Steinberg (2000) concluded that the climate that brings out the best in students is one with warmth, high standards and moderate control. These are exactly the same qualities that lead to good outcomes in the home, which makes perfect sense. Both students and teachers are apparently more satisfied in classrooms that are innovative rather than focused on controlling students. Moderate degrees of structure in the classroom along with high student involvement and high teacher support – where student participation is encouraged but kept under control – also seem to provide a climate for optimum growth. Young people at risk of poor outcomes appear to benefit particularly from schools that emphasise academic involvement (Bryk and Thum 1989 in Manlove 1998). But too much emphasis on completing tasks, particularly with strict teacher control, lead to higher levels of anxiety, disinterest and unhappiness (Moos 1978 in Steinberg 2000). More recent research found that in schools with tolerant discipline practices, where students who break rules for the first time are not immediately expelled or suspended unless the infraction is extremely serious, students feel more connected to the school (McNeely et. al. 2002). In contrast, students in schools where first infractions result in being permanently or temporarily removed from the school under a wide range of rules feel less connected to their schools.

Teachers who focus primarily on lessons, rather than setting up equipment or dealing with discipline problems, begin and end on time, give clear feedback about their expectations and student performance and praise good performance get the best out of their students (Rutter 1983 in Steinberg 2000). Steinberg points out that good teachers are much like good parents in this respect. They are supportive but firm and expect clearly defined standards of behaviour and academic work. In turn, their students tend to have stronger connections to their schools, are more motivated to achieve and experience fewer problems such as skipping classes and delinquency (Roeser, Midgley and Urdan 1996 in Steinberg 2000). To put the cherry on the cake, they also score better on achievement tests. So, just as authoritative (nurturing) parents are associated with good outcomes for young people, so are authoritative (nurturing) teachers. This suggests the environment in which young people thrive stays fairly stable across home and school, with young people's developmental needs being similar in each place.

New Zealand research on the importance of school climate was not located in the literature search for this review.

HOW SCHOOL STRUCTURE CAN LEAD TO BETTER OUTCOMES

Key points:
- Schools (less than 1000 pupils) are associated with better involvement and performance, both academically and in extracurricular activities.
- Students tend to feel more connected to smaller rather than larger schools.
- This is particularly true for young people at high risk of 'dropping out' and becoming involved in crime.
- Separating students into different classes by ability ('streaming' or 'tracking') is associated with better results for higher streams and worse results for lower streams who most need the help.
- The same applies to separating groups in classrooms according to ability.

- Mainstreaming young people in classes of mixed ability appears the best policy for good results for all young people, with individual plans for improvement.
- Parochial (church) and independent schools seem to result in better school outcomes for the young people who attend them, and lower rates of teen pregnancy.
- Single-sex schools, both private and public, are also associated with better academic outcomes for both sexes, and less unemployment.

School structure includes factors such as school size, class size, streaming of students into different classes by ability and public versus private schools. There is evidence that these aspects of schools can make a positive difference.

School size

Most people talk about the importance of small classes in schools, but in fact the evidence suggests class size is not as much of an issue as school size (McNeely, Nonnemaker and Blum 2002, Mosteller, Light and Sachs 1996 in Steinberg 2000). Classes from 20 to 40 in size seem to result in equally good learning, with the exception of remedial education classes that benefit from being smaller. But overall school size makes a big difference. While larger schools can offer a greater variety of subjects and extracurricular activities like sports and clubs, students in smaller schools are twice as likely to participate in the extra activities. Large, in this context, is over 1000 students, while small is 500 to 1000 students. Students in small schools are more likely to report doing things that aid the development of their skills and abilities. They are also more likely to work closely with others and say they feel needed and important. In small schools, students also get more chances for leadership and responsibility and more often get involved in activities that make them feel confident and diligent (Barker and Gump 1964 in Steinberg 2000).

In addition, students in smaller schools are more likely to say they feel connected to the school than those in larger schools (McNeely et. al. 2002). The authors suggest this is because larger schools become more bureaucratic, so that connections between people in the school become less personal. They also suggest that, in larger schools, students have less opportunity to take part in extracurricular activities. Lastly, larger schools tend to have larger classes which makes it more difficult for students to have a personal connection with their teacher.

This is particularly true for weaker students, who tend to feel like outsiders in big schools but in smaller schools feel a sense of involvement and obligation to the school equal to that of stronger students (Barker and Gump 1964, Lee and Smith 1995 both in Steinberg 2000). Given that research on extracurricular involvement shows this is particularly useful in keeping at school young people who are at risk of dropping out, the value of keeping schools small seems great indeed (Mahoney 2000).

When schools are less bureaucratic and create a sense of community that binds staff and students together, both student performance and interest take a leap upwards (Lee and Smith 1995, McNeely et. al. 2002, Roeser Midgley and Urdan 1996 both in Steinberg 2000).

Streaming by ability

Known in the United States as 'tracking' and in New Zealand as 'streaming', this is the practice of separating students into different classes based on their ability. One downside of streaming is that students who are less successful and probably less motivated, study and socialise with each other (Rosenbaum 1976 in Steinberg 2000). As we saw in the peers section, being friends with other students who place a low value on school and are not doing well tends to have a bad effect on grades and motivation over time.

While in the United States, placement in different streams is based on ability more than background (for example, income or ethnicity) middle-class children are more often moved up a stream than poorer children. This is often because of parental 'lobbying' (Alexander and Cook 1982, Dauber, Alexander and Entwisle 1996, Wells and Serna 1996 all in Steinberg 2000).

What streaming does tend to mean is that the young people who need the most help to succeed – and who are at highest risk of 'dropping out', teen pregnancy and antisocial behaviour – get the poorest quality teaching (Gamoran 1993, Hallinan 1994 both in Steinberg 2000). While this does not happen in every school, lower-streamed young people frequently fall even further behind, missing out on opportunities as they do.

Young people in the higher streams tend to learn more, have more options for future learning and enjoy more challenging instruction and better teaching. They get more classroom activities that involve higher order thinking, such as class discussions rather than rote learning (Gamoran and More 1989, Lee and Bryk 1989, Stevenson, Schiller and Schneider 1994 all in Steinberg 2000). However, streaming has a negative effect on the achievement of young people in the lower stream (Fuligni, Eccles and Barber 1995 in Steinberg 2000). Even grouping students by ability within the class lowers the expectations of teachers for the weaker students, who look worse in comparison with the stronger ones and so get lower grades (Reuman 1989 cited in Steinberg 2000). In addition, when gifted students are integrated into regular classrooms, they have more positive academic perceptions of themselves than those in specialist classes (Marsh et. al. 1995 in Steinberg 2000).

Overall, it appears streaming benefits stronger students but not the weaker ones. Mainstreaming all young people appears to be a strategy that can help all students achieve their potential, both through positive peer influence and high-quality teaching.

Type of school

The last aspect of school structure to be considered is that of type of school, whether single-sex, private or public. With regard to single-sex schools, Cairns (1990) found the more academic schools were associated with higher academic self-esteem and more of a sense of being in personal control (internal locus of control) than the less academic ones. He found no gender effects and analysis revealed his results were unlikely to be due to the effects of income.

A New Zealand study found similar results. Young people of both sexes who attended single-sex New Zealand schools experienced greater success in School Certificate, stayed more years at school and were less likely to be unemployed after leaving (Woodward, Fergusson and Horward 1999). Even when pre-entry differences in academic, behavioural, social and family functioning were taken into account, these differences persisted. The authors suggested that the better outcomes might be due to school climate and traditions, or to error.

There is some evidence that private schools, particularly Catholic schools, have better results for young people than public ones, with higher performance and less chance of dropping out (Lee and Bryk 1988, Mayer 1991 both in Manlove 1998). This appears to be because they have more resources and steer all students – including weaker students – into academic rather than vocational subjects (Gamoran 1996 in Steinberg). Female students also showed lower likelihood of teen pregnancy at these schools (Manlove 1998). Other researchers have suggested that at Catholic schools, there are close relationships and shared values between parents and teachers, meaning that young people have more contact and receive similar messages at home and at school (Entwisle 1990). Private schools have also been found to be more orderly and disciplined and to assign more homework (Coleman, Hoffer and Kilgore 1982 in Steinberg 2000).

COPING POSITIVELY WITH TRANSITIONS FROM ONE SCHOOL TO ANOTHER

Key points:

- Moving from junior to senior schools (whether intermediate or secondary) is associated with risk of decreased grades, motivation, attendance and well-being in the United States, especially for young people from poor, ethnic minority families.
- Losses appear worse with early and multiple transitions (for example, from primary to intermediate to secondary). This is possibly because these coincide with the start of puberty for girls and/or less responsive teachers and more rigid, anonymous cultures in senior schools.
- Teaching style and school organisation in United States secondary schools is related to the drop in achievement, with less emphasis on meeting developmental needs than in primary schools and more emphasis on competition and public evaluation of success.
- Some factors protect young people from the full effect of transitions, including: personal autonomy; academic confidence; parental support and involvement; teacher support and positive regard for students; emphasis on individual effort and improvement rather than competition; smaller, more personal and less rigid schools; and changing schools later in adolescence.

United States research shows academic performance, motivation to achieve, confidence, positive attitudes to school and well-being decrease with the transition from primary school to intermediate at age 11 and intermediate to secondary school at age 13 (Gutman and Midgley 2000, Isakson and Jarvis 1998, Roeser and Eccles 1998, Steinberg 2000). This is true for young people from all ethnic groups and both low- and middle-income families. Although, it appears young people from poor, high-risk, ethnic minority families are at highest risk after transitions (Gutman and Midgley 2000).

A number of factors have been suggested to account for this down-turn. One is the change in teaching style that goes with the move up the school ladder. Secondary school teachers are more performance-oriented in their teaching style and in the way they evaluate students. This emphasis on marks undermines many students' motivation and self-confidence that in turn affects their performance (Steinberg 2000). Even in intermediate, there is a move to requiring the whole class to participate in a task rather than giving individual tasks and to publicly evaluating performance which most likely increases the emphasis on academic ability and social comparison (Gutman and Midgley 2000). Older students also tend to believe that intelligence is stable and does not change over time, which may in turn affect their motivation and performance (Steinberg 2000). In middle school, or intermediate, there is less emotional support from teachers and less contact between teachers and students than in primary school. There is also less contact among students. This may affect identification with teachers and connection to the school, which may particularly affect minority students who have less access to positive adult role models and mentoring (Gutman and Midgley 2000).

Multiple transitions (from primary to intermediate to secondary) have also been found to be more harmful than single transitions (from primary to secondary) (Simmons and Blyth 1987 in Steinberg 2000). This is particularly true for girls, who suffer drops in self-esteem at each change of school. Young women who have had only a single transition are twice as involved in extracurricular activities at age 13 than those who have had several transitions. At age 15 involvement is three times higher. Suggested reasons for this are that change is harder to cope with earlier in adolescence and that the earlier transition occurs at the same time as puberty in young women, creating a double stress (Simmons and Blyth 1987 in Steinberg 2000).

An alternative explanation for poor outcomes in the multiple system emphasises the change in teaching style discussed above. Research shows that compared with primary schools, teachers in intermediate schools in the United States (middle school or junior high) are less likely to trust their students and more likely to emphasise control and discipline. They also tend to believe that students cannot increase their abilities through school, but are stuck with what they have (Midgley, Berman and Hicks 1995 in Steinberg 2000). The authors of this research make the point that reductions in self-esteem are likely given the dramatic change from primary school teaching style and the lack of provision for the developmental needs of young adolescents in the secondary school system.

The reasons for different teacher attitudes and teaching styles at intermediate and secondary schools in the United States are not completely clear. They may relate to popular negative stereotypes of adolescents that focus on their potential to fall into bad behaviour and overlook their developmental needs, or it may be that teachers are affected by the way these schools are organised and their anonymous nature (Midgley, Feldlaufer and Eccles 1988 in Steinberg 2000).

Some factors appear to lessen the impact of this transition. In one study, support from parents, as perceived by adolescents, predicted a higher sense of school membership some months after the transition. The ability of parents to be supportive was in turn affected by the amount of stress they were under, with less stressed parents able to give more support. Autonomy in young people before the transition also predicted better grades a year later (Isakson and Jarvis 1998).

The way teachers respond to students and the way the classrooms are organised, also predicted better or worse adjustment in another longitudinal study over two years. In this the reactions of United States students aged 12 to 14 years were studied as they moved from primary school to intermediate (United States elementary to middle school). Students showed better adjustment to the change in school if they felt that teachers saw them positively and there was an emphasis in the classroom on individual effort and improvement. Specifically, when these factors were present, students showed an increase in the value they placed on school, feelings of academic accomplishment, self-esteem and academic achievement. They also showed a decrease in symptoms of depression and anger, as well as decreased truancy (Roeser and Eccles 1998).

In contrast, when students perceived the school as placing an emphasis on competition and teachers as treating students differently depending on their level of ability, adjustment was worse. The value placed on school and studying tended to decrease, as did self-esteem and academic achievement. Increases in truancy, anger and symptoms of depression were also associated with perceived competitiveness and differential treatment (Roeser and Eccles 1998). The longitudinal nature of both these studies suggest (but do not confirm) something of a causal relationship between individual factors such as autonomy, family factors such as stress and support and school factors such as teacher attitudes and teaching style on the one hand and student outcomes on the other.

Other research has revealed that young people who move to more personal, less departmentalised schools do better than peers in rigid and more anonymous schools (Lee and Smith in Steinberg 2000). Changing schools has also been found easier for young people who go to small rather than large schools (Russell, Elder and Conger 1997 in Steinberg 2000). Moving schools later rather than earlier reduces stress and having close friends before and during transition helps successful adaptation (Berndt 1987, Simmons and Blyth 1987 both in Steinberg). The study by Isakson and Jarvis (1998) found that support from friends was actually associated with lower grades, so there is some contradictory evidence here.

As mentioned, students from poor, ethnic minority families face even more of a challenge in moving schools and tend to have even worse adjustment than young people from the dominant culture or adequate income families (Munsch and Wampler 1993, Seidman et. al. 1994 and 1996 all in Steinberg 2000). There is evidence, however, that some factors protect young people from such backgrounds from the full impact of transition to a less supportive school environment. First, students who have high confidence in their ability to perform academically tended to show higher marks across the transition year than those who did not. Secondly, students who had high levels of parent involvement in their schooling as well as teacher support, or a sense of belonging to school, had higher marks across the transition year. These findings were controlled for prior marks (Gutman and Midgley 2000 in Steinberg 2000). Parent involvement was defined both as at school – for instance working as class volunteer or parent support on trips – and at home in terms of helping with homework or asking how school was going. Teacher support referred to how supported and respected by their teachers students felt – for instance whether they could ask for help or were criticised. School belonging refers to how personally accepted, respected, included and supported at school students felt, including whether they felt a part of the school or wished they were at a different school.

The big question here is whether the findings from United States classrooms can readily be applied to New Zealand classrooms. The situation here with regard to multiple versus single transitions is similar in that there are intermediate schools in some areas. Also, the culture of secondary schools is similar, with an emphasis on performance, competition, public evaluation, larger schools, anonymity, different teacher attitudes to students with more emphasis on rule enforcement and lack of attention to developmental needs. Superficially, it appears that New Zealand is similar enough that many of the United States findings could apply here and that secondary school culture in this country could be failing to lead to positive development for significant numbers of pupils, particularly ethnic minority and/or lower income students.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEISURE AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Key points:

- Korean young people who studied long hours and did not enjoy it and who were not very involved in leisure, were more likely to feel depressed than American young people, who studied less and relaxed more.
- Those young people who enjoyed study or were more involved in active leisure were less likely to be depressed.
- Young people were less likely to drop out of school and get arrested if they were involved in extracurricular activities (sport, clubs, hobbies) at school over one to two years.
- The positive effects were even greater when half or more of their friends and associates were also involved.

Is having fun beneficial? Does 'goofing off' help bring about positive developmental outcomes? Given the importance of school success for career options and income, not to mention personal well-being, it might be that time outside school that is not spent studying or doing chores is wasted.

A cross-cultural study suggests very strongly that this is not the case. Korean senior students aged 17 to 18 (roughly the equivalent of New Zealand seventh formers) were found to spend far more time in study, both at home and school, than similar United States students in the same age group. In random reports

of time use, Korean students were studying for 43 percent of the random reports, whereas American students were studying for only 23 percent. For Koreans, this translated into more than twice as much time in study – 7.7 hours per day compared with 3.7 hours per day in the United States. The American students were regular party animals in contrast, spending three times as many hours as Koreans socialising and almost twice as much time in passive and active leisure (Lee and Larson 2000). The Korean students also experienced less positive emotion and more negative feelings than the American students when they studied. Even during socialising and passive leisure (such as TV watching) their mood was not as good as their United States counterparts. Only when involved in active leisure (such as sports) did the Korean students reach the level of positive feeling that United States students did, very likely due to being absorbed in the experience.

The Korean students also showed significantly higher levels of depressive symptoms than the United States students. While this does not prove long hours of studying caused the depression, it seems likely that there is some connection. The amount of time spent studying related to depression only when young people felt bad while doing homework. For those who felt good during homework, depression did not seem to be a problem. The adolescents who spent more time in active leisure were also less likely to be depressed, which fits with other findings that active leisure (particularly sports) is associated with better mental health (Haworth and Hill 1992 in Lee and Larson 2000). Taking all this together, it is likely that the thoughts associated with studying (possibly anxiety about marks) might lead to low mood. Although, it is highly likely that having fewer chances to go out and have fun and a simple lack of variety contribute to feeling blue.

In the New Zealand context, young people in the West Coast region of the South Island listed their most common extracurricular activities as sports and exercise – very active pursuits. The next most common were 'hanging out' with friends, watching TV and videos, using the computer and listening to music, all far more passive activities. Very few young people in this sample of 194 appeared to be involved in extracurricular activities such as youth groups and performance arts (Hamilton 2001) The favourite local activities were listed as the skate park, Smokefree Rockquest, live bands and sports, although the last was significantly less popular than the first three interests.

In the United States, a long-term study that followed young people from childhood to the end of high school found that participating in activities at school outside the study day had a positive impact, particularly for young men and women at high-risk of problems. The activities ranged across sports, singing, clubs, dance and bands, amongst others. Young people who showed higher levels of risk for leaving school and committing crimes were less likely to drop out of school early and be arrested for a crime if they participated in extracurricular activities over one or more years. Indications of higher risk were being rated higher on aggression and below average on academic competence, popularity and family income. Positive effects were even greater when at least 50 percent of friends and associates also participated in extracurricular activities (Mahoney 2000).

It is likely that by mixing with young people who have prosocial values and behaviour in clubs and other activities, young people who tend towards bad behaviour are influenced in a positive way. When friends who are also tending towards antisocial behaviour are involved as well, they are also likely to be positively influenced by the larger peer group. In this way, what were negative peer influences are transformed into positive peer influences. In addition, involvement in positive activities after school means less free time hanging round thinking up and 'getting into mischief', particularly for young people who are not well supervised at home in their free time.

Another United States study found that at schools where more students took part in extracurricular activities, young people were more likely to feel connected to the school. In contrast, those at schools where fewer people took part in activities outside school felt less involved with their school (McNeely et. al. 2002). The authors suggest that this is because extracurricular activities provide support and supervision from prosocial adults, positive peer relationships and opportunities to develop and show competence in different activities.

These three studies suggest that leisure activities play a very important role in helping reduce the risk of depression, dropping out of high school and delinquency. For both prosocial and mildly antisocial young people, being actively involved in pursuing hobbies, interests and leisure pursuits seems to act as a protective factor against problems.

WHY MONEY CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO HOW WELL YOUNG PEOPLE DO AT SCHOOL

Key points:

- Young people whose parents have moderate to high income are far more likely to finish high school and go to university than those with a low family income.
- This is because they experience less stress that would interfere with their schooling and because their parents are likely to be less stressed and more involved with their education.
- For young women from low-income families, believing they have some control over what happens in their life increases the chances of staying in school.
- For young men from poor families, having their parents take an interest in what they are doing in school and their plans protects them from dropping out and giving up on their dreams.
- Aside from this, little is known about why some young people from low-income families manage to succeed at school and more research into this is needed.

One of the most well-documented predictors of young people leaving school without qualifications and failing to achieve their educational dreams is that their families do not have much money (Fetherman 1980, Hanson 1994, Lucan 1996, Sewell and Hauser 1972 all in Steinberg 2000). Young people from middle-class homes score higher on achievement tests, get better grades and complete more schooling than those from lower-class and working-class families. Those young people whose parents have had tertiary education are more likely to do so themselves. Even if their parents have simply graduated from high school, young people are more likely to attend tertiary institutions such as university or polytechnic.

This in turn has an impact on their income as adults (Newmann 1998). Fred Newmann calculated that someone who leaves high school without qualifications will earn over their working lives $212,000 less than someone who graduated from high school, $384,000 less than a person with some tertiary education, $812,000 less than someone who graduated from a tertiary institution and a massive $2,404,000 less than someone with a professional degree.

Higher income leads to access to better accommodation, a safer neighbourhood and social opportunities (Newmann 1998). All of these are more likely to give young people a better start in life. Whereas the type of accommodation (crowded, temporary) and neighbourhoods (crime-ridden and violent) that families with a low income can afford are all associated with higher risk for dropping out of school and other poor outcomes. And so the cycle perpetuates.

Even when young people have plans to do a degree and a grade average above the median for reading and maths, those who fail to go on to university are more likely to be from poorer families rather than middle-class backgrounds (Trusty and Harris 1999). This is particularly true for young men and white American. For young women, believing that they can influence what happens in their life (internal locus of control) makes it more likely they will continue with their education. For young men, having parents who take an interest in what happens at schools and in their educational plans and attend extracurricular events at school increases the likelihood they will go ahead with their tertiary study plans. For young men from low-income homes, having parents take an interest in their education was particularly important, whereas for those from higher income homes, having parents attend extracurricular events at school was important.

But how exactly does family income affect eduction? The first reason is that children from lower income families tend to score lower on academic accomplishment when they first enter school, both because of genetic inheritance and environment. This disadvantage puts them behind and means they may enter high school without core academic skills that will enable them to succeed. Better health care and nutrition, among other things, make it more likely that children in higher income families will start school with an advantage that persists and accumulates throughout their school career (Chen, Lee and Stevenson 1996, Featherman 1980, Teachman 1996 all in Steinberg 2000).

A second reason is that low-income parents may be less likely to be involved in their child's education, whether because of lack of time due to long work hours, lack of interest (in neglectful families), or because they simply do not realise it is important that they take an interest. They may also place low value on education. As we have seen in an earlier section, involvement by parents in the child's education enhances the likelihood of achievement at school.

The third reason is the one that has found the most support. It is that low income increases the stress levels experienced by young people during adolescence, such as stressful life events (like the death of a friend), daily hassles, high-risk neighbourhoods and schools with a negative climate (DuBois et. al. 1994, Feher et. al. 1998, Fungello et. al. 1996 all in Steinberg 2000). Stress statistically explains why low income leads to poor educational outcomes with the exception of reading. Young people with low family incomes experience more stress which in turn leads to failure at school. United States research on Mexican American young people found they regularly experienced relatively rare events such as worrying about being mugged or shot, parents' unemployment, family finances, being put in jail or being suspended. Many also work while at school to help with family finances (Gillock and Reyes 1999). As discussed, low family income means more chance of living in high-risk, high-crime neighbourhoods where drug running, use of guns, gangs, violence and unemployment are common, which in turn greatly increases the opportunities for stress.

But class is not destiny. Not every young person from a well-off background makes it through university and not everyone from a poor background drops out. A key question that is yet to be answered is why some young people from disadvantaged backgrounds actually make it through all the barriers that their background puts up to do well academically. One suggestion is they have better social support from parents who take an interest in their education and peers who value education and work hard to achieve. But the study of poor Mexican American young people found that the stresses and hassles they experienced were so great that even the presence of caring support from loyal family and friends was not enough to offset the effect of stress on education (Gillock and Reyes 1999). More investigation is needed on how some disadvantaged young people manage to make it through all the barriers.

MOVING ON TO TERTIARY EDUCATION

Key points:

- Young people have the potential to earn a lot more over their working life if they attend tertiary education.
- Young women are more likely to attend if they believe their actions will really make a difference to how their life turns out.
- Young men are more likely to go on to further study if their parents take an interest in their education, particularly in low-income families and if their parents attend extracurricular events at school (for example, school trips, sports days).
- Young men are likely to adapt better to university if their parents have a relationship of equals with them, with mutual respect and open communication.
- Young men are also likely to adapt better if they are less stressed and depressed in their first year and have a strong sense of identity.
- Young women are likely to adapt better to university if they can discuss issues at university with their parents.
- Young women also adapt better if they are less depressed and stressed and have good self-esteem.

As is clear from the preceding section, the longer young people stay in education, the more they are likely to earn when they enter the workforce. This trend has increased in recent years in the United States where 'real' earnings for young adult men dropped from 1973 to 1986 by six percent for college graduates and more than 28 percent for high school graduates. For those who did not finish high school, earnings fell by a mammoth 42 percent (William T. Grant Foundation 1988 in Steinberg 2000). In one New Zealand study, 65 percent of 194 young people surveyed said they were planning to go on to tertiary study of some type (Hamilton 2001).

Whether or not a young woman goes on to study after secondary school depends in part on how much influence they believe their own actions can have on how well their lives will turn out. Whether a young man is likely to do so is influenced by how much interest his parents take in his education, both day-to-day and long-term. This is particularly so for young men from poorer families. For young men from more affluent families, both parents' interest and participation in extracurricular events at school (for example involvement in school trips) is also important in keeping them to their study plans (Trusty and Harris 1999).

Once young people are involved in tertiary study, parental interest remains important. First-year male university students in Canada adapted better to university when they had relationships with their parents where they saw each other as equals, respected each other's point of view and were involved in open communication on a regular basis. Female students who discussed their concerns about study with their parents also adapted better. Adaptation included coping academically, socially and emotionally and being committed to their goals. (Wintre and Yaffe 2000). Parent support was significant but only played a small part in predicting adaptation. For young men, lower levels of initial stress, fewer changes in stress levels, a strong sense of identity and less depression all helped them to adapt and succeed. For young women, lower depression, both when starting university and over the year, lower stress to start with and good self-esteem also helped predict how well they adapted to this new educational experience.

CROSS-CULTURAL PATTERNS

Key points:

- Even when low income (which is more likely for ethnic minority families) is taken into account, ethnicity has an impact on how well young people do at school.
- Some studies that appear to show that certain ethnicities are associated with poor outcomes in fact actually show the link between low income, stress and poor results at school.
- Ethnic minority youth may do better in culturally diverse schools where they are not the minority, in terms of finishing school and earning more.
- Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds – more frequent for ethnic minority groups – may gain more in cognitive development from attending school than those from the dominant culture.
- Doing well in school appears influenced in part by having good physical health, particularly in poor countries and attending three years or more of primary school.
- Other than this, it appears that beliefs and values associated with particular cultures have an impact on school performance.
- Young people appear to do better at school when the culture they grow up in teaches them education is valuable, that they can increase their ability by practising and that making an effort will lead to greater success – in short, they have some personal control over how well they do.
- Attending schools that treat young people of different ethnicities fairly and do not show discrimination also appear to increase the likelihood of good outcomes.

Are patterns of achievement different for young people from different cultures? Little research on New Zealand young people was found in the literature search, so cultures from other countries are examined. While the impact of ethnicity is strongly mixed up with the impact of family income, there is evidence ethnicity makes some difference to school outcomes, even once low income is taken into account (Steinberg 2000, Trusty and Harris 1999).

In the United States, African American and Hispanic American lag behind white Americans in achievement, but all are trailing young Asian Americans, particularly those who recently immigrated. This is true even once family income has been taken into account (Steinberg 2000). Even when grades are declining with the transition from primary to intermediate school, young Asian American students' grades get better (Fuligni 1994 in Steinberg 2000).

The reasons for these differences are not completely known but it appears beliefs about education and ability may enter into it. There is some evidence adolescents who believe they have been discriminated against or prevented from achieving their potential by society achieve less in school than those who do not hold such views (Wood and Clay 1996 in Steinberg 2000). Other research has shown African Americans tend to see themselves as less able to act to make a difference to how their lives turn out than other people in the United States (Gurin, Gurin and Morrison 1978). People from Asian cultures tend to emphasise effort over ability as contributing to success and often believe all students have the potential to succeed. There is also evidence students who believe they can increase their ability through effort tend to be more motivated and successful (Hess, Chih-Mei and McDevitt 1987, Holloway 1988, Stevenson and Stigler 1992 all in Steinberg 2000). Young women who believe they have some control over their destinies are more likely to go on to tertiary study than those who do not (Trusty and Harris 1999). So,

differences in achievement may be related to beliefs about the value and the affect that has on the amount of effort put in. Asian and Asian American students spend more time than other students studying, which will increase their chances of doing well (Caplan, Choy and Whitmore 1992 in Steinberg 2000, Lee and Larson 2000).

As discussed earlier, teachers' expectations are lower for ethnic minority students and this may also affect success. Across all cultures in the United States, better achievement occurs at school when students feel a sense of belonging to school, and see a connection between doing well and their future success. Doing well in school is also more likely when young people are supported in their educational aims by parents and friends and when their parents monitor their school work and behaviour (Steinberg 2000).

African American students also make gains in academic scores over the school year that they do not maintain over the school break (Heyns 1982 in Steinberg 2000). But white students maintained the same academic standard whether they were at school or on holiday. This is not to suggest some students could take a permanent holiday. It does suggest, however, that for young people from ethnic groups that are more likely to be faced with problems such as low income, living in a high-risk neighbourhood and less effective parenting styles, going to school is particularly important for their cognitive development.

In terms of school structure, one study found African American students who went to racially diverse schools showed less chance of dropping out of school, with the attendant risks of teen pregnancy, involvement in crime, unemployment and low income (Brooks-Gunn, Guang and Furstenberg 1993 in Manlove 1998). There is also evidence young people from non-dominant cultural groups in society have better self-esteem when they attend a school in which they are the majority ethnic group. In fact, all students appear to do better psychologically when the cultural environment of their school matches the cultural environment of their neighbourhood (Arunkumar and Midgley 1996, Gray-Little and Carels 1997, Hudley 1995, Phelan, Yu and Davidson 1994 all in Steinberg 2000). However, there appear to be some advantages in terms of finishing high school and earning more when young people attend ethnically-diverse schools rather than schools with one main ethnic group (Adan and Felner 1995 in Steinberg 2000).

Research in Guatemala finds that young people there did better at school in adolescence if they had spent more than three years at primary school. Despite health, hygiene and nutrition risks and low environmental stimulation at home, attending primary school appeared to buffer the effect of risk on school test scores, although young people with fewer risks still did better (Gorman and Pollit 1996).

Jamaican young women aged 13 to 14 did better in high school when they had basic school materials such as books and pens and reading materials such as newspapers at home. They are less likely to be successful when aggressive (which fits with United States research), and also when sexually active or anaemic. Aggression and sexual activity are likely linked with high risk family backgrounds, with all the attendant problems of low income, poor accommodation and less effective parenting styles. Young women in Jamaica are also more likely to drop out of high school when they start sexual activity early and do not live with both parents, again associated with other risk factors for poor outcomes (Walker, Grantham-McGregor, Himes, Williams and Duff 1998). School attendance, which is closely linked with school success (in that it is difficult to be successful at school when you are not there) was linked with the number of chores young women had to do before and after school. It was also linked with hunger, poorer housing, the frequency of punishment by parents and part-time jobs. As we saw in the earlier section on income, all of these are likely to be linked with low-income families where children are expected

and needed, to contribute to helping and supporting the family. They are also likely linked to authoritarian and perhaps neglectful parenting styles, which lead to poorer outcomes. Overall, these Jamaican young women are more stressed, which in this case does appear linked with income and parenting issues more than ethnicity.

Young Mexican American people also showed poor outcomes at school, although in this case they were directly linked with stress. As we saw above, stress forms the link between low income and poor school outcomes. For these young people, the stress in their lives was so intense – having friends injured or killed regularly, danger of violence, involvement in illegal activities, having to work part-time to support the family – that even high support from family and friends failed to offset it (Gillock and Reyes 1999). Once again, this is more likely to be related to family income, particularly with regard to not being able to afford to live in a safer neighbourhood, rather than ethnicity per se.

Related New Zealand research found that in the area of offending, much of the elevated rates of crime by young Māori and Pacific people were explained by factors such as maternal age and education, family income and occupation, living standards and early childhood environment (Fergusson, Horwood and Lynskey 1993). In four out of five comparisons of ethnic groups there were no significant differences in offending rates once these factors were taken into account.

Overall, it seems likely that what appears to be related to ethnicity in some cases is actually more the impact of low income on stress levels for both young people and their parents. It seems possible that ethnicity may have its specific impact through beliefs and values that are taught by older generations to younger. These might include a lower or higher value placed on education, or a lower or higher belief that personal effort makes a positive difference to how well one does. Overall, beliefs that making an effort will increase the chance of success and that education has value, whether for increasing work success and earnings, or for the sheer thrill of learning, seem to lead to better outcomes. In addition, there is some evidence that young people from different ethnicities will do better in schools that treat all cultures fairly and do not discriminate. High teacher expectations of achievement also appear to make a positive contribution.

WHAT WORKS DIFFERENTLY FOR YOUNG WOMEN AND FOR YOUNG MEN

Key points:
- Young women receive higher marks on average than young men, even when from disadvantaged backgrounds, but spend fewer years at school even when they have similar abilities and family income to young men.
- Disadvantaged young women may do better with more help with their home circumstances, as this is where most of their stress occurs.
- They may also do better when encouraged to believe that their actions make a positive difference to how their lives will turn out.
- Young men may do better with more parental interest and encouragement although, this is also important for young women.
- Young women do less advanced study in maths and science despite being as interested and able as young men. This appears to be because they want to be popular with peers and males, and see these subjects as less relevant to their futures.

- Parents, teachers and school counsellors also have an impact, as they expect and encourage less involvement from girls.
- Young men cope better with primary to intermediate to secondary school transitions, whereas young women show better self-esteem and extracurricular involvement when they have only one transition, from primary to secondary.

Overall, young women in United States schools receive higher marks than young men, but do not complete as many years of education by the time they reach 30 (Hout and Morgan 1975 in Entwistle 1990). How well young men do in school is largely determined by their level of ability but young women's achievements have more to do with the income and occupation of their parents. Young women from more affluent families are more likely to spend longer at school than those from poorer families (Alexander and Eckland 1975 in Entwistle 1990). But even when family background and ability are controlled, young women do not receive as much schooling (Hout and Morgan 1975 in Enwistle 1990).

Even when living very stressed lives, young women tend to do better than young men at school (Gillock and Reyes 1999). Mexican American young people from poor homes experience high levels of stress, including neighbourhood crime and violence, family conflict, financial stress and having to help with the family. Young women tended to experience more interpersonal and social stress related to expectations of them to help at home and to conflict with their families. Despite this, their experiences at school were more positive than that of young men from similar backgrounds and they outperformed the males academically. For instance, they were more likely to make the honours roll and receive a special mention for good grades. This may have been explained in part by the higher level of support young women received from their friends than young men did.

Young men in the study tended to have problems at school, home and in their peer group, coming under pressure for delinquent activity and getting into conflict with the law. At school they tended not to like classes, had trouble with teachers, failed tests and were suspended, adding even more stress to an already difficult adolescence. This is likely related to the tendency for young men to react to family problems and other stresses with externalising, or 'bad' behaviour which actively interferes with schooling and drives teachers mad. Young women, in contrast, tend to respond to stresses more with internalising, or 'sad' behaviour which is less noticeable and irritating to adults and does not interfere as much with study and achievement.

This suggests that young men and women from poor, stressed environments may need extra help to succeed at school. Other research shows that young men from poor backgrounds are more likely to do well if they have the interest and involvement of their parents while young women do better the more they believe they can influence what happens to them, something that is also affected by parental attitudes. It may be that in intervening to help these young people fulfil their full potential, support from peers, parents and teachers may be more important for young men, while help in coping emotionally and developing helpful beliefs may be more useful for young women.

One of the most noticeable things about young women going through secondary and tertiary schooling is the way they increasingly shy away from maths and science, and head towards arts and languages. Not only does this happen in the United States, but also in Japan, Taiwan and Hungary (Evans 1992 in Steinberg 2000). This is despite the fact that girls and boys show only small differences in ability on standardised maths and science tests (Hanson 1996, Stumpf and Stanley 1996 both in Steinberg 2000). As school goes on, young women are less likely to pursue advanced courses in these subjects, and more likely to drop out of them, restricting later study and career options.

Why the difference? Obviously it is not one of ability and it is apparently not because of lack of interest either. Young women and men show roughly the same level of liking for maths, although young women see it as less useful to their future careers (Kavrell and Petersen 1984, Klebanov and Brooks-Gunn 1992 in Steinberg 2000). One theory is that young women are concerned about doing too well, especially in 'unfeminine' subjects, in case they lose standing with their friends, or become less attractive to the opposite sex (Bornholt, Goodnaur and Cooney 1994, Dweck and Light 1980 both in Steinberg 2000).

One of the things that appears to help young women succeed is whether they believe their actions have any influence on what happens to them – for instance, whether they think studying hard will improve their maths performance. Young women with these beliefs are more likely to go on to tertiary study (Trusty and Collins 1999 in Steinberg 2000). However, girls are more likely to be socialised to believe that achievement is out of their control and so feel helpless to do anything about it when they fail (Dweck and Light 1980 in Steinberg 2000). Observations of teachers in maths classes have shown that when young women have problems, teachers tell them this is due to lack of ability. When young men have problems, teachers tend to communicate this is due to lack of effort and they must work harder (Henderson and Dweck 1990 in Steinberg 2000). Messages like this are likely to increase young women's feelings that their actions (for example, studying harder or getting help) are not likely to make a difference and they should just give up. Working with young women to increase their belief that their actions can increase their ability and success (views which research shows are entirely realistic) could be one way of increasing female school success.

As well as being influenced by what peers think of their involvement in maths and science, young women are influenced by their parents and teachers. Parents of sons are more likely to think that taking an advanced maths course is important than parents of daughters do (Parsons et. al. in Steinberg 2000). Both teachers and school counsellors discourage girls from taking maths courses, both within all girl and co-educational schools, although some schools are better than others (Kavrell and Petersen 1984; Lee, Marks and Bird 1994 both in Steinberg). In addition, girls with high maths ability are less likely to be assigned to high ability groups than boys with comparable ability and less likely to be moved from lower to higher groups (Hallinan and Sorenson 1987 in Steinberg 1200). The views of authority figures may affect young people's views of themselves ('good at maths', 'bad at maths', 'not a maths type of person'), which in turn could affect how hard they try and how well they do (Jacobs and Eccles 1992 in Steinberg). Girls may also come to place less value on maths (Smith 1992 in Steinberg).

Another respect in which young women may be disadvantaged is when there is a double school transition – from primary to intermediate (or junior high) to secondary, rather than just one, from primary to secondary. With one transition, young women showed steady increases in self-esteem, similar to young men. But with two transitions, young women's self-esteem dropped dramatically with each shift. Young women also showed twice as much involvement in extracurricular activities at age 13 in the single transition system as in the double and three times as much at age 15 (Simmons and Blyth 1997 in Steinberg 2000). Given the importance of extracurricular activities for young women at risk of dropping out and delinquency (and the increased risk of pregnancy after dropping out, as we will see in the next section) this is a serious disadvantage (Mahoney 2000, Manlove 1998).

While all of the studies reviewed refer to countries other than New Zealand, their findings may be applicable in this country. While we cannot be certain the same things hold true for young New Zealanders, it is worthwhile bearing them in mind when trying to bring about good results in this country.

STAYING AT SCHOOL – PROTECTIVE EFFECTS FOR TEEN PREGNANCY AND CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR

Key points:

- Staying in school reduces the chance of teen pregnancy – young women who are positively involved in school and want to further their education are less likely to get pregnant.
- Attending Catholic or independent schools is also associated with lower risk of pregnancy, although the reasons for this are not clear.
- Finding ways to increase young womens' interest in, achievement at, valuing of, and involvement in school is likely to help them delay child-bearing.
- Staying in school is a protective factor against crime for New Zealand young people – the longer they stay in school, the less likely they are to become involved in crime, even when their risk of criminal involvement is high.

If you pick up any book on adolescence and turn to the pages on teen pregnancy, chances are you will find a discussion of knowledge about contraception, age at first sexual experience and impulsive behaviour (for example, Millstein and Litt 1990). Much less often will you find a discussion of the role school plays in preventing teen pregnancy.

So prevalent is the focus on the physical mechanics of getting pregnant as a teenager that it comes as a surprise to find that there is much more to it than that. Recent research is showing that attending school, being involved and doing well at school are linked to delaying the age of pregnancy (Hofferth and Moore 1979 in Manlove 1998, Manlove 1998, Marini 1984 in Manlove 1998, Rindfuss, Bumpass and St John 1980 in Manlove 1998). Young women who achieve at secondary school and have dreams of going further in their education are much less likely to fall pregnant. Teens who perform better at school and plan to continue their schooling are less likely to be sexually active and more likely to use contraception and abortion services (Chanressian and Croket 1993, Thronton and Camburn 1987 both in Manlove 1998).

In itself this may not mean much. As we have seen, young women who do well at school are likely to be from more affluent families and families with more money are less likely to be stressed and more likely to parent more effectively. So the link between doing well at school and not getting pregnant may be down to better parenting and nothing to do with school. In fact other research shows families with a higher incomes have daughters more likely to have sex later and to use contraception and abortion services (Hayward, Grady and Billy 1992, Kahn, Rindfuss and Guilkey 1990, Plotnick 1992 all in Manlove 1998).

This is where a longitudinal study which looks at what comes first in time is really useful. Manlove (1998) followed young women over six years from age 13. She found young white women and young Hispanic women who stayed at school were far less likely to get pregnant. Overall, almost 60 percent of young women who got pregnant while at school age dropped out of school. Just over half of them got pregnant and then dropped out, while almost half got pregnant after they dropped out. Other factors were associated with teen pregnancy. Living in a family where parents did not divorce, attending a Catholic or independent school and higher involvement and performance at school were associated with less risk of pregnancy.

It seems that finding ways to encourage young women to stay at school, getting them interested in education, increasing the value and relevance of it in their lives and improving their performance all have the potential to reduce the risk of teen pregnancy. As we saw in earlier sections, young people are more

likely to stay at school if they are well liked, so improving social skills is important, as is decreasing aggressiveness, the prime cause of rejection. They are also more likely to stay if they have basic academic skills, so supporting them in developing these is crucial, particularly if they grew up in families where they missed out on early learning. Feeling that teachers like them and are there to help and getting the message that teachers expect the best from them and believe they can do it, are also important to doing well, particularly for young women from poor backgrounds. The link between Catholic and independent schools and lower pregnancy rates is most likely related to better resources at these schools, which can mean smaller classes and more attention. Such schools also tend to have more academically-oriented curricula and expect more of their pupils (Lee and Bryk 1988, Mayer 1991 both in Manlove 1998).

Mixing with peers who value school and are doing well also helps young women do better at school and doing better in turn increases their likelihood of staying at school. Reducing stress levels at home may help them stay, particularly for young women from poorer, larger families in high risk neighbourhoods. Working with parents to increase the value they place on education and their positive involvement in schooling may also help. Lastly, encouraging young women to believe they have some control over their destinies and that there are realistic options other than motherhood – such as education and career – may also help them stay at school and avoid pregnancy.

Staying at school has also been shown to have a protective effect for criminal behaviour. In a piece of New Zealand research, young men who lacked self-control were found to be more likely to be involved in crime. Those who left school early were found to be have the greatest criminal involvement. But for young men who stayed longer at school, criminal involvement was found to be less (Henry, Caspi, Moffit, Harrington and Silva 1999). This pattern held true from 15 to 21 years of age. Even when prior offending, early delinquency and disruptions to family life were taken into account the impact on criminal involvement of staying at school longer was still significant. These are some of the most powerful factors that put young people at risk of future offending. So, it seems likely that staying at school is actually protecting young people, rather than that young people who are less likely to offend in the first place are staying longer at school and the high risk ones dropping out. The longitudinal nature of this research, following young people over a period of five years as part of the Dunedin Health and Development Study, means it is even more likely that staying at school longer is actually affecting criminal behaviour, rather than the other way round. Results for young women were not statistically significant, suggesting this was not as protective for them. Offending tends to be far less of an issue, however, for young women than young men.

It is not clear from the research why staying at school has this positive effect in protecting against pregnancy and criminal behaviour but it is highly likely to be related to the greater monitoring and supervision by adults that young people receive at school. It may also be related to developing an identity based around study and future career plans rather than dating and crime and to a greater sense of the possibilities outside motherhood and criminal careers. These are issues on which further research is needed.

OVERALL KEY POINTS SUMMARY FOR SCHOOL INFLUENCES

Key points summary:

- A warm school climate helps young people achieve good outcomes, personally and academically, with positive teacher regard and support for students, higher teacher expectations of students, particularly disadvantaged students and an emphasis on individual progress rather than competition.

- High standards for learning and behaviour, moderate classroom control and teacher warmth lead to best results.

- School organisation makes a positive difference, with small schools (not classes), classes of mixed ability (not streaming) and resource-rich schools with high standards doing best.

- Multiple school transitions lead to developmental losses, particularly for young women, who do better with one transition from primary to secondary.

- Some losses associated with moving to secondary school appear linked to teaching styles that do not support developmental needs. Although, there are factors that protect young people.

- Balancing study with leisure, particularly active leisure and being involved in extracurricular activities at school appear to enhance emotional, academic and prosocial development.

- Money makes a difference, with young people from more affluent homes more likely to finish school and attend university. Although, individual and family factors can protect poorer young people and make it more likely they will go on to tertiary study.

- Young people adapt better to tertiary study when they have lower levels of stress and depression and relationships with parents that are equal, mutual and involve open discussion of school and study issues.

- Young people from non-dominant cultures may do better in ethnically diverse schools and benefit more cognitively from attending these school than dominant-culture youth.

- Beliefs and values associated with various cultures may help explain different achievement levels, with the beliefs that one can influence events through personal effort, that education is valuable and that effort is more important than ability appearing helpful.

- Young women tend to do better than males in school but attend for fewer years. However, young women who believe they can influence events in their lives tend to stay longer at school.

- Low maths and science involvement by young women appears influenced both by peers and adults.

- Pregnancy is delayed when young women are positively involved in school, doing well and aspiring to further education.

- Involvement with antisocial peers and activities is reduced when young men stay longer at school.

❥ Work/career influences

CHOOSING AN OCCUPATION

Key points:

- Many factors have an impact on what type of career a young person hopes and expects to have – schooling, parental education, father's occupation, gender and living in the country or the city.
- Rural young people tend to expect lower status careers, possibly because of a conflict between jobs that would take them to the city and those that would keep them in the country.
- There is some evidence people choose jobs that match their personalities.
- Family income influences career choice by affecting the number of years spent at school, career exploration and values looked for in a job.

It is tempting to think that young people choose their occupations based on what they are truly interested in but in fact a great deal more than this seems to influence occupational decisions. One of the most potent is tracking, or streaming, at school into academic on non-academic types of topics, which was discussed in the section on school influences (Andres, Anisef, Krahn, Looker and Thiessen 1999). Young people in academic streams appear to want and expect higher status jobs (professional and managerial) than those in non-academic streams. Another influence is how well educated parents are. Young people whose parents have a university education are more likely to both dream of higher status jobs and believe it is realistic they can get them. Those with a father in a professional or managerial occupation also tend to have the same hopes and plans. Interestingly, these trends were true across the 1970's, 1980's and 1990's in Canada, whether the economy was booming or in recession.

Young men's aspirations and expectations stayed remarkably stable through these decades but those of young women tended to shift from traditional clerical, sales and service aspirations to professional and managerial goals. This trend was so marked among the Canadian youth studied that the 1970's trend of more males than females aspiring to higher status careers was reversed by the 1990's. As the five studies analysed in this paper were longitudinal, one from birth, it is more likely the factors studied affected career plans, rather than the other way round. That is, it is more likely a person will expect to have a lower status career if they are in less academically demanding classes, than be in less academic classes because they do not want a high status career. However, even in a longitudinal study there is some risk these things will be confounded.

The other trend worth noting was that young people from rural backgrounds tended to aim for and expect less in the way of career status than those from urban environments (Andres et. al. 1999). A study that sheds some light on why this might be, found young people in rural settings felt conflict between careers that would take them away from their home community, versus those that would let them remain (Hektner 1994 in Steinberg 2000).

While children may dream of exciting careers as firefighters, air stewards (or in earlier, less enlightened times, firemen and air hostesses) or marine biologists, as they get older they usually start to examine options based not only on their interests, but also on what is possible given their resources and abilities. One influential model of how young people choose careers was developed by Super and suggested a developmental process throughout adolescence and early adulthood (Steinberg 2000). He proposed a sequence whereby throughout adolescence young people start to examine their traits, abilities and interests, then experiment with different work roles. In addition, they will integrate the family influences described above with their own desires. Unfortunately there does not seem to be a great deal of research into this model to prove it one way or another.

Another view is that career choices are influenced by personality. There is some evidence that in fact choice of occupation is influenced by whether a person is outgoing or not and other personality traits (Holland 1985 in Steinberg 2000). This is unlikely to be the only factor influencing decisions, as interests and abilities tend to change over the lifetime, partly as a result of experiences in different types of work (Mortimer and Lorence 1979 in Steinberg 2000). And as we saw above, other factors such as parental income and education, also have an impact.

Families influence career choices in other ways as well. Family income has an impact on what type of career a young person will choose, probably because it influences how many years they will spend at school. One of the best indicators of success at work is the number of years spent at school. The more years in school, the more choices, even when a young person leaves school without qualifications or receives only pass grades (Garbarino and Asp 1981 in Steinberg 2000). Students who receive A grades tend to end up in jobs of similar prestige and salary to those who earn C grades.

Other research has suggested middle-class parents will encourage career exploration more than parents with a lower income (Grotevant and Cooper 1988 in Steinberg 2000). Parents can also influence the values that influence career choice, depending on their social status. Middle-class parents may emphasise the importance of power and freedom in a career, whereas lower income parents may stress conformity and obedience (Kohn 1977 in Steinberg 2000). Not only parents, but also friends can influence career choices – for example, young people with mainly middle-class friends have been found to aspire to more typically middle-class occupations (Simpson 1962 in Steinberg 2000).

Overall, choosing a career does not seem a simple matter of following one's dreams, or even of completely rational choice. It is influenced by schooling, family, friends, and a peron's own personality.

THE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Key points:
- Young people are directly influenced in their career choices by the models parents provide, especially where families are close.
- They are particularly influenced by the same-sex parent.
- Young people in dual career families are more likely to have positive attitudes to such families for themselves.

We have already seen that parents have an influence on the choice of career by their income, education level, values and occupation. But parents are also direct models of what type of career young people might aim for, particularly when family relationships are warm and close and young people strongly identify with their parents (Barber and Eccles 1992, Grotevant and Cooper 1988 both in Steinberg 2000).

For example, in a family where a mother and daughter have a close friendship and enjoy each other's company, it may be more likely the daughter will choose to train to be a doctor like her mother.

As we saw earlier, young people are particularly influenced by the parent of the same sex as them. In one study, daughters of women who were happily employed outside the home were more likely to seek a career as well as having a family (Leslie 1986 in Steinberg 2000). Young women whose mothers are in a high status occupation, such as medicine, are more likely to enter high status occupations themselves (Hoffman 1974 in Steinberg 2000). Families where both parents pursue careers in addition to parenting have an impact on young men too. Young people of both sexes from these families tend to have less stereotyped attitudes about work and prefer dual career marriages for themselves (Barber and Eccles 1992 in Steinberg 2000).

EMPLOYMENT WHILE AT SCHOOL – HELPFUL OR HARMFUL?

Key points:

- Part-time work during the school year is increasingly common in developed countries and is often in menial, monotonous jobs.
- Outcomes of part-time work – including lower school dropout rates, increased employment and earnings in the years following high school, and self-reported gains in punctuality, dependability, responsibility and female self-reliance – appear best when work takes up no more than 20 hours a week.
- After this point, it may foster alcohol use and affect school grades, particularly in the senior years of high school.
- Working in family businesses is associated with greater perceived parental support, less drug use and better coping skills, but it is not clear whether this is due to parenting style or the nature of family businesses.
- Where teen earnings are spent not only on personal goods and entertainment but also on non-leisure items such as school fees, clothes and contributions to the family, more positive outcomes are found, although again it is not clear whether this is due to parenting style or spending style.
- Young people from poor families and neighbourhoods can benefit from part-time work in terms of more involvement in school and less criminal activity.
- Young people in poor neighbourhoods may find it hard to find work, and those in United States suburbs tend to earn more and have better jobs.
- Part-time work of ten hours or more can lead to more time with the family when in a family business, and increasing earnings by young people are associated with less family hostility and more advice-seeking from parents.

Up to 80 percent of high school students in the United States work during the school year (Steinberg 2000). This is one of the highest figures internationally, compared with about 37 percent in Canada, 20 percent in Sweden and less than two percent in Japan. Developmental psychologist Lawrence Steinberg calls the impact of part-time work on school grades and well-being 'one of the most controversial issues in the study of contemporary adolescents' (Steinberg 2000: 247). He notes that once young people either went to school, or went to work, but in the last 100 years the overwhelming trend in the United States has been to do both. Steinberg attributes this to increased affluence, along with pressure on young people to spend money on 'teen' consumables like music, movies and so forth.

Main impacts of part-time work

The strongest evidence about the impact of part-time work comes from a study which followed 1000 representative young Americans for four years, from age 14 or 15 to 18 or 19. It found two main effects – that working long hours (more than 20) fostered alcohol use among young people and that working less than 20 hours per week in the last two years of high school was associated with better grades. Other than this, part-time work during high school appeared to have no effect – positive or negative – on mental health, academic achievement, cigarette use and behaviour problems at school (Mortimer, Finch, Ryu, Shanahan and Call 1996).

A later report on the same study concluded that involvement in part-time work while at school is neither good nor bad for young people when it comes to getting good results at school. The exception was again for older high school students who worked more than 20 hours per week and strangely enough, those who did no part-time work at all (Mortimer and Johnson 1998). But this result was found for only one year of the study, which means it cannot be taken as a general trend. Males who spent the most time in part-time work also spent the least time in extracurricular activities. Given the positive impact of extracurricular activities for at-risk young people discussed earlier, this does raise concerns. While overall longer work hours did not appear to affect their educational achievements, these young people felt less satisfaction with their lives than those who worked less (Fine, Mortimer and Roberts 1990 in Steinberg 2000). That may have been as a result of long work hours, or they may have chosen to work long hours because they already felt dissatisfied with their lives – it is not clear which.

Part-time work in family businesses versus private enterprise

A smaller study looked at whether outcomes were better for those who worked in family businesses or those who worked in private enterprise (Hansen and Jarvis 2000). Canvassing 450 white, mainly middle-class 14 to 18 year olds, the authors found some positive effects for working in family businesses. Young people who worked with their families perceived a great level of parental support. They also used drugs significantly less than young people working in private enterprise and used more effective, active coping strategies, particularly the young women. However, young people working in private enterprise also showed some positive trends, with greater emotional autonomy in terms of regarding their parents as people and showing a strong individual identity. The shortcoming of this study is that it was a one-off snapshot which cannot tell us what led to what. As evidence, it is not as strong as the four-year prospective study that could track changes in academic and other functioning during involvement in work. It may be that the positive results for young people in family businesses were in fact due to good parenting and nothing to do with their work involvement. However, it would be interesting to repeat this analysis with a longitudinal study over several years to see if these trends hold true.

Other effects of part-time work

Other studies indicate part-time work may have some adverse effects that are not quite as obvious as poor grades. In the United States, the kind of jobs teenagers tend to do are likely to involve cleaning and carrying rather than writing and maths (Greenberger and Steinberg 1983). On the whole, young people's jobs are repetitive, monotonous and intellectually undemanding. They also tend to mix mainly with other young people on the job, with very little contact with adults who might provide guidance, or act as mentors or role models. So how positive are the impacts of this not very positive work?

There is some evidence the experience of work was a positive one during the Great Depression, increasing the desire of boys to grow up and teaching them the responsible use of money and industrious behaviour (Elder 1974 in Steinberg 2000). Girls were not studied because they rarely worked outside the home at that time.

Recent studies suggest, however, that working while at school does not increase personally responsible behaviour or feelings of social obligation, social tolerance or social belongingness (Greenberger and Steinberg 1983, Steinberg and Dornbushch 1991, Steinberg, Fegley and Dornbusch 1993 all in Steinberg 2000, Mortimer and Johnson 1998, Mortimer et. al. 1996). In fact, the experience of work seems to increase individualistic values and behaviour, including cynical attitudes toward work and unethical work practices such as stealing, lying and working only as hard as is required (Steinberg et. al. 1982 in Steinberg 2000). It could be young people involved in work that is more stimulating and satisfying could show different patterns and this is worth investigation.

Some positive trends are also reported, making the picture less bleak. Young people who work part-time as students tend to see themselves as being more punctual, dependable and personally responsible, no matter how others may see them. Young women also feel a greater sense of self-reliance (Greenberger and Steinberg 1986 in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). Young people who work less than 20 hours a week have showed lower dropout rates from school and increased employment and earnings in the years following high school (D'Amico 1984, Steel 1991 both in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000).

How young people spend what they earn, in the country and in the city

Even if work is not building character (and this may in fact be due to the socially and intellectually undemanding nature of the work) one would hope that it would build money management skills. But, again United States research shows few young people save a large percentage of their earnings, even when they are making several hundred dollars a month, or contribute to household expenses (Steinberg, Fegley and Dornbusch 1993 in Steinberg 2000). Generally, those that do are non-minority young people – both male and female – from reasonably affluent families (Steinberg and Cauffman 1995 in Steinberg 2000). Arguably their parents do not need the money – it simply cuts down the amount of allowance they need to provide.

So what do young people tend to spend their money on? Research tells us it is designer clothing, expensive stereo equipment, movies and eating out, drugs and alcohol (Greenberger and Steinberg 1986, Steinberg, Fegley and Dornbusch 1986 both in Steinberg 2000). One researcher suggests that American adolescents suffer from 'premature affluence', where they are able to enjoy a level of discretionary spending while at home which may be beyond them once they move out and have to pay for rent, bills and other necessities (Bachman 1983 in Steinberg 2000). Some researchers suggest the outcome of 'premature affluence' might be increased cynicism about the value of work and more materialistic attitudes (Greenberger and Steinberg 1986 in Steinberg 2000).

However, a different pattern emerged in a study of young people in rural United States. While 90 percent spent their earnings on daily entertainment, such as movies, games and sports, and 25 percent on electronic equipment, a third (34 percent) put money towards savings, buying necessities such as clothes, shoes and school fees, and giving or lending money to the family (Shanahan, Elder, Burchinal and Conger 1996). The authors attribute this difference to the greater emphasis and value placed on families in the country. The young people in this sample who spent their money on non-leisure items (such as savings or necessities) were more likely to spend time with their families than those who did not. As the amount they spent on non-leisure items increased, so did the time the spent with their families. This may mean they were simply prosocial young people who helped their family because they liked them, or it could mean their responsible behaviour with money led to positive responses from their parents which encouraged them to spend more time at home. In families where young people spent on non-leisure activities, there tended to be less hostility, both from the parents' and young person's point of view. Again this may be because prosocial young people who behave responsibly with money tend to also be

less hostile, or positive responses from their parents to their spending habits might have led to less hostility (Shanahan et. al. 1996). This research is difficult to interpret because it does not provide clear evidence of what leads to what, only that one thing tends to occur alongside another. More research is needed to clarify causation.

Part-time work trends for rural students

Some other positive trends associated with part-time work by students in country areas also emerged. Generally speaking, the students tended to spend increasingly less time with their families as they aged. But those who worked ten hours a week or more tended to spend more time with their families, possibly because they worked in family businesses. However, as adolescents grew older and earned more they tended to spend less time with their family. Advice seeking tended to increase as young people earned more (which they did with advancing age), particularly from fathers (Shanahan et. al. 1996). As earnings and hours at work increased, hostility with parents (particularly mothers) also tended to decrease, for reasons the research did not reveal. On the downside, mothers became less aware of their children's whereabouts as young people's earnings increased.

POSITIVE IMPACTS FOR VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE

Key points:
- Young people who are not so well off benefit from employment through earnings and adult supervision, becoming more involved in school and less involved in crime.
- Youth from minority families who moved away from poor housing estates to the suburbs were more likely to be employed than those who stayed behind.
- New Zealand young people who were employed after leaving school enjoyed better mental health and were less involved in crime despite high levels of other risk factors in their lives.

There are suggestions from other research, however, that young people who are not so well off benefit from employment. Face-to-face interviews with young people from poor areas suggest the earnings and supervision by adults that result from working part-time led to increased involvement in school, and less criminal behaviour (Gleason and Cain 1997, Leventhal, Graber and Brooks-Gunn 1995, Newman 1999, Sullivan 1989 all in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). Unfortunately, employment opportunities for young people in some poor communities may be limited and minority youth may also suffer from discrimination when trying to find work (Freeman 1991, Iceland 1997, Kirschenman and Neckerman 1991, Lewin-Epstein 1986, Newman 1999, Osterman 1991, Wilson 1997 all in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). One study found that minority families who moved away from a poor housing estate to the suburbs in the United States were more likely to be employed than their friends who stayed behind (Poplin, Rosenbaum and Meadine 1993 in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). They also tended to earn more than young people who stayed in the city and to have jobs that offered benefits.

New Zealand longitudinal research found young people who had fewer strengths overall in their lives (in their families, schools and other areas) were more likely to enjoy better mental health and less likely to be involved in crime when they were employed. Unemployment, added to all the other stresses in their lives, seemed to tip the scales even further in the direction of offending, particularly property offending (Fergusson et. al. 1997a).

CONTRASTING INFLUENCES AND EXPERIENCES FOR YOUNG MEN AND FOR YOUNG WOMEN

Key points:

- Both young men and young women are influenced in their career choices by their father's occupation.
- Young women are influenced by their mother's level of education and young men by their father's level of education.
- Young people appear more influenced by the parent of the same sex and more likely to go to that parent for advice, as well as give advice to that parent.
- While young people experience stereotyping regarding work roles from a relatively young age, as well as discrimination regarding pay, there is potential for mothers who are positive role models to offset this.

As noted earlier, young women in Canada became more likely to aspire to professional and managerial jobs than traditional clerical, sales and service jobs from the 1970's to the 1990's. While both young men and women were influenced in the career they hoped for by their fathers' occupation, young women were also influenced by their mothers' level of education. Those with university educated mothers were more likely to aspire to professional and managerial jobs than those with mothers who had finished formal education earlier. Young men in contrast tended to be influenced by their father's level of education, suggesting some same-sex identification, or perhaps mentoring by parents (Andres et. al. 1999). A study of rural young people in the United States found similar patterns in relation to advice seeking in families. Both young men and young women tended to seek advice fairly often from their parents (Shanahan, Elder, Burchinal and Conger 1996). Interestingly, their parents tended to seek advice equally often from their children. But sons and fathers tended to seek each other's advice more than daughters and fathers, and mothers and daughters more than sons and mothers. Once again, avenues of influence seem to be directly linked to gender.

Once they reach the workplace, men and women often end up doing different types of work from each other and men often earn more, even for the same work (Greenberger and Steinberg 1983 in Steinberg 2000). But there is interesting evidence that the separation of work by gender starts very early, in the home (White and Brinkerhoff 1981 in Steinberg 2000). While both girls and boys in the United States tend to be expected to do chores like washing dishes, as they grow older boys are more likely to be asked to do outside work and girls to do housework. This separation of work by gender becomes more marked as they age (White and Brinkerhoff 1981).

By the time young men and women start in paid work, therefore, they are already accustomed to doing different types of work and this trend continues in adolescence. Both are likely to be employed during the school year in California (where this research was carried out), as in other places, but males can expect to work as manual or skilled labourers, gardeners, janitors and on paper runs. They can also expect to earn on average 15 percent more than females, who tend to work as food servers, house cleaners and baby sitters (Greenberger and Steinberg 1983 in Steinberg 2000). So, both young men and young women are likely, as they develop, to learn that they have set roles in the workplace and that those of women are worth slightly less in terms of status and earnings.

For young people living in the country, gender differences in earnings have also been found (Shanahan, Elder, Burchinal and Conger 1996). Males start off by earning more and their earnings increase more

rapidly than those of young women from age 12 to 13 to age 15 to 16. The types of work they are involved in tend to be the same as in the city but to be more seasonal and possibly more in family businesses.

Some familiar positive and negative trends become apparent when the sexes are compared. The most important point here is probably that same-sex parents can have a positive impact by virtue of their own choices about education and career and the advice they give.

OVERALL KEY POINTS SUMMARY FOR WORK/CAREER INFLUENCES

Key points summary:

- A number of factors influence adolescent choices about career – not only interests, but years of schooling, family income, parental education and job, and personality.
- Young people are more likely to succeed at work if they have spent more years at school, even if they have not received any qualifications or have just scraped through.
- Young people are directly influenced by parents' careers and level of education, especially in close, warm families.
- Part-time work during school does not lead to adverse effects on grades and alcohol use provided it is less than 20 hours a week.
- Spending earnings on things other than personal entertainment and goods, such as school fees and contributing to the family appears associated with good outcomes. It is not clear, however, what leads to what.
- Same-sex parents are particularly important as role models of educational and career achievement and as sources of advice, particularly for young women.

❥ Neighbourhood/community influences

EFFECTS OF NEIGHBOURHOODS ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELL-BEING

Key points:

- Neighbourhoods can have a positive impact on young people, but it is difficult to tease out the influence of families, friends and schools from that of neighbourhood.
- Overall, the impact of neighbourhood is fairly low compared with family and other influences.
- It seems it is the combined weight of numerous neighbourhood factors that makes a difference, more than any single factor.
- Young people in the healthiest, most nurturing neighbourhoods where there is the greatest number of strengths tend to have the best outcomes.
- School outcomes (including grades, staying at school, graduating, better skills, and going on to tertiary education) are better when there are more white American neighbours, fewer high school dropouts locally, fewer women-headed households, less unemployment, fewer low-income families and more high- income ones, particularly for males.
- Young people grow up less likely to break the law and abuse substances in neighbourhoods that have more high income families, less ethnic diversity, more residential stability and collective action by neighbours with close ties.
- Emotional problems such as depression and anxiety are less common in young people in neighbourhoods that have more high-income families, are more supportive and where neighbours get on well and work together for the collective good.
- Young people are more likely to delay sex and parenthood when they live in neighbourhoods where parents have more education, earn more and are in higher status jobs and where there is more employment and more economic and social resources. There is some evidence, however, that community factors are very much less important than family factors.

Everybody grows up in a neighbourhood of some type. It may be a suburban tract of affluent houses, a loosely-knit collection of travelling house trucks, a rural village built around a marae, a high rise of council flats, or an isolated rural community of farms. And yet for decades researchers largely ignored the possible impact of neighbourhoods on families and young people and vice versa. Only a small number of researchers such as Shaw and McKay in 1942, James Julius Wilson in the 1980s and Uri Bronfenbrenner starting in the late 1970s, suggested neighbourhoods were important, either in themselves, or in interaction with other environments (Ginther, Haveman and Wolfe 2000, Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). Now all that has changed and research on neighbourhoods is in vogue. One review has commented:

In the past decade, the convergence of these multiple strands of research has led to a miniature explosion of research on neighbourhood influences on children and youth.
(Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000:310).

This explosion in research makes it more possible than ever before to work out just what kind of impact, and how much, neighbourhoods have on the people who live in them. In looking at neighbourhood research, four questions tend to be asked and sometimes answered. The first is 'how is neighbourhood defined?' The second is 'how do we know the outcomes are due to neighbourhood and not something else?' The third is 'what impacts do neighbourhoods have on young people?' These three questions are answered in this section. The fourth question, 'how do neighbourhoods have an impact?' is considered in a separate section following this one.

What is a neighbourhood or community?

One of the first steps in talking about neighbourhoods and communities is to establish just exactly what they are. Three ways of viewing neighbourhoods have been suggested – place, space and face.

Place – the physical area a person lives in, as defined by census data, local landmarks, residents themselves, council districts, electorates or other means.

Space – the way the space inside the place is filled, whether with parks, recreation centres, libraries and well spaced individual houses, or with parking lots, disused factories and council high rises.

Face – the people who live in the spaces and the places, the heart of the neighbourhood, without whom there would be just a collection of empty buildings. Face includes not only the type of people who live in a neighbourhood – ethnicity, age, income and occupation – but the way they relate to each other (Roth and Brooks-Gunn 2000).

Neighbourhoods and communities include all of these aspects, although space and face seem most important for good outcomes for young people (Ginter et. al. 2000, Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). Hence, a neighbourhood can be widely defined as a locality where a group of people reside, with associated buildings and facilities and where people relate to one another on a day-to-day basis. While a neighbourhood is defined by where people live, community is defined more by who people have ties with (Unger and Wandersman 1985). 'Community' can be defined as the people one has links with, regardless of their location. One study suggests communities have four important qualities:

Membership – boundaries that define who belongs and who does not, within which people feel a sense of belonging, emotional safety and identification with other members (such as iwi affiliation or religious beliefs).

Influence – the people within the community can affect the group and the group can affect the individuals within it and the wider world.

Values – the group shares values.

Emotional connection – the people in the community have an emotional connection with each other based partly on a shared history, whether they were part of that history or identified with it (McMillan and Chavis 1985 in Unger and Wandersman 1985).

According to this model, people are part of a community with along others they have things in common with, are influenced by and influence and share values with and feel emotional ties with, whether or not they live near each other. This could include family members in another district, or being part of a bigger group such as an iwi or local gay community, where there are links with people both inside the neighbourhood and outside it. Some writers have questioned whether improved transport, communication and technology mean that neighbourhoods are made irrelevant by these wider

communities based on shared values and interests (Wellman 1979 in Unger and Wandersman 1985). For most people today, so many important activities and relationships take place outside the neighbourhood that perhaps the importance of neighbours has been lost. But there are still roles neighbours perform and influences they bring to bear are based largely on the fact that they live nearby and which people in the wider community would not be able to fulfil because of distance (Unger and Wandersman 1985). Neighbours can provide help in emergencies, local information and community surveillance that others simply cannot, so their role is still relevant and worth investigating.

Types of relationships and support in neighbourhoods and communities

A Canadian study of how people with close ties relate to each other sheds some light upon the kinds of help that neighbourhoods and communities can provide (Wellman and Wortley 1990). Talking in-depth to 29 members of a largely white neighbourhood of mixed occupations and income (from blue collar to white collar), researchers found a total of 1500 ties with other people for the whole group. However, only 344 were active relationships. Of these, 137 were socially close or intimate relationships and 207 were significant but not as close. The median number of relationships was four intimate and seven significant ties for each person interviewed. These were made up by friends, neighbours and relatives up to first cousin, both in the neighbourhood and across the whole of Toronto city.

These active relationships provided the following range of support to people:

- emotional aid (provided by 62 percent of network members)
- small services – minor services, lending and giving household items, household services, aid in dealing with organisations (provided by 61 percent of network members)
- large services – major repairs, help with housework, day care, health care (provided by 16 percent of network members)
- financial aid – a small loan or gift, large loan or gift mainly for housing (provided by 16 percent of network members)
- companionship – discussing ideas, doing things together, participating together in organisations (provided by 59 percent of network members).

For the whole group, 87 percent of the 344 network members provided some kind of support and 61 percent provided help in less than three dimensions (Wellman and Wortley 1990). Two-thirds of support was provided by the closest relationships, who also tended to give more types of support.

Physical proximity made relationships more likely – 23 percent of active network members lived within a mile of each other (Wellman and Wortley 1990). The most frequent contact was with people who had no close ties but were simply around so they 'bumped into' each other without planning. Obviously, neighbours will be high on the list of such contacts. Network members who were physically close to one another were more likely to provide each other with both large and small services, although large services (such as big loans or helping with home renovations) were more likely to be provided by family, particularly parents. Neighbours who were in each others' networks tend to exchange small services, such as childminding and lending tools, simply because their physical closeness made it easier to do so. Friendly neighbours were more likely to provide companionship than nearby family members as well, as were friends. Socio-economic status (a combination of income, occupation type and education) did not make any difference to how supportive network members were to each other, but people who were in similar types of work were more likely to exchange small services and companionship (Wellman and Wortley 1990). This fits with social psychology findings that people are more likely to get on with each other when they have things in common (Myers 1992).

As well as this, neighbours have been found to provide information about services and resources available locally, particularly to new migrants (Froland, Pancoast, Chapman and Kimboko 1979 and 1981 in Unger and Wandersman 1985). They can also be routes by which neighbours get involved in neighbourhood organisations such as neighbourhood watch which not only provide resources for the community but also provide information and support for the individuals involved (Gibbs 1983, Hunter 1976 both in Unger and Wandersman 1985). People are far more likely to attend meetings of local organisations when they are asked to by someone they know in the neighbourhood (Berger and Neuhaus 1977 in Unger and Wandersman 1985).

It is clear from this that neighbours have the potential to provide a wide range of support, much of which could reduce stress for parents, thus enabling them to be more effective. Only a few network members give large amounts of help, so presumably families with larger networks will receive more support. There is probably also going to be more potential for financial aid in a community with high employment and middle to high income, although that is not guaranteed.

Just how much is due to neighbourhood rather than other factors?

The second step in considering the impact of neighbourhoods is teasing it out from other influences, particularly the very strong influence of the family. It makes sense that families, with whom young people spend a good part of their time from an early age, will have more impact than people down the street who are seen less often. To confuse matters, a lot of the characteristics of families we know have an impact on outcomes, such as income, parent education and occupation, are also included in research on neighbourhoods. Thus, the finding that neighbourhoods have an impact on young people might be due to the influence of parental income, occupation and education rather than the neighbourhood itself – the outcome might be similar whether they live in an urban slum or an affluent suburb.

Another major problem is that not every aspect of a neighbourhood – whether the characteristics of the families who live there, the physical surroundings or the quality of the relationships – is included in each study. So, there may be some factors that could explain some or all of the outcomes for young people that never get looked at. For example, most studies include ethnicity, income and residential stability of families. But the physical state of buildings is rarely looked at and this might have a great influence. Decrepit buildings might be more likely to burn down, leading to more affluent families moving out of the area and greater levels of vandalism and crime.

Obviously it is impossible to include every single variable in an analysis – there will always be some that are overlooked. But there is evidence the more variables that are included, the more impact is found for neighbourhood characteristics. In a study in Michigan spanning 21 years, neighbourhood was found to have a significant impact on years of schooling, high school graduation and teen pregnancy when six neighbourhood variables were included (Ginther et. al. 2000). But few of these variables on their own appeared to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes. So, looking at a wide range of neighbourhood characteristics is important when trying to work out what the impact really is.

Given these problems, it is difficult to answer the question 'exactly how much impact do neighbourhood factors have?' One study does cast some light on this question, however. An English study of twins found that once genetic, family and individual factors were taken into account, the type of neighbourhood accounted for just five percent of all the influences on children. So, it seems likely that while neighbourhood effects do exist, they account for a relatively small amount of influence compared with genes and parents. This question is looked at in more depth in the section on what environment has the most influence. It also seems likely that as young people grow and move beyond home, their parents

have less effect and the wider community starts to have more (Aber, Gephart, Brooks-Gunn and Connell 1997, Luthar 1999 both in Luthar and Cushing 1999).

The positive impacts of neighbourhoods on young people
The overall findings of research on neighbourhoods show young people from the 'healthiest' neighbourhoods tend to have the best outcomes. Broadly speaking, this includes access to caring school environments, religious organisations and supportive adults. In contrast, young people from the riskiest, least nurturing neighbourhoods tend to have the worst outcomes (Benson, Leffert, Scales and Blyth 1998 in Roth and Brooks-Gunn 2000). Unhealthy neighbourhoods are places where adults do not look out for everyone's children and either help them or keep them in line. It is not clear whether this is because they are not interested, are antisocial themselves or because they fear retribution from the neighbours or the young people. They are also places lacking in services, where neighbours do not stay for long and where people may be in actual danger from violence, including guns (Burton 2001). This section looks at what kind of impact neighbourhoods have on young people's well-being. The exact reasons for the different outcomes in nurturing or unhealthy neighbourhoods are explored in a later section.

School achievement and neighbourhoods
It appears the more aspects of a neighbourhood that are taken into account, the more influence will be found. In a long-term study of a Michigan community, six factors were found to be significantly related to the number of years young people spent in school, and whether they graduated from high school (Ginther et. al. 2000). Young people were more likely to stay in high school and graduate when there were more white American neighbours, fewer high school dropouts and female-headed households and less unemployment in the neighbourhood. In contradiction of most of the other research on this topic, this study found staying in school was more likely when there were more low-income households and fewer high-income ones. How well young people in the neighbourhood did at school was also affected by their family income relative to that of their neighbour. If it was relatively higher, results tended to be more positive. In contrast, high school graduation became more likely when there were more high-income households and fewer low-income ones.

The authors concluded the pattern of finding smaller and less significant effects as family variables were added to neighbourhood variables, suggests the effects of neighbourhood are not as strong as once thought (Ginther et. al. 2000). The strongest effects were found for neighbourhood characteristics that were more directly related to the outcome being looked at. For example, having fewer high school dropouts in the community was associated with more chance of young people doing well at school.

One of the strongest effects found in the research is for neighbourhood income. The more people there are in the community with good incomes, the more likely it is early adolescents will achieve more in maths and basic skills and get better grades. This may be even more true for young men than young women (Dornbusch et. al. 1991, Entwisle, Alexander and Olson 1994 all in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). In later adolescence, growing up in a neighbourhood where more families earn good incomes is associated with completing high school, attending tertiary education and staying at school longer, even more so for males and white Americans (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov and Sealand 1993, Duncan 1994 both in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). Again, having fewer young people in the neighbourhood who had left school early and fewer families headed by women was associated with better school results (Ensminger, Lamkin and Jacobson 1996, Rosenbaum, Kulieke and Rubinowitz 1988 both in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). One study found when the number of adults with professional/managerial jobs fell

below five percent in the neighbourhood the school drop out rate went up, but this result has not been replicated (Crane 1991 in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000).

Prosocial behaviour
While doing well in school is a highly desirable goal, growing up law-abiding and respectful of others are just as important. Neighbourhoods also have something to contribute to prosocial behaviour, although the evidence is not quite as consistent as for schooling (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). In general, many more young men tend to exhibit antisocial behaviour than young women, who are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, eating disorders and suicidal feelings (Achenbach, Howell, Quay and Conners 1991). As for schooling, living in neighbourhoods with more high earning families is associated with better mental health. This is particularly true for antisocial behaviour, such as lying, fighting, stealing and drug use (Loeber and Wikstrom 1993, Peeples and Loeber 1994 both in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000).

Young people whose families move from lower income to higher income areas have been shown to be less likely to problem drink and use marijuana compared with those who stayed behind. Young men who moved to better income areas were also less likely to be arrested for violent crimes, including assault, robbery, rape and other sex crimes with those who stayed in poor neighbourhoods. Youth who moved from poor to low- to middle income neighbourhoods were less likely to be involved in drug offences, truancy, running away, disorderliness and weapon offences than those who did not move (Briggs 1997b in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000).

Living in communities with greater ethnic diversity has also been found to be associated with more emotional and behavioural problems in adolescents (Sampson and Groves 1989 in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). This was particularly true for personal victimisation. The rate at which neighbours come and go, or residential stability, is also related to well-being. In one study, early adolescents who lived in neighbourhoods where people tended to move on quite quickly were more likely to show higher lifetime alcohol use than those from schools in more disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Ennett, Flewelling, Lindrooth and Norton 1997 in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). There is some evidence that residential instability is also associated with delinquency and crime, particularly property crimes (Sampson and Groves 1989 in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000).

Neighbourhoods and emotional well-being
There is less research showing a link between neighbourhoods and the extent of the emotional problems experienced by young women. However, there is some evidence that people are less likely to experience emotional problems in neighbourhoods with more high-income families (Sampson and Groves 1989; Simons, Johnson, Beaman, Conger and Whitbeck 1996 both in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). Young African American women have been found to show fewer symptoms of depression when they live in neighbourhoods where they receive support and supervision from local adults (Stevenson 1998). This was true even when support from their family was low. Young men were less likely to feel helpless in such neighbourhoods. This effect was particularly marked in neighbourhoods with generally low perceived support and supervision. When young people did not feel supported and looked after by family in such neighbourhoods, they showed more depression. When they were lucky enough to find support in such neighbourhoods, they tended to experience less depression. In high support and supervision neighbourhoods, in contrast, even young people with low kin support showed less depression, suggesting a protective effect of neighbourhoods.

Delaying sex and parenthood

Another positive impact of neighbourhoods is on delaying parenthood until young people have finished their education and established a career. The strongest pattern here is the relationship between timing of first sexual experience/child-bearing and socio-economic status – a measure which encompasses parental income, occupation and education. There seems more of a chance young people will delay sexual experience and child-bearing when they live in areas with more people in professional and managerial jobs (Brooks-Gunn et. al. 1993, Crane 1991 both in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). Young men have been found to be more likely to have sex more often and get someone pregnant when they live in neighbourhoods that are poor and/or have high levels of unemployment (Ku, Sonenstein and Pleack 1993 in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). Both economic and social resources in the community are associated with less child-bearing outside of marriage (Billy and Moore 1992, Brooks-Gunn et. al. 1993 both in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000).

However, in a 21-year longitudinal study, six characteristics of neighbourhoods (unemployment levels, high and low family income, number of high school dropouts, female-headed households and number of white American families) were found to predict school outcomes but not teen pregnancy (Ginther, Haveman and Wolfe 2000). Single teen parenthood was not predicted consistently in this study by any of the neighbourhood characteristics, singly or in combination. Given this study controlled for the impact of family characteristics including family structure, parent education and household moves, this suggests family outweighs neighbourhood in its impact on teen pregnancy. It may also be the more salient issue here was what type of occupation most neighbours had rather than their income and this was not investigated.

Providing yet another point of view, there is evidence that in neighbourhoods that are reasonably affluent, young African American women will delay both sex and parenthood compared to poor, highly racially segregated neighbourhoods (Hogan and Kitagawa 1985 in Ensminger et. al. 1996). This is true even when the effects of family and individual characteristics are taken into account. Here it definitely appears income is the issue, although the effect of this may have been confused with the effect of occupation.

Overall, it appears both the income and occupation of neighbours has an impact on whether young people will delay sexual experience and plan child-bearing until they have finished their education and are established in a career. This may be because in poorer neighbourhoods the economic uncertainties discourage educational aspirations, and there are norms that increase the risk of childbearing, such as dropping out of school (Hogan and Kitagawa 1985 in Ensminger et. al. 1996). So, in more affluent neighbourhoods, young women may see educational aims as more realistic because they feel they have the resources to achieve them and may feel that a career is a real possibility for them.

Neighbourhood safety

There is evidence the involvement of residents can reduce violence even in the poorest neighbourhoods, thus making a safer environment for young people to flourish in (Sampson and Morenoff 1991 in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). When neighbours share values, have close ties, work together and agree to intervene with young people to uphold shared standards, there is less homicide in the neighbourhood (Sampson 2001). Not only that, but there is less homicide in nearby neighbourhoods. Sampson and colleagues found that neighbourhoods near crime 'hot spots' tended to have more violent crime, simply by proximity. This is even taking into account previous levels of violence in the area and other factors such as residential stability and number of immigrants, both of which could reduce close ties and shared values. Thus the way neighbours relate to one another and the actions they take to support and supervise

local young people have quite a dramatic impact. Close ties, shared values and collective action (together known as collective efficacy) are more common in affluent neighbourhoods and less common in poorer areas. Sampson suggests that lower collective efficacy means neighbours are less likely to control groups of young people in the neighbourhood (in Duncan and Raudenbush 2001).

The reduction in violence is likely to lead to positive outcomes for young people by reducing the amount of stress they experience growing up. Young people who grow up exposed to repeated stress are more likely to have behavioural and emotional problems (Biafora et. al. 1994, DuRant et. al. 1994, Osofsky 1995b all in Steinberg 2000). Adolescents who are exposed to violence in their lives are also more likely to act violently themselves. They are also more likely to think about killing themselves, experience symptoms of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and substance abuse (Campbell and Schwartz 1996, DuRant et. al. 1994 and 1995, Pastore, Fisher and Friedman 1996a all in Steinberg 2000). Other research has found that living in neighbourhoods where all adults share a willingness to monitor and supervise the behaviour of all young people, leads to greater prosocial competence and fewer adolescent problems (Elliott, Wilson, Huizinga, Sampson, Elliott and Rankin 1996 in Brody, Ge, Conger, Gibbons, Murry, Gerard and Simons 2001).

So young people who grow up in neighbourhoods where neighbours get on and work in together, share values and actively intervene with adolescents are more likely to experience less violence, less stress, be less violent themselves, have better mental health and more positive values and behaviour.

PATHWAYS OF INFLUENCE – EXPLAINING HOW NEIGHBOURHOODS HAVE THE IMPACT THEY DO

Key points:
- The pathways by which neighbourhood has an impact on young people are complex and only partially known.
- The presence of employment has an impact on both income and how likely people are to stay in neighbourhoods.
- Income and occupational status of residents have an impact on what support is available for parents and young people from neighbours and may affect what resources a neighbourhood can acquire.
- People from many different ethnicities who live in one neighbourhood may be less likely to share values and form close ties, thus reducing their ability to work together to set and uphold community standards and support parents and young people.
- Where residents form close ties and there is local employment, neighbours are more likely to stay long-term, thus increasing the potential for close ties, shared values and collective caring for and management of young people.
- Good maintenance of properties can help build close ties and also enhance sharing of values, thus making collective action and support more likely.
- Residential zoning with local services provides fewer opportunities for unsupervised 'hanging out' with peers than mixed commercial and residential zoning.
- Neighbours can provide practical help and support easily through their close proximity and are more likely to form close ties and be helpful to each other when they are settled long-term.

- Settled and ethnically similar neighbours are more likely to form close ties, and if they agree on values can work together to support and supervise local young people, thus decreasing negative peer influences and making the community safer to live in.
- Close ties with neighbours, practical help, emotional support and companionship are likely to decrease parental stress, as does living in a safer neighbourhoods where there are more resources.
- Parents who are less stressed are more likely to parent more effectively, thus leading to better outcomes for young people.
- Effective parenting reduces the opportunities for young people to mix with peers who are involved in antisocial activities through better supervision and reduces vulnerability to negative community influences through warm support, while increasing the chances of young people getting involved with positive activities and influences.
- Neighbourhoods with shared values and an agreement to actively intervene to support and supervise all young people also reduce the likelihood of negative peer influence, as well as enhancing individual outcomes through modelling.
- Good local activities, supervised by skilled adults, structured and with a focus on skill building and cooperation, provide positive activities and interests for young people, decrease time in less positive, unsupervised activities and reduce contact with peers involved in these less positive activities. They also increase time with prosocial peers and adults who can be a positive influence, thus making staying at school more likely and risky behaviour less likely.

It is clear from the studies explored above that neighbourhoods can have a positive impact on young people, supporting them in building strengths and achieving their potential. But the big question is – how does this happen? Just exactly what is going on in neighbourhoods that makes positive outcomes more likely?

The ways that neighbours can relate to each other and make each other's lives better or worse are so numerous and complex that sorting out clear pathways is a challenge. As seasoned researcher Robert Sampson commented in a recent article:

> There are a daunting number of complex challenges to assessing the neighbourhood-level framework . (Sampson 2001).

To make it even more challenging, it is difficult to work out exactly what is due to individual families and what is due to the actual neighbourhood. For example, if a neighbourhood is generally high in income and youth outcomes are better than for a generally low-income area (which is usually the case) is this because a good income made parenting easier for most of the individual families? Or is it because having neighbours with good incomes had a positive effect on the poorer people in the community? The very little research there is in the area does not answer these questions completely, so there is still a lot of guesswork in any discussion of neighbourhood effects.

Two things are likely in considering pathways of influence within neighbourhoods. The first is that most of the effects are not direct. Neighbourhoods will likely have most of their impact by affecting other factors such as influencing parental stress or affecting the amount of contact peer groups have and how well antisocial young people are managed (Duncan and Raudenbush 2001, Sampson 2001). Some, such as the impact of adult support and extracurricular activities, will have a direct impact on young people,

however (Damon and Eisenberg 1998). Secondly, neighbourhood influences operate over time, with time lags before a neighbourhood characteristic such as more people moving out, has an impact on youth. This is due to the time taken to influence the other factors that have a direct impact on young people, such as parenting (Sampson 2001).

Pathway of neighbourhood income and occupation

Australian research has shown a link between economic stress and parenting style. Single parents who were also experiencing poverty were significantly more likely to neglect their children, greatly increasing the risk of delinquency (Weatherburn and Lind 1998). They also found this pattern was affected by the type of neighbourhood the families lived in. When parents allowed their children to go out often in the evenings without supervision, youth were very much more likely to get involved in crime when they lived in crime-prone neighbourhoods as opposed to areas with reasonably low crime rates. Furthermore, being frequently allowed out alone in the evening was significantly associated with involvement in crime only for those youth who lived in crime-prone neighbourhoods. Weatherburn and Lind (1998) suggested an 'epidemic model' which suggests youth crime will increase when so many neighbours are experiencing financial stress that the number of young people vulnerable to crime through less effective parenting passes a certain level. Once this threshold of young people vulnerable to crime, or actually involved is passed, there will be a much greater than normal growth in the number of local youth who offend.

They suggest low-income neighbourhoods have more youth involvement in crime because they have more vulnerable youth, due to the level of economic stress which puts a strain on parenting skills, particularly keeping a close eye on young people. With single parents this is particularly an issue. One person, often working full-time, is sometimes stretched beyond their resources trying to fulfill all the tasks of two parents while their child or children are with them. When that person is worried about money, their stress levels may mean that even the good parenting skills they have all but disappear.

Income is directly related to employment and there is evidence that when there is less employment in an area, neighbours are more likely to move on. So, neighbourhood income also affects neighbourhood stability, which in turn affects how likely people are to help and support each other, share values and intervene when young people act antisocially (Sampson 2001). It also affects parental stress levels which affect parenting (Amato 2000, Harold, Pryor and Reynolds 2001).

When parenting effectiveness is lower, peers with antisocial tendencies start to have more influence. Sampson observed that in neighbourhoods with low income and racial inequality it seemed particularly difficult for neighbours to work together to maintain a safe and well-resourced neighbourhood. The reasons for this are not entirely clear, but certainly neighbours work together more effectively in higher income areas (Sampson 2001). Sampson suggested that it is more having a high number of families with middle to high incomes has a positive impact, rather than having low-income neighbours has a bad impact. Living in an area with many different incomes may create some of the same difficulties found in a mixed ethnicity neighbourhood, where people are less likely to form ties, support each other and work together towards positive neighbourhood conditions (Froland et. al. 1981b in Unger and Wandersman 1985).

Areas with high concentrations of low-income residents have fewer resources and poorer social organisation (Kasarda and Janowitz 1994, Sampson 1992 both in Luthar and Cushing 1999). The presence of economically successful adults in the neighbourhood has been found to foster discipline in young people, due to better social resources and collective socialisation (all neighbours taking responsibility for instilling and upholding values) (Wilson 1991 in Luthar and Cushing 1999). So, income has the potential

to affect young people by affecting the quality of parenting they receive and from there, affecting how many young people are involved in crime and how vulnerable they are to those peers. But neighbourhood income also affects how helpful neighbours might be to young people and whether there are local resources there to buffer them and their families.

It is important to distinguish between income and occupation type. While income is important, a number of studies have found it is the number of white collar or professional residents in a neighbourhood that is more significant than income (Crane 1991 in Leventhal and Brooks-Ensminger et. al. 1996). As many studies do not distinguish between occupation and income it may be that a misleading impression is being created and it is actually the former that is more important. That is, living where there are few professional/managerial workers might be worse for young people than living in poor areas.

One area that does not appear to have been much researched is that of the impact of the extreme 'busy-ness' of high income, dual career parents on parenting and youth development. Clearly, if parents are extremely busy they will lack time to carry out all the nurturing and monitoring tasks of effective parenting, just as single parents tend to do. It could be that in this case the level of income is not as important for predicting outcomes for youth as the quality of parenting. In fact, research on parenting has found that the positive impacts of authoritative (nurturing) parenting outweighed the impact of income, ethnicity and family structure on outcomes for young people (Steinberg, Mounts, Lamborn and Dornbusch 1991). This brings up the question of whether 'quality' time is as important to children as 'lots of time' in which to do all the things that effective parents do. Busy, affluent parents may well let go of some of the monitoring and supervision of their adolescent children because of time constraints, which could well lead to more crime and poorer school performance amongst high income families. While this is a fascinating possibility, it is unfortunately beyond the scope of this review to explore further.

Pathway of neighbourhood help and involvement

It may help to look at the many ways neighbours can make life heaven or hell for one another to work out the ways this might impact on young people. First, the personal relationships in a neighbourhood can make a difference. Neighbours who are friendly and exchange greetings, or pop over for a 'cuppa' can help people belong and stop them feeling isolated (Rubin 1976 in Unger and Wandersman 1985). Taking it one step further, when neighbours start sharing their joys and sorrows and become friends who can be relied on for support, people tend to feel more satisfaction with their neighbourhood and less desire to move (Fischer et. al 1977, Gans 1968, Unger and Wandersman 1982 all in Unger and Wandersman 1985). Neighbours who have close or significant ties with each other are much more likely to provide support, ranging from babysitting to household repairs to loans (Wellman and Wortley 1990).

Companionship in communities has been found to reduce loneliness, anxiety and mortality (Marangoni and Ickles 1989 in Wellman and Wortley 1990). This strongly suggests that parents who feel welcomed by the neighbours and feel they have friends living nearby they can call on for support, are less stressed and more able to parent to their full ability. As we saw in the section on family influences, parents who are less stressed are more able to use authoritative (nurturing) parenting techniques that lead to good outcomes for young people.

Neighbours can also offer a range of help, from providing a shoulder to cry on to providing information on useful organisations. Some things make it more likely that neighbours will help each other. When neighbours have lived in the area for ten years or less, have children and share the same kind of income bracket and ethnicity they are more likely to lend a hand or an ear (Michelson 1979, Unger and Wandersman 1982 both in Unger and Wandersman 1985). Attachment to the neighbourhood and a sense

of community are also positively related to social interaction among neighbours, which would increase the chance of forming close ties (Ahlbrandt 1984 in Unger and Wandersman 1985). Once again, this could make a difference to young people by affecting the amount of support their parents get and thus their stress levels.

Actions by local people to keep an eye on each other's properties and the people who are coming and going has been thought to reduce crime, although evidence on this is mixed. Strong recent research has shown that when neighbourhoods are high in social cohesion and informal social control, there is a much lower incidence of violence (Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls 1997 in Sampson 2001). Social cohesion refers to a willingness to help each other, similar values and close ties. Informal social control involves a willingness to intervene when local children play up or there is violence, or to work together to stop local assets such as fire stations being shut down, in other words, collective efficacy at work.

The real strength of this research is that it took into account the influence of some other key neighbourhood variables – residential stability, concentrated social disadvantage and concentration of new immigrants – along with 11 factors relating to individuals, such as ethnicity and income. Sampson et. al. (2001) found when neighbours moved less often and there were fewer social disadvantages concentrated in one neighbourhood, violence was less likely. But the impact of neighbourhood closeness and informal social control was far greater than these other factors to the point where it almost ruled them out. These two factors have a positive impact on young people by reducing the stress they experience through victimisation, reducing antisocial peer influence and reducing the number of violent role models they are exposed to (Biafora et. al. 1994, DuRant et. al. 1994, Osofsky 1995b, Pastore, Fisher and Friedman 1996a all in Steinberg 2000, Sampson 2001).

Research on Very Important Adults (or VIP adults) also shows us that young people are influenced by a range of people locally, from extended family and older friends, to teachers, youth leaders, church workers and neighbours (Greenberger et. al. 1998, Werner and Smith 1992). The presence of more white collar neighbours may feed into this by making more VIP adults available who have skills and resources to provide more resources. But even in poorer neighbourhoods, the presence of a strong support network of caring adults can help make the difference between sinking and swimming (Werner and Smith 1992).

We know social advantage and stable neighbours have a positive impact on young people. This research suggests very strongly that social disadvantage and residential stability have an impact by affecting how well neighbours get on together and how prepared they are to take action to take care of the neighbourhood, especially the young people. This in turn suggests that when neighbours do not feel enough trust and shared values to intervene in fights or misbehaviour by young people, antisocial peer groups gain ground (Sampson and Lauritsen 1994 in Duncan and Raudenbush 2001). There is also some evidence that when neighbours do intervene in both supporting and supervising young people, there are benefits for the emotional well-being of youth, particularly young women (Stevenson 1998).

Pathway of residential stability
Research cited above also shows that living in a more stable neighbourhood is better for young people and just getting on with the neighbours appears to have some impact on whether people stay around or move on (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000, Sampson 2001). Support – emotional, practical and financial – is far more likely to come from neighbours with whom there are close ties (Wellman and Wortley 1990). It is difficult to maintain or establish close ties when neighbours are there one day and gone the next.

Another way in which residential stability may help in neighbourhoods is by enabling neighbours to build up a shared language of territorial markers such as fences, locked gates and well-kept house fronts

that tell others this neighbourhood has certain standards (Rapoport 1982 in Unger and Wandersman 1985). Such markers have been found to differentiate between those houses that are burgled and those that are not, particularly the presence of symbolic markers like having a name and address on the front of the house (Brown and Altman 1981, Becker 1977 both in Unger and Wandersman 1985). In neighbourhoods where many different ethnic groups and inadequate police protection lead to social disorganisation, the shared meaning of these markers may be lost, making them less effective in keeping neighbourhood order (Merry 1981b in Unger and Wandersman 1985). People from high problem neighbourhoods have been found to view such territorial markers as less effective in protecting them from violations of the neighbourhood such as burglary than in low problem neighbourhoods (Brower 1983 in Unger and Wandersman).

When neighbours move frequently, this affects local institutions and relationships and this in turn may make values less clear and affect how safe people feel in enforcing them (Sampson 2001). Residential instability itself is further affected by how many local institutions such as libraries, medical services and community centres there are (Yancy and Erickson 1979 in Unger and Wandersman 1985). However, this is not a direct affect but the result of the availability of employment for neighbourhood residents. Where there was access to employment people tended to stay longer and there tended to be more local institutions.

Pathway of ethnic diversity

There is some evidence that young people do better in communities that have less ethnic diversity (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). The reasons for this are not intuitively obvious. One finding that helps explain it is that in areas where people are of the same ethnicity, neighbours are more likely to refer each other on to helpful local services and provide other useful information (Froland, Pancoast, Chapman and Kimboko 1981b in Unger and Wandersman 1985). This is possibly because they feel more at ease and trusting with each other because they know they share values and world views. Increased social and practical support may in turn reduce stress for parents and give them access to more social support, thus affecting their parenting style and having an impact on youth well-being.

In a neighbourhood where people are from different ethnic groups, they may be less likely to talk to each other and form ties. Any ties that are formed may not be very useful if there are strong boundaries between different ethnic groups in the neighbourhood, meaning one group cannot use the resources of another group (Merry 1981b in Unger and Wandersman 1985).

Another possible reason for the impact of ethnically diverse neighbourhoods is that there may be less agreement on shared values and the kind of behaviour that is expected from young people, or how to deal with young people locally. There may also be constraints between different ethnic groups about intervening with young people from another culture in case this causes conflict with their adult neighbours. This is based on Sampson's work on community violence which showed that in neighbourhoods where people had shared values and were likely to intervene with neighbour's adolescents, violence was reduced (Sampson 2001).

There is also evidence that in migrant communities, more settled migrants act as gatekeepers for new migrants from the same ethnic group. They help them to forge links with and access resources in the wider community (Froland et. al. 1979 and 1981a and b; Snyder 1976 both cited in Unger and Wandersman 1985). Gatekeepers refer new migrants to services such as social service agencies. They are not, however, found in all neighbourhoods and the traditions and sense of social responsibility of the gatekeeper affect their role. If too many ethnic groups are found in one neighbourhood, it could be that gatekeepers

cannot serve all of them or all of them do not have gatekeepers and thus informal referral to local services and resources is decreased. Once again, this would put more stress on families.

Pathway of buildings and land use
Given that two of the key aspects of neighbourhood are 'place' and 'space', the way land is used and the characteristics of buildings are rarely looked at in the literature. However, some snippets of information are available. However, good home maintenance is associated with closer relationships between neighbours, although what brings this association about is not clear (Greenbaum and Greenbaum 1981 in Unger and Wandersman 1985). Neighbours who live in cul-de-sacs where there are more opportunities to greet and chat while coming and going, are also more likely to get on with each other (Gans 1965 in Unger and Wandersman 1985).

Land use patterns such as the location of schools and residences versus commercial buildings, also have an impact. Neighbourhoods that are 'mixed use' – that is, a mix of residential and commercial buildings – tend to offer greater opportunities for property crimes such as theft and burglary. They also provide more opportunities for young people to get together in situations that are ripe for unsupervised, negative peer group influence as opposed to the positive peer group influence that takes place at school and in extracurricular activities (Stark 1987 in Sampson 2001). Some research has linked the incidence of delinquency to the proximity to a McDonalds restaurants (Brantingham and Brantingham 1984 in Sampson 2001). It is not that McDonalds outlets are breeding grounds for crime rather the restaurants tend to become gathering places for unsupervised groups of young people.

In this instance, neighbourhoods can be affected by public decisions about land use and zoning and here the willingness and ability to take collective action are important. However, this collective efficacy is more likely in affluent areas and less likely in areas with few resources where there are high degrees of racial exclusion (Sampson 2001). Where neighbours can band together to insist on residential zoning only, outcomes are likely to be better for young people.

Pathway of parenting
There is some evidence that neighbourhoods have their impact by making a difference to the way parents deal with their children. We know from a previous section that economic hardship is associated with parental stress that then affects parenting style to make it less effective. This in turn has an impact on outcomes for young people. Hence living in a neighbourhood where there is little employment and few support facilities is likely to increase economic hardship and stress, setting off this whole cycle. The level of support available from neighbours in terms of information, aid and friendship is also likely to affect parent stress levels. The higher level of social support available in higher income areas may reduce parent stress (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). Neighbours, both kin and friends, have been found to provide a wide range of support – emotional, practical, financial, large and small (Wellman and Wortley 1990).

Having people nearby whom one is able to confide in, get information from, ask for help or get a small loan from is likely to greatly reduce parental stress, particularly for people with financial problems. There is evidence adolescents benefit directly from parents being socially involved in their neighbourhoods as this allows for an exchange of resources with other neighbours (Steinberg, Darling and Fletcher 1995 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998). Parents who are more involved in the neighbourhood tend to be more effective parents, possibly because they are less stressed.

Parenting style is also known to change when families live in low-income neighbourhoods, although the research in this area is contradictory. Parents tend to be less warm and use harsher discipline (Briggs 1997, Simons, Johnson, Beaman, Conger and Whitbeck 1996 both in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). Parents living in areas with a generally low income tend to be more authoritarian, punitive, controlling, restrictive and disapproving (Kelley, Sanchez-Hucies and Walker 1993; Hart and Risley 1995 both in Damon and Eisenberg 1998). When parents move to middle-income neighbourhoods their disciplinary style becomes less harsh, possibly because they are under less stress (Briggs 1997 in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000).

Parenting styles can range from extreme protection and insulation of young people in more dangerous neighbourhoods to playing an active role in developing community-based networks of support that aid positive youth outcomes (Furstenberg, Cook, Eccles, Elder and Sameroff 1998 in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). In high-risk neighbourhoods, moderate to high control by parents has been found to be more beneficial for youth (Baldwin, Baldwin and Cole 1990 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998; Lamborn, Dornbusch and Steinberg 1996). For young African Americans it has been found to result in lower levels of depression.

However, other research into parenting styles has found that authoritative (nurturing) parenting leads to better outcomes irrespective of parents' income, although, this may not take into account the actual dangerousness of where they live (Avenevoli et. al. 1999). More restrictive monitoring, with young people required to stay home and avoid peers, certainly appears to take place in high-risk neighbourhoods, whatever its effects (Jarrett 1997 in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000).

One study found that differences between parenting styles in different types of neighbourhoods were quite modest. While parent management of young people was more restrictive in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, the relationship between neighbourhood and parenting style was not a strong one. In disadvantaged neighbourhoods, restrictive parenting led to reduced involvement in positive activities outside the home, but not in other neighbourhoods. The links families had with local institutions, such as schools and libraries had an impact on how well young people did in school, but only in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Cook, Kim, Chan and Settersen 1998 in Duncan and Raudenbush 2001)

Another study found the impact of community disadvantage on psychological distress in young men was largely explained by the degraded quality of parenting due to stress (Simons et. al. 1996 in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). That is, parents stressed by poor community conditions were less effective in their parenting, with the result that their adolescent sons were less happy. Conversely, the association between more affluent neighbourhoods and lower rates of teenage pregnancy has been largely explained by greater monitoring of young women when dating, which occurs less in less affluent neighbourhoods (Hogan and Kitagawa 1985 in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). This suggests healthy neighbourhoods may have a large part of their impact by supporting parents in doing a good job, both in relating warmly to their adolescent children and in keeping an eye on them.

All this research seems to indicate the enhanced importance of parenting style when other strengths are missing from the environment. It may be good parenting is not quite as necessary for good outcomes when young people are exposed to strong schools, rich neighbourhood resources of institutions and activities, prosocial friends and supportive local adults. But when these factors are weakened, parenting style becomes all the more important.

Pathway of peer group influence

Parenting style is also related to the influence of peers. As previous sections showed, when parents are relating effectively to adolescents, peers have less influence. But when parents provide inadequate supervision or fail to adapt the rules to changing maturity levels, young people tend to be far more influenced by their peers. This may be particularly problematic for single-parent families where there is only one person to do all the supervision and monitoring.

Aversive parenting, using harsh methods, means young people learn aversive techniques to deal with conflict with friends, neighbours and schoolmates. They also fail to learn the prosocial skills that earlier sections showed were vital to getting on well with peers (Snyder and Patterson 1995 in Brody et. al. 2001). In a knock-on effect, this means they are more likely to be rejected by peers who do have these skills. This rejection leaves them lonely, with time on their hands and vulnerable to starting friendships with young people who have the same lack of skills and aggressive style they have (Simons, Whitbeck, Conger and Conger 1991 in Brody et. al. 2001). Unfortunately, their new friends are often involved in crime and this tends to rub off on them.

Long-term studies of this chain of events have shown that harsh parenting tends to lead to asociating with peers (Blanton, Gibbons, Gerrard, Conger and Smith 1997, Conger and Reuter 1996 both in Brody et. al. 2001). Low monitoring by parents of where young people are and with whom, low nurturance of young people by parents and lax discipline are all associated with poorer outcomes (Brody and Forehand 1993, Dishion, Patterson, Stoollmiller and Skinner 1991 both in Brody et. al. 2001). Overall, parenting that is stressed and harsh – which is more likely in low-income, dangerous neighbourhoods with little support and few resources – tends to put young men at particular at risk of antisocial behaviour. This is particularly true for parents with low education and occupational class (Dishion et. al. 1998 in Brody 2001).

Australian research shows when single parent families experience financial stress, parenting style is more likely to move towards neglect, where minimal supervision is provided. The researchers suggest at this point the peer group becomes more powerful and other research supports this (Weatherburn and Lind 1998). In a neighbourhood where there are many poor single parent families, there can be expected to be more unsupervised young people, with even greater risk of antisocial behaviour and other problems (Sampson 1987 in Sampson 2001).

The most common pattern when young people (usually young men) start offending is that they do it in the company of one of their peers, often someone from their neighbourhood (Reiss and Farrington 1991 in Luthar and Cushing 1999). As a result, the more young people there are in the neighbourhood who are involved in crime and the less supervised they are by their parents, the more opportunity there is to team up with a buddy to 'have a go' at crime.

Not only parents, but also other adult neighbours, can make a difference by monitoring and supervising young people in their locality. However, when neighbours do not share values and expectations that they will intervene with local young people who are behaving dangerously or illegally, groups of young people with antisocial tendencies can get out of hand (Sampson 2001). In such neighbourhoods, rates of violence tend to be higher.

Very Important Adults also play a protective role with regard to antisocial peer influence. By modelling responsible behaviour and disapproving of risky behaviour they provide a counter-influence to any local antisocial activity for young men (Greenberger et. al. 1998).

The availability of supervised activities locally also has an impact on peer relations. Young people involved in structured, supervised activities that build skills are less likely to 'hang out' with friends involved in dodgy activities (Mahoney and Stattin 2000). They are more likely to spend time with friends who have good social skills and are involved in school and other positive activities. Further, young people who get involved with such activities after school are more likely to stay at school and stop antisocial activities, particularly if their friends get involved too (Mahoney 2000). This means the number of resources in the neighbourhood/community will have an impact on youth outcomes, partly directly through encouraging more positive interests and partly through their impact on who young people spend time with, and are influenced by.

Putting a positive spin on this seemingly dire situation, when parents are nurturing, involved, use reasonable discipline, show caring and keep an eye on their adolescent children, young people are far less likely to become involved with antisocial peers. Neighbourhoods in which all adults share a willingness to monitor and supervise the behaviour of all young people enhance this, leading to greater prosocial competence and less adolescent problems (Elliott, Wilson, Huizinga, Sampson, Elliott and Rankin 1996 in Brody et. al. 2001). So, the way parents and other adults deal with young people in their locality affects how likely they are to be vulnerable to antisocial influences, how powerful the peer group is and how positive the influence of the peer group is. In addition, when the community provides structured, supervised activities that build skills out of school hours, young people are even more likely to be disinterested in crime and show positive interests in learning and recreation.

All this suggests that neighbourhoods can contribute to how positively peer groups interact and behave. They can support parents in their role through close neighbourhood relationships and through good institutional resources. This means parents will be more likely to continue warm relationships with their children and to keep an eye on where they are, who they are with and when they come home. This reduces the influence of antisocial peers and the fewer antisocial peers there are in the neighbourhood, the less likely it is that other young people will be influenced by them. Also, the more young people there are who see school positively and have good emotional well-being, the more likely they are to be a positive influence on their peers. Neighbours can also keep a direct eye on young people in the neighbourhood, making community values clear and making sure any bad behaviour does not get out of hand. Once again, this reduces the potential numbers and influence of young people involved in crime and other undesirable behaviour.

Putting it all together – many neighbourhood pathways
Based on the research and theories discussed above, the following overall pathways can be suggested. It should be borne in mind they are likely to take place over a number of years, with one neighbourhood factor having a knock-on effect on another, leading only in the final instance to changes in adolescent well-being.

NEIGHBOURHOOD /FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

PATHWAYS OF NEIGHBOURHOOD INFLUENCE

PARENT EDUCATION

LOCAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

PARENT OCCUPATION

PERCENTAGE OF WHITE COLLAR WORKERS IN NEIGHBOURHOOD

PERCENTAGE OF SINGLE PARENTS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

ETHNIC DIVERSITY

NEIGHBOURHOOD DISADVANTAGE

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF NEIGHBOURHOOD (TERRITORIAL MARKERS, HOUSE CHARACTERISTICS, BUILDING MAINTENANCE)

LAND USE (MIXED RESIDENTIAL/ COMMERCIAL)

INCOME

NUMBER AND QUALITY OF LOCAL RESOURCES AND INSTITUTIONS (EG, LIBRARIES, HEALTHCARE)

PERCENTAGE IN NEIGHBOURHOOD BELOW POVERTY LINE

PARENT ADDICTION AND/OR MENTAL ILLNESS

SOCIAL INTERACTIONS BETWEEN NEIGHBOURHOOD SOCIAL SUPPORT FOR ADULTS

RESIDENTIAL STABILITY – MOVING HOUSE

VIOLENCE /DANGER IN NEIGHBOURHOOD

SOCIAL COHESION* + INFORMAL SOCIAL CONTROL = SOCIAL EFFICACY*

VERY IMPORTANT ADULTS/ NEIGHBOURHOOD SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

*Social cohesion – close relationships and shared values
*Social efficacy – effective maintenance of standards by the community

NB: This diagram does not specify mediating or moderating variables, as these are not fully specified by the research.

OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

PARENTAL LINKS WITH LOCAL RESOURCES AND INSTITUTIONS

PARENTAL STRESS

ETHNICITY OF PARENTS

PARENTAL/FAMILY CONFLICT

PARENTING STYLE
1. WARMTH/ ACCEPTANCE
2. MONITORING/ SUPERVISION

PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF AND BELIEFS ABOUT VIOLENCE IN THEIR NEIGHBOURHOOD

PEER INTERACTIONS (VULNERABILITY TO INFLUENCE/ OPPORTUNITY TO BE INFLUENCED/ TYPE OF INFLUENCE)

CURFEWS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

ADOLESCENT STRESS

ACADEMIC OUTCOMES (ACHIEVEMENT/ ATTENDANCE)

SOCIAL COMPETENCE

STAYING LONGER AT SECONDARY SCHOOL

DELAYING PARENTHOOD

ASSOCIATES (PROSOCIAL OR ANTISOCIAL)

AMOUNT OF DRUG USE

BEHAVIOUR (PROSOCIAL OR ANTISOCIAL)

PROSOCIAL COMPETENCE

FEWER PROBLEMS

LEVEL OF EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING OR DISTRESS (HAPPINESS, ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, ETC)

LEVEL OF YOUTH VIOLENCE (NONE TO MUCH)

The first part of the pathway appears to be economic conditions in the neighbourhood, particularly income levels of residents. This, in turn, is particularly related to the availability of employment locally.

Economic advantage or disadvantage has an impact on what local institutions are available and how good the schools, libraries and other social organisations are. It also affects how likely people are to stay in the community or move on. It has an impact too on the overall level of social advantage or disadvantage in the community. Ethnic diversity, while not necessarily affected by income levels, may also come into play at this point.

These factors all act on social cohesion and informal social control. Greater ethnic diversity potentially means fewer close ties between neighbours and less agreement on values and community actions. Residential instability means shared values and agreed ways of dealing with groups of young people and other community issues are continually eroded and may be difficult to re-establish. Residential stability means shared values and agreed behaviours are strengthened and passed on to new neighbours ('this is how we do things round here'). Stable neighbours are also more likely to become close and help each other, thus reducing parent stress and increasing parent effectiveness. The quality of schools and availability of structured after-school activities also has a downstream impact on well-being.

Social cohesion and social control have an impact on how much violence there is in the community and is also likely to influence how stable the neighbourhood is. The more violence there is, the more likely people may be to move out or not move in. Social cohesion also affects the amount of social support a parent is likely to get which in turn affects stress levels and parenting style.

The next step on the pathway is the impact on parenting. Income, family structure, the safety or dangerousness of the neighbourhood and the level of support from neighbours all have the potential to reduce or increase parental stress. This, in turn, affects parenting style as well as the home environment. The number of single-parent families in the neighbourhood may also enter as a factor at this point. More single-parent families may also affect parenting styles when combined with economic stress. The overall effect may be harsher, more authoritarian discipline, or reduced supervision and monitoring. Both have negative impacts, one on reduced emotional well-being, the other on less control of antisocial behaviour. In neighbourhoods with better income, fewer single-parent families, better resources and relationships, and more informal social control, parenting is likely to stay at a better level.

At this point, peer relationships are likely to come into play. With less supervision by parents and fewer structured and supervised after-school activities, young people spend more time just 'hanging out' together. Lower levels of parental influence mean peers have more potential influence. Poorer quality parenting and schooling mean more dropouts in the neighbourhood which in turn increases the likelihood of other young people dropping out. School dropouts become more likely to have children early. Low-income neighbourhoods are less likely to provide work to keep young people off the street and legally in funds. The more unsupervised young people there are, especially those who have few links to school or other social institutions, the more potential for antisocial behaviour and influence there is. This makes it even more difficult for the community to control young people, especially if they are lacking shared values and strategies.

If, on the other hand, parents are less stressed by single parenthood, economic problems, neighbourhood dangerousness, unemployment and low social support, they are more likely to be parenting well. Their friendships with other neighbours provide good role models for their children and there are fewer unsupervised young people to become an antisocial influence. If schools are better resourced and safer, they are likely to attract good teachers and have good morale and young people are more likely to stay

in school and graduate. This means they are likely to delay child-bearing, go on to further education and earn more. Well-resourced schools are also likely to provide more extracurricular activities which reduce drop out rates and antisocial behaviour. Good parenting is also likely to promote emotional well-being in young people, as are safe, supportive neighbourhoods.

This analysis, based on the research reviewed above and on current theories, does not take into account mediating and moderating variables, or attempt to describe the interaction between various pathways. What is needed to clarify the area is a path analysis of all these various factors, taking into account the time lags involved on the way to youth outcomes.

LINKS BETWEEN FAMILIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS

Key points:

- When neighbourhoods lack strengths, family strengths become even more important.
- When families lack strengths, neighbourhood strengths become even more important.
- Parenting style is affected by the nature of the neighbourhood, with nurturant, involved, limit-setting (authoritative (nurturing)) parenting more likely in strong neighbourhoods and restrictive, harsh (authoritarian) parenting more likely in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- The reasons for this include different levels of stress on parents in each type of neighbourhood, and differing levels of education and occupation.
- Restrictive parenting which is not harsh or aversive (for example, curfews, limits on time in neighbourhood, emphasis on supervised activities) can lead to better outcomes for young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- Parent involvement with neighbours can lead to better outcomes for young people in healthy neighbourhoods, worse in dangerous neighbourhoods.
- Parenting style has an impact on young people over and above neighbourhood characteristics and family income – the way parents treat young people can lead to good outcomes in any kind of neighbourhood or family.

The relationship between parenting style and neighbourhood is rather like a see-saw: when one lacks strengths the other compensates by making more of a difference than usual. It is known that good parenting takes on even more importance as a protective factor in neighbourhoods that are lacking in strengths (Rutter 1985 in Brody et. al. 2001). But we are also seeing in this review that when parenting is less effective, neighbourhood strengths become even more important. For example, when young African American women whose families were giving them little support found an alternative source of support in their neighbours, they showed even better emotional well-being than those who had both supportive families and neighbourhoods (Stevenson 1998). It appears the strength and importance of protective factors is determined not only by how close to a young person an environment is (family being closest, neighbourhood furthest away and friends and school at points between) but also determined by what other strengths exist in a young person's world. Where one environment falls down, the other environments suddenly become all the more important and powerful.

An example of this can be found in a study of parents who are addicted to opioids and cocaine. Between 80 and 90 percent of these parents also suffered from a mental illness such as affective anxiety disorder, or antisocial personality disorder (Luthar and Cushing 1999). While parenting style was unfortunately not measured, it is highly unlikely that parents who are trying to service an addiction and suffering from

a mental illness would be parenting very effectively. Previous research had found a link between addiction and psychological disturbance in mothers and poorer functioning in children (Luthar, Cushing, Merikangas and Rounsaville 1998 in Luthar and Cushing 1999). It had also found that substance-abusing mothers were less able to provide effective supervision and positive role models for their children. What the researchers found in their later study was that neighbourhood factors had two to five times as much impact on young people as maternal risk and protective factors. These factors were the concentration of low-income residents in the neighbourhood, the presence of economically successful residents and local crime rates. The strength of this study was that the young people were followed for two years from age 12 to 14 so we can much more confidently say that neighbourhood factors were having an impact on downstream outcomes such as academic success, emotional distress, antisocial behaviour and everyday functioning and competence.

The study found boys were less emotionally distressed in neighbourhoods with few low-income families, whereas girls did better in neighbourhoods with more low-income families. Where local crime rates were low, boys were far less likely to become involved in antisocial behaviour, whereas girls were less likely to do so in neighbourhoods with high crime rates. Girls showed better academic success when living in neighbourhoods with high numbers of managerial workers whereas boys did slightly better when there were fewer neighbours of this occupational class. Lastly, boys showed much better levels of everyday competence and functioning (as assessed by their mothers) when there were fewer low-income families in their neighbourhood, whereas girls showed better levels when there were more. This is not to say that it is desirable for young women to grow up in poor, crime-ridden neighbourhoods, but it does appear that young men do far better when they grow up in areas with less crime and more affluence.

There is some evidence parents change the way they treat their children depending on the type of neighbourhood they live in. A common response to more deprived or even dangerous neighbourhood conditions is to become more restrictive, allowing young people (particularly young women) less freedom to go outside home and school. In areas with generally low income, parents tend to be more authoritarian and punitive and also more controlling, restricting and disapproving (Kelley, Sanchez-Hucier and Walker 1993, Hart and Risley 1995). There is also evidence that parents' perceptions of how dangerous a neighbourhood is affect the way they treat their children. Mothers who see neighbourhoods as more dangerous (even when this is not supported by objective evidence) tend to treat young people more restrictively (Neil and Parke 1997 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998). Mothers who perceived more danger around them tended to have children who were more socially competent, largely because of their restrictive monitoring and supervision.

The extent to which parents are integrated into the local community can also affect young people. In neighbourhoods where good parenting is the norm, close ties with local people can lead to better outcomes for young people (Damon and Eisenberg 1998). But in neighbourhoods with a high number of parents involved in antisocial or undesirable activities, fitting in with the neighbours can have a harmful effect on adolescent outcomes.

The question here is whether parenting has an impact over and above that of neighbourhoods and family factors like income. To study this, neighbourhood characteristics and processes and family socio-economic status would have to be controlled for to see if parenting style still has an effect. With African American families it was found that parenting had an impact over and above that of neighbourhood and family income. When parents were nurturant and involved with their pre-adolescent children, young people were much less likely to get involved with antisocial acquaintances (Brody et. al. 2001). When parents were harsh or inconsistent in their treatment of young people, they were more likely to develop

antisocial friendships. The impact of parenting – whether for good or for ill – was greatest in neighbourhoods with the most disadvantage. Once again, parents had the most impact when other strengths were low.

This brings up the issue again of whether authoritative (nurturing, high warmth and high, fair control) or authoritarian (inconsistent warmth and high, harsh control) parenting is more effective in poor, difficult neighbourhoods. This last study suggests authoritative (nurturing) parenting is more effective even in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. But another study contradicts this, finding that for African American young people authoritarian parenting – where parents make decisions without involving young people – is better for them whether they live in affluent neighbourhoods or poor, ethnically mixed areas (Lamborn, Dornbusch and Steinberg 1996). In contrast, white American, Asian and Hispanic young people showed better outcomes when they made decisions jointly with their parents, irrespective of the type of neighbourhood they lived in. The authors suggest that the different results for African American young people are due to different types of risk in each neighbourhood: in ethnically mixed areas, the risk is of poor outcomes; in mainly white, affluent locales the risk is of discrimination. It may be that strong direction from parents protects African American young people from both.

While these two studies disagree, it is worth noting the second study is not talking about harsh, inconsistent parenting but about parenting where parents make the decisions. While this style is associated with authoritarian styles, it may be that it can be used in consistent, caring ways that offset the negative effects of authoritarian parenting (Lamborn, Dornbusch and Steinberg 1996). The emphasis in the literature is on restrictive parenting as more adaptive in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, not harsh, uncaring, aversive parenting. It may be that in areas which are more dangerous, stronger direction, supervision and monitoring has a protective effect, particularly when delivered by parents who are clearly caring, accepting and involved. In the favourite words of researchers everywhere, more research is needed to clarify this.

ARE YOUNG WOMEN LESS VULNERABLE TO NEIGHBOURHOOD INFLUENCE THAN YOUNG MEN?

Key points:
- There is some evidence neighbourhoods have more a positive impact on young men than young women.
- There is also evidence neighbourhoods can have a positive impact on young women.
- The apparently more positive impact on young men may be due to a focus by research on issues more relevant to young men, such as antisocial behaviour.
- Positive effects may also be due to young men spending more time mixing in the community, so being exposed to community influences.
- This in turn appears related to parenting style which is often more restrictive for young women, in both affluent and poorer areas.

It has been suggested young men are more influenced by strengths in the neighbourhood than young women (Luthar and Cushing 1999). For example, in a study that followed young people from 1966 to 1993, young men tended to stay in school until graduation significantly more often when they grew up in neighbourhoods with many white-collar neighbours (Ensminger et. al. 1996). This was even after accounting for the influence of family background, early school performance, parental supervision and adolescent marijuana use. But there was no matching protective effect for young women. Graduation

was more likely for young women when their family did not move home, their mother was more educated, their early school maths performance was good, their family had curfew rules and they did not heavily use marijuana (Ensminger et. al. 1996). In other words, family and individual factors were more important for young women than neighbourhood factors. Crane (1991 in Ensminger et. al. 1996) found living in an area where more neighbours were professional was a protective factor against school dropout for young men but not young women. Another study found middle-class neighbours were more protective for African American young men than women for school graduation (Connell, Halpern-Felsher, Clifford, Crichlow and Usinger 1995 in Ensminger et. al. 1996). At an earlier age, maths scores were more responsive to neighbourhood factors for males than females (Entwisle, Alexander and Olson 1994 in Ensminger et. al. 2000).

However, there is some evidence that neighbourhoods have an impact on young women. Stevenson (1999) found young women were particularly affected by neighbourhood support and supervision, showing much better emotional health than young men in response to these strengths. In the area of teen pregnancy, young women in more affluent areas were far more likely to delay child-bearing until their education was finished and they were established in careers than young women in highly racially segregated, poorer areas (Hogan and Kitigawa 1985 in Ensminger et. al. 1996). At a younger age of around six to seven years, girls were less likely to be aggressive if they lived in a neighbourhood with more white-collar residents (Ensminger et. al. 1996).

If neighbourhoods are having some effect on young women why is it that they appear to have more influence on young men? There are three possible reasons. The first is that much of the research looks at outcomes for male rather than female issues. Around puberty, young men and young women tend to show very different patterns in the types of problems they are most likely to develop (Achenbach et. al. 1991). Young men are far more likely to show externalising problems – for example 'acting out', aggression, stealing and lying – whereas young women are far more likely to show internalised problems such as depression, anxiety, physical complaints, suicidal feelings and eating disorders. Neighbourhood research is far more likely to look at outcomes such as antisocial behaviour and antisocial peers than emotional distress and the former are far more likely to be found for young men. In the research that has looked at the impact of neighbourhood variables on emotional distress, the effects found for young women have sometimes been stronger than those for young men (Sampson and Groves 1989, Simons, Johnson, Beaman, Conger and Whitbeck 1996 both in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000, Stevenson 1998).

The second possible reason is young men may participate more in local activities than young women and are thus more prone to being influenced by their neighbourhood through simple exposure (Entwisle, Alexander and Olson 1994, Luthar 1999 both in Luthar and Cushing 1999). Lower participation by young women appears largely due to parenting practices. This may be even more the case in dangerous neighbourhoods where young women tend to be restricted to their homes by their parents for safety reasons and so are less exposed to community influences (Ensminger et. al. 1996). But even in affluent, and presumably safer, neighbourhoods where young women are less likely to become pregnant during school years, it has been largely due to close monitoring by their parents during dating (Hogan and Kitigawa 1985 in Ensminger et. al. 1996). In more disadvantaged neighbourhoods, there is less supervision of young women, making early pregnancy more likely.

With regard to school graduation, young women also tend to do better when parents set a curfew time (Ensminger et. al. 1996). All of this suggests that were young women to spend more time in the community, the influence would be stronger. But even so, where family support is lacking, neighbourhoods can show a marked effect on well-being, as happened in the Stevenson (1998) and Werner and Smith (1992) research.

THE IMPACT OF IMPORTANT ADULTS OUTSIDE FAMILIES

Key points:

- A number of adults other than parents are important to young people of both sexes as sources of support, whether personal, academic or otherwise.
- Such Very Important Adults (VIP adults) had a strongly positive impact on young men by modelling behaviour, and disapproving of problem behaviour such as drink-driving, drug use, cheating, stealing and lying.
- They have a smaller but still positive impact on young women in that when the adults are happy and emotionally healthy, young women tend to be more so themselves.
- The effect of VIP adults was not as great as that of friends or family in most instances, but it was still significant.
- In a very long-term study, the presence of supportive adults, whether extended family or community members, acted as a strong protective factor for young people facing a number of risk factors for poor outcomes.

Young people move in a variety of worlds, and all of those worlds appear to have some impact on them. In their day-to-day life they meet many adults – at school, in the wider family, with friends, during recreation – and some of these adults become very important to them. Two studies of these VIP adults found they have the potential to have a positive impact on young people.

The first study looked at a group of 200 young people aged around 16 years from all kinds of ethnic backgrounds. Most of them were from two-parent families and around a quarter had parents with a university education. They were asked to name any person eight or more years older than them who they felt they could count on in times of need and who was a significant influence on them. Many of them did; over two-thirds of males and more than 80 percent of females. Very often VIP adults were of the same sex as the students and around half were members of their family other than their parents (Greenberger et. al. 1998). Aunts and uncles were very common for both sexes, as were older sisters or brothers. For young women, grandparents were commonly mentioned. Young men, in contrast, tended to turn to older friends more often than young women did and to older cousins.

Outside the family, teachers were reasonably common as VIP adults for both genders. Coaches and church representatives were somewhat less common, as were neighbours. Counsellors were very rarely seen as significant influences, underpinning the importance of the people young people mix with daily as the biggest influences for change (Greenberger et. al. 1998).

The most common function of all these significant adults, in the eyes of the young people, was to support them. This including supporting their personal development, and helping them solve interpersonal problems and reach academic goals. Young men sometimes saw the relationships as being for fun and companionship, but this was less likely for young women, who more often saw their VIP adults as being like parents to them. Interestingly, the young people surveyed did not often say they saw these important adults as role models.

So what was the impact of these very important people? First, for both young men and women, simply having a VIP adult in their lives did not have an impact on problem behaviour either way. In this instance, problem behaviour included risk-taking such as drink-driving, school misbehaviour such as cheating, using drugs and/or alcohol, physical aggression, stealing, vandalism and other misconduct such as lying,

or fraud. But when VIP adults showed problem behaviour themselves, young people showed significantly more problem behaviour (Greenberger et. al. 1998). This is particularly the case for young men, especially when the VIP adults were young themselves. But the impact of VIP adults was not all bad. When they showed open disapproval of bad behaviour, young people were less likely to act up, especially young men. Young women tended to be much more affected by their friends' disapproval than that of adults.

To put it simply, VIP adults act as role models who can either encourage or discourage good behaviour in young men, whether or not young people see them this way. What is more, they had an impact on young people even when the influence of friends and family were controlled for, although friends also made a unique impact and a stronger one.

Depressed mood in significant adults also increased the risk of problem behaviour, whether they were family or VIP adults. Overall, the six measures of VIP adults used (behaviour, disapproval, mood, warmth, age and whether young people confided in them) explained almost half of the problem behaviour in young people. This is a strong relationship.

When it comes to depression, the relationship with VIP adult characteristics is not so strong. Again, simply having a VIP adult made no impact on depression in young people either way. For young men there were almost no significant trends, except that when their VIP adults were relatives and behaved warmly towards them, they tended to be more depressed, which seems an odd result. Other than this, the impact on symptoms of depression showed up exclusively with young women who were somewhat more depressed when their significant adult was depressed. All the measures of VIP adults together explained 20 percent of the depression, but their contribution was not any more important than that of friends and family (Greenberger et. al. 1998).

So, there is a relationship between having a close adult in whom a young person can confide and how young people feel and behave. Because of the one-off nature of the research it is impossible to say what led to what, but this exploratory study suggests further research would be worthwhile (Greenberger et. al. 1998). If it turns out that having a significant adult other than parents to provide support is leading to positive (or negative) results, then this will be another avenue for helping bring about positive outcomes for young people. Other research which finds a positive impact for mentoring programmes for young people suggests that it is very likely that significant adults influence young people, rather than young people of certain types simply attracting relationships with certain adults. While the influence of these VIP adults is not as strong as that of family or same-age friends, they clearly make a difference. The more positive influences a young person can have the better, and this is a rich source of even more positive support.

What is important for young people who are growing up in supportive circumstances becomes crucial for those who are born with low birth weight or other problems, with poor parents in semi- or unskilled work, mothers with limited education and even alcoholic, mentally ill and/or abusive parents. Long-term research followed such vulnerable children in Hawaii found that those who had the best outcomes tended in adolescence to have external support systems which included friends, extended family, neighbours and elders. Sometimes they turned to favourite teachers, youth leaders, ministers or church groups for counsel and support in difficult times (Werner and Smith 1992). With the help of significant adults, young people acquired a faith that their lives had meaning and that they had control over their fates. These networks were one of the factors that distinguished them from their peers and even their siblings, who ended up with moderate to severe problems in adulthood. In contrast, these resilient young people were much more likely to succeed at school, enter into happy, stable relationships, become a stable part of the workforce and enjoy good mental health.

HOW TO GET THE BEST OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE GROWING UP IN DISADVANTAGED NEIGHBOURHOODS

Key points:

- Some young people experience good outcomes in life despite growing up in adverse environments.
- These young people are known as resilient and while scarred by their experiences, manage to rise above them.
- One key to good outcomes for young people growing up in disadvantaged neighbourhoods is parenting that is warm, involved, and sets clear, firm limits with good supervision.
- For African American young people, even more firmness than usual appears important for good outcomes, with parents making decisions without involving their young people and putting restrictions on them.
- This does not mean that parents are harsh, punitive or inconsistent, as this leads to poor outcomes.
- Parent involvement in local institutions leads to better school outcomes, but only in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- The presence of supportive adults other than parents, from extended family, neighbours and community members, also leads to better outcomes for young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- Neighbours who stay long-term are better for young people.
- Close ties between parents and neighbours are protective only when those neighbours have positive values and lifestyles.
- Involvement in community activities also protects young people from the stresses and influences of deprived areas.

While young people in the healthiest neighbourhoods have the best outcomes, does that mean that there is no hope for young people in the unhealthiest neighbourhoods? There is good evidence that this is not the case. While youth growing up in areas that are dangerous, marked by low income and unemployment, where many young people are an influence for bad rather than good and where adult guidance is lacking are still more at risk, they can definitely do well under certain conditions. Young people who manage to grow up in such conditions and finish their education, form positive relationships with peers and adults, find meaningful work and stay largely drug and crime free are known as 'resilient' youth.

This does not mean they come away unscarred by the deprivations they experience. Physical, sexual or emotional abuse, experiencing parental addiction, mental illness and violence, not having enough money or sometimes enough to eat, frequent moves, chronic family conflict, criminal victimisation and parental abandonment are among the experiences that resilient young people survive. Obviously, these leave emotional and other scars and young people would have been better off without these experiences (Burton 2001, Werner and Smith 1992). Being resilient does not mean being unaffected by such problems, it means rising above them and building a positive life despite them. Compared with brothers and sisters who grew up in circumstances just as bad, these young people are relatively unaffected by problems such as poor mental health, unemployment, school failure and dropout, and addictions.

So just what is the secret of resilient young people? Possibly the most powerful factors affecting resilience are individual – the physical health and personality of the young person. Those who get through their mother's pregnancy with good health and are born on time and at a good weight are likely to do better in life. Having a sunny, calm disposition and relating positively to other people also helps, as does having a high IQ and looking less for novelty in life (Fergusson and Lynskey 1996, Werner and Smith 1992).

But there are other, later factors that also make a difference. As usual, family factors are most important simply because young people spend so much more time in their families and at such formative stages. For a start, parenting that is nurturing, involved, accepting and sets firm limits and consequences tends to result in better outcomes even in poor neighbourhoods (Brody et. al. 2001; Lamborn et. al. in Ensminger et. al. 1996). This warm but firm parenting also helps prevent young people from being overly influenced by young people in the neighbourhood who are into crime and drugs and from spending much time 'hanging out' with them (Brody et. al. 2001). New Zealand research confirms this, showing that even when there are weaknesses in families (such as low income, poor living standards, parental conflict and negative life events) which put young people at risk of offending, harsh and abusive parenting increases the overall risk level (Fergusson and Lynskey 1997). So parenting that is moderately controlling and caring is likely to reduce this risk, even when other factors in the environment are negative.

It also seems likely that for some young people going a bit further with supervision, monitoring and making unilateral decisions without involving them, may lead to better outcomes in dangerous and deprived areas (Baldwin, Baldwin and Cole 1980, Ensminger et. al. 1996, Lamborn et. al. 1996). This does not mean being harsh, punitive or inconsistent. There is evidence that if parenting swings too far towards the authoritarian style, young people end up with poor social skills, negative and possibly violent ways of solving conflicts, and a poor ability to relate to others. This ends up in rejection and vulnerability to antisocial peer influence (Brody et. al. 2001). Outcomes tend to be better for some cultures when parents make sure that they know where their children are, who they are with, that they are not hanging out with certain other young people and make it clear there are places they may not go, (Lamborn et. al. 1996).

This does not mean restricting access to resources such as libraries and churches, or ruling out activities such as well-supervised sports, performance arts, youth groups and so forth. But it may mean being very directive about where young people will go and what they will do, to the point of making sure all their time is constructively filled and supervised by responsible adults. This approach has been found particularly effective with young African Americans and sometimes with young Asian Americans, whereas other cultures, particularly white, have benefited more from normal authoritative (nurturing) parenting (Lamborn et. al. 1996). This restrictive parenting style is also more effective for young African Americans in affluent neighbourhoods. Lamborn et. al. (1996) suggested the reason for the positive impact is that it offsets the discrimination they are likely to encounter in largely white environments as a minority group with a long history of lower status and oppression.

Lack of relevant research means that we do not know which cultures in New Zealand would particularly benefit from this more restrictive approach. It may be cultures that have long histories of discrimination may benefit more in this country. But it is safe to say that for all ethnicities living in dangerous, deprived neighbourhoods, parenting that is very warm, involved and sets very firm limits and guidelines is most protective of young people.

The most interesting aspect of this research is the effect of this kind of parenting is actually *stronger* in disadvantaged neighbourhoods than in safer, better-resourced areas. Good parenting becomes even more vital in weak neighbourhoods.

In addition to parenting style, the links parents have with local institutions such as churches, schools, community organisations and libraries have positive effects on how well young people do in school, but only in disadvantaged communities (Cook, Kim, Chan and Setterson 1998 in Duncan and Raudenbush 2001). Once again, in communities with few strengths, any positive things parents can do will be all the more important.

What is important to note here is close ties between parents and neighbours may not always result in positive outcomes for young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Where those ties are with neighbours who have positive values, care about the well-being of young people, can give emotional support to parents and so forth, they have a positive effect by providing access to goods and services and reducing parental stress. But when parents form ties with neighbours who are involved in deviant behaviour such as drug use or selling, violence and other types of crime, the effect on young people is negative (Steinberg, Darling and Fletcher 1995 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998). To be protective, parents' close ties in disadvantaged neighbourhoods need to be with neighbours who are positive and supportive.

But parents are not always able to be affective, because of economic stress, personal problems like mental illness, low support, or simply a lack of skills and knowledge. The next buffer zone then comes into action. This is relationships with other adults, from extended family through to older friends, neighbours, teachers, church workers and youth leaders. Once again, these are particularly protective in deprived areas (Werner and Smith 1992). Support and supervision from concerned neighbours is also important for both young men and young women, although in different ways. For young women, such support is associated with better emotional well-being and less depression, even when family support is low (Stevenson 1998). This was true even in neighbourhoods where neighbours overall were not particularly supportive. For young men, it is associated with less antisocial behaviour (Sampson 2001). When neighbours have close ties, share values and work together to make sure local young people keep to those values, young people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods have better outcomes.

Neighbours who are more stable and do not move out of the neighbourhood while young people are growing up can also help outcomes such as lower lifetime alcohol use by young people (Ennett, Flevelling, Lindrooth and Nortin 1997 in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000). This has an impact on how well neighbours get on and work together for the collective good, making communities safer and more supportive for young people (Sampson 2001). Presumably it also means when young people are able to develop supportive relationships with adults other than their parents, these relationships will be there to protect them until they are independent.

Lastly, young people who become involved in community activities, particularly those that are cooperative, are also likely to do better despite growing up in difficult areas (Werner and Smith 1992). It is likely involvement in structured activities with skilled adult supervision is protective of young people in weak neighbourhoods as well, especially if their peers also get involved, but unfortunately the research covered in this review did not specifically examine this. It is certainly protective for young people involved in antisocial activities and peer groups who are at high risk of dropping out of school, and these young people are likely to live in neighbourhoods with less strengths (Mahoney 2000). However, this is, at best, an indirect piece of evidence.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTICIPATING IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Key points:

- Young people enjoy leisure activities in the community more than other activities, and may take part in a wide variety, from organised to unstructured, positive to antisocial.
- Leisure activities may provide opportunities to try out roles and identities, helping young people move into adult roles.
- The type of activities young people enjoy tend to remain fairly stable during the transition from adolescence to early adulthood.
- Participating in positive community activities has a positive impact on young people, including less drinking, drug taking and truanting, better education and career outcomes, less delinquent activity and better attitudes and behaviour regarding sex.
- Highly structured activities that have set timetables and rules, teach skills, give feedback and are supervised by skilled adults are associated with better outcomes than unstructured, unsupervised activities.
- Volunteering leads to more altruistic attitudes to community involvement, less cynical attitudes to the value of work and less emphasis on the importance of career and better long-term adjustment.
- Participating in community activities may make a difference by expressing and reinforcing a young person's identity and leading to contact with peers who influence young people in specific directions.
- Parents who are involved in community activities themselves and/or warmly encourage and praise their children for getting involved increase the likelihood of youth participation.

One of the characteristics of strong, healthy communities is they offer a range of activities to their residents. But does this make any visible difference to the young people who live there? The research reviewed in this section suggests that it does. Participating in organised activities in the community, from church to volunteering to school sports teams, appears to have a positive impact on young people. In contrast, young people who participate least, or in the least structured and supervised activities, tend to have the worst outcomes academically and in terms of risky behaviours like drinking and missing school (Eccles and Barber 1999, Mahoney and Stattin 2000).

Levels of participation in community activities

Activities in the community range from clubs and sports at local schools, organised activities at local organisations such as youth groups and churches, volunteering for local worthy causes and just 'hanging out' with friends (Brown and Theobald 1998, Eccles and Barber 1999, Raymore, Barber, Eccles and Godbey 1999). At one time young people would have spent a great deal of their time in work, but as school has replaced work as the primary occupation of adolescents, so after-school leisure time has gained in importance (Brown and Theobald 1998). Young people rate leisure as their most enjoyable activities, rating their motivation and activation highest when involved in hobbies or listening to music – even higher than when spending time with friends, and much higher than when in class (Csikszentmihalyi and Larson 1984 in Raymore et. al. 1999).

According to United States research, around 70 percent of young people were involved in one extracurricular activity at school and 30 percent of white middle-class suburban students in two or more. As many as 42 percent of students in an ethnically mixed school were involved in two or more activities

(Brown, Kohrs and Lazarro 1991, Cooley, Hendricksen, Van Nelson and Thompson 1995 both in Brown and Theobald 1998). The most popular activities were sports followed by interest clubs and performing arts. Involvement in sport declined with time, possibly due to higher selection standards for senior teams, while the other activities increased. For community organisations outside school, such as scouts, YMCA, church groups and youth organisations, participation rates were also at about 70 percent for 13 to 14 year olds (US Department of Education 1990 in Brown and Theobald 1998). As this research concluded, involvement in organised activities is widespread among young people, but not universal.

The uses of leisure

Leisure is seen by some theorists as a forum for trying on different roles, learning social norms and trying to cope with challenges young people might face as adults, including sexuality and aggression (Fine, Mortimer and Roberts 1990, Iso-Ahola 1980, Kleiber and Rickards 1985 all in Mahoney and Stattin 2000). Leisure provides a link between the play of children and the disciplined commitments of adults in work and personal relationships, offering the chance for a disciplined kind of play (Kleiber, Larson and Csikszentmihalyi 1986 in Raymore et. al. 1999). Young people probably have no such conscious intentions in mind when they do it however.

The characteristics of leisure

It is assumed that active pursuits are going to have a more positive impact on the lives of young people than passive activities but there is little research to prove this one way or another (Eccles and Barber 1999). Community activities vary not only in terms of how active they are, but also in the degree they are structured and supervised (Mahoney and Stattin 2000). While scout groups are relatively organised, with rules, set meeting times and supervision by adults, 'hanging out' at the mall is very unstructured in terms of when it happens and is largely unsupervised by adults. High structure in youth activities means there is a regular schedule for participation, involvement is guided by rules and activities are directed by one or more adult leader. There is an emphasis on developing skills in increasingly complex and challenging steps, the activities require sustained attention and young people get feedback on their performance (Mahoney and Stattin 2000). It goes without saying these activities will be prosocial in contrast to activities such as learning to run drugs or involvement in a criminal organisation.

Types of leisure

Youth activities can be divided into rough categories. One study looked at five clusters of activities: prosocial (church, volunteer, community service); team sports at school; school-based activities (such as cheerleading, student bodies); performing arts (such as bands and drama); and academic clubs (such as debating and chess) (Eccles and Barber 1999). Young people can theoretically be involved in more than one cluster. But studies of leisure pursuits can be limited if they look only at 'nice' activities and forget to explore all the kinds of things young people do. A study that did not make this mistake came up with four main activity clusters for young women. The first was risky (hanging out with friends, taking drugs, doing dangerous things just for kicks, as well as involvement in more normal activities). The second was positive active (focus on sport, musical instruments, volunteering, religion, clubs and organisations). The third activity cluster was home-based (reading, family time, and watching TV, with low involvement in other activities). The fourth and last group was called diffused (showing no clear commitment to any type of leisure pursuit with fairly low levels on many activities). Over a third of mid-adolescent women studied fell into positive active, just over a quarter into diffused, a quarter into risky and just over ten percent into home-based.

Young men fell into four categories – risky (with alcohol as well as drug use), positive active (similar activities to women, but without sport), diffused (similar to women) and jocks (sports, hanging out with friends, watching TV). For young adult men, the study found the active category split into formal active – where the focus was on organised activities like clubs, religion and volunteering – and informal active where the emphasis was on sport along with hanging out with friends, volunteering and home-based activities (Raymore et. al. 1999).   The largest proportion of young men, just over a third, fell under the risky category, followed by active at just under a third, jocks at almost 20 percent and diffused at 16 percent. Not every young person will fit into these categories as young people who did not form a cluster at two different ages were not included (Barber and Eccles 1999).

In the New Zealand setting, a study with young people aged ten to 18 on the West Coast found their most common leisure activities were sports and exercise followed by less active pursuits. These included watching TV and videos, hanging out with friends, using the computer and listening to music (Hamilton 2001). There was a noticeable lack of involvement in organised activities with adult supervision, other than in sports.

Stability of leisure activities from adolescence to adulthood
These types of activities stayed reasonably stable from late adolescence to early adulthood. Almost half of the young men and women who were active at the start of the study were still involved in active pursuits three years later. For the remaining 50 percent plus who changed leisure patterns, the changes were sometimes predictable and sometimes a bit of a surprise. Some of the positive active young women took up risky activities while others became less involved, choosing diffused and home-based activities. More than half the risky young women went on to a more positive profile, many of them as positive active or diffused. Risky teenage behaviour was not necessarily a lasting pattern. Many of the diffused became home-based and quite a number risky, but the home-based group stayed fairly stable. For the young men, risky teenagers were reasonably likely to become risky adults and quite a few of the jocks became risky. Other than this, there was quite a lot of stability across the transition from teenager to adult (Barber and Eccles 1999).

The positive impact of participating in community activities
These are the kinds of community activities that young people tend to participate in during their free time. But what kind of impact do they have?

Extracurricular activities at school: Links have been found between extracurricular activities at schools (which are an integral part of the community) and adult attainment, income and occupation. This is even when social class and personal ability are controlled for (Landers and Landers 1978, Otto, 1975 and 1976 all in Eccles and Barber 1999). Involvement in organised activities is associated with a lower chance of dropping out of school, particularly early in high school. This effect was strongest for high risk youth (Mahoney and Cairns 1997, McNeal 1995 both in Eccles and Barber 1999).

Community organisations: Participating in community organisations has also been associated with positive effects. Young people who took part in activities they found interesting and useful provided by community-based organisations were 26 percent more likely to report good grades than average young people in the United States. Youth who were involved several days a week were more than twice as likely to get good grades. They were also 20 percent more likely than average youth to rate their likelihood of going on to tertiary education as 'very high' (2000). For Hawaiian children growing up in high risk families, participation in community activities was a protective factor, particularly cooperative activities such as the YMCA and YWCA (Werner and Smith 1992).

Sports participation: Sports in particular have been associated with lower school dropout rates and higher tertiary education attendance (Keeter 1990, Elliott and Voss 1974, Holland and Andre 1987 all in Eccles and Barber 1999). Involvement in organised, structured activities has also reduced criminal convictions for young people and lowered substance abuse (Mahoney 1997, Youniss, Yates and Su 1997 both in Eccles and Barber 1999). Participation in extracurricular activities has been linked as well to improvements in self-concept, school grades, school attendance and aspirations for further learning (DeMartini 1983, Youniss, McLellan and Yates 1997 both in Eccles and Barber 1999).

These associations, while positive, do not necessarily indicate what led to what. It might be young people who are functioning better are more attracted to community activities than those who are experiencing problems rather than that participating helps them do better. Studies that look at changes over time are needed to establish whether or not participation has positive consequences.

Long-term effects
One such study found sports participation does not protect against delinquency. It is simply young people who are involved in antisocial behaviour tend to drop out of sports, just as they drop out of school, so that sports groups became increasing free of young people involved in delinquency. However, this study found participating in other youth organisations did predict less delinquency (Larson 1994 in Eccles and Barber 1999).

Another longitudinal study found involvement in prosocial activities (for example church and volunteer activities) protected young people against risky behaviour (drinking, taking drugs and truanting) (Eccles and Barber 1999). Involvement in the performing arts protected males against drinking and skipping school. School-based clubs were not related to risky behaviour, but were related to better grades, liking school more and being in tertiary education at age 21. As well, getting involved in academic clubs, such as debating and chess, was related to better grades and tertiary attendance at age 21. So, while not all types of community participation were equal, there were some definite positive effects. The strongest effect on risky behaviour was for prosocial activities and to a lesser extent performing arts, although the latter applied to males only. Academic clubs and school-related activities (such as student government and cheerleading) were linked to better academic outcomes rather than risk (Eccles and Barber 1999).

Positive effects have been found for young people in inner city housing projects which are usually reasonably poor and sometimes very high-risk environments. Young people who participated in Boys and Girls Clubs were less likely to use drugs and alcohol, showed less delinquent activity and had healthier attitudes and behaviour regarding sex compared with those who did not participate (Hattie, Marsch, Neill and Richards 1997 in Brown and Leopold 1998). There maybe, however, a selection effect operating which would mean that better-functioning young people were more likely to take part, undermining the findings.

The positive impact of highly structured activities
Is every kind of community activity positive in its impact? Possibly not, according to Swedish researchers Joseph Mahoney and Hakan Stattin (2000). They reviewed studies that showed that some young people have had poor outcomes after participating in community activities (Greenberger and Steinberg 1986, McCord 1993 both in Mahoney and Stattin 2000). Mahoney and Stattin suggest this is because the activities they were involved in were unstructured. For example, there was no regular timetable, rules or supervision by skilled adults. There seems to be some support for this argument. Young people who participated in various community activities organised and supervised by highly-skilled adults showed lower aggression and antisocial behaviour afterwards (Jones and Offord 1986, Noret 1989 in Mahoney

and Stattin 2000). This kind of change after intervention suggests a real impact is occurring, although a control group is needed to be sure of this.

Mahoney and Stattin's own research found over 70 percent of the young people they surveyed were involved in one or more structured activity, the young people who admitted to law breaking and drug use were more likely to be involved in unstructured activities such as 'hanging out' (Mahoney and Stattin 2000). These young people were also likely to have parents who were not monitoring where they were, what they were doing and who they were with. As well, the parents did not support their children taking part in structured activities. Low parental support is associated with less involvement, a topic to be considered in greater depth later. However, this is not conclusive as it could be that young people who want to get up to mischief are attracted to activities with no rules, timetable or adult supervision so they can behave as they wish without censure. The findings cited in the previous paragraph showing that antisocial and aggressive behaviour decreased after such involvement is far more convincing evidence that structured activities are actually having an impact on youth behaviour.

Mahoney and Stattin (2000) argue youth leisure that leads to less risky and illegal behaviour is highly structured, emphasises skill building in an area of interest and includes young people who are both more and less competent. This way less competent young people have role models to learn from, and a chance to make friends with young people with better skills who can be a positive influence. More structured activities include school, community-sponsored athletics, organisations that teach and promote music, church groups and some youth organisations. Less structured activities include watching TV, playing pool, and 'hanging out' with friends.

Participating in volunteering

One study suggested adolescents and young adults who participate in voluntary community service are more likely to experience greater feelings of commitment to helping others (Yates and Youniss 1996 in Damon and Eisenberg 1998). However, this study was qualitative and had no control group, so the results are not conclusive. More reliable studies examine the impact of volunteering (or not) for different groups long-term. Looking at the impact of volunteering over four years on a representative group of 1000 high school students, another study found definite positive effects. Young people who volunteered tended to have stronger beliefs in the intrinsic value of work, saw community involvement as more important and saw their future career as less important (Johnson, Beebe, Mortimer, and Snyder 1998). This was irrespective of how many hours or years they spent volunteering. Interestingly, volunteering did not have an impact on things such as grades, mental health or attitudes towards friendship and marriage. Rather, it affected values related to altruism and opposed to the cynicism about work, as discussed in an earlier section, increased when young people were involved in part-time work.

Young people who participated in voluntary community service have also been found to have significantly better long-term adjustment than those who did not. Although, this may also be a result of young people who were better adjusted choosing to volunteer (Allen, Philliber, Herrling and Gabriel 1997 in Mahoney and Stattin 2000).

What is interesting is the range of young people who have been found to volunteer. They are from all social classes and relatively equal numbers of males and females. There is a tendency though for volunteers to be young people with plans for higher education, better grades and an intrinsic desire to learn (Johnson et. al. 1998). Young people have been found to volunteer to gain career-related experience, meet people, learn and develop themselves (Allen and Rushton 1983 in Johnson et. al. 1998).

How parents can increase participation by young people

Parents can increase participation by their adolescent children in two ways. The first is by participating in community activities themselves. Adolescents whose parents were more involved in the community were significantly more likely to take part in extracurricular activities themselves than those from less involved families (Fletcher, Elder and Mekos 2000). But, even in families where parents were not very involved in community activities, young people were more likely to take part themselves if their parents showed care, concern, warmth and encouragement towards their children and showed appreciation of their activities. In families where parents were already involved, warmth was sufficient to encourage young people to get involved at age 14 or 15, but appreciation was needed in addition to warmth for youth to get involved at age 15 or 16. It was in families where parents were relatively uninvolved where warmth and appreciation made the biggest difference to young people's involvement. In addition, once young people were involved in extracurricular activities at age 15 or 16 they were significantly more likely to carry on their involvement into the next year (Fletcher et. al. 2000).

Why does participation make a difference?

It is clear that participating in organised community activities makes a positive difference, but once again the crucial question is 'why?' It seems that it may be because of the impact community activities have on the identities young people choose, for themselves, as well as the peers they mix with and choose as friends (Eccles and Barber 1999). Identities can be seen as allowing young people to be actors in the world, to feel effective, successful and connected with the environment they live in. There is some evidence that young people have fairly clear ideas of who they identified as at age 16. Young people in one study were asked the type of person they most identify with from the popular 1980's film 'The Breakfast Club'. The types were princess, jock, basket case, brain or criminal. Most of those surveyed readily identified with one and the identity they chose fitted reasonably closely with the activities they were later involved in. 'Jocks' tended to do a lot of sports, 'criminals' played more sports than 'basket cases' but other than that were fairly low in organised activities. 'Princesses' were more likely than others to be involved in the performing arts, 'brains' tended to be involved in prosocial activities, and 'basket cases' did not participate much other than in performing arts (Eccles and Barber 1999). So, there appear to be some links between how young people see themselves and what activities they choose.

Interestingly, 'criminals' were equal in grades and alcohol consumption to 'jocks' and almost half were also involved in team sports at age 16. But 70 percent of 'criminals' had dropped school sports by age 18, the largest dropout rate of all five identities. What appeared to distinguish 'criminals' from 'jocks' was their identity or what they felt connected with in their world. In other research young people with a 'burnout' identity (a combination of 'criminal' and 'basket case', meaning they were most likely to be high risk and highly disadvantaged) tended to drop out of school before graduating. It appears the 'criminal' group does not base its identity on school or sports activities, but elsewhere, very possibly on the company of antisocial friends and their activities.

It is highly likely identity leads to good or poor outcomes via the pathway of peer influence. Young people who chose a 'criminal' identity for themselves tended to have consistent networks of friends who were involved in risky behaviour like drinking, taking drugs and missing school. Their friends also tended to be doing poorly in school and were generally not planning further study. As we saw earlier, young people are significantly influenced by their friends in terms of their attitudes to school, school grades and alcohol and drug use. Despite initially acceptable grades, young people who identified as 'criminals' had the worst academic outcomes by age 21 of all the identities. In contrast, the 'brains', young people who had friends who were doing well academically and not drinking, drugging and skipping school, tended to have the most consistently positive outcomes.

What is likely is young people choose activities based not only on their interests, but also on how they see themselves. In turn, the activities they take part in reinforce their identity – the more sports they do, the more they see themselves as a 'jock' (and are seen that way). Their choice of activities and identity has an impact on who they spend time with and have things in common with – two of the biggest predictors of close relationships. These acquaintances and friends then influence them to keep on with certain activities and identities, and there becomes a cost to losing them, because they would be rejected and lonely. For example, academically gifted young people from African American families were found to routinely do worse at school than they were capable of. Their motivation for failing was to avoid being labeled 'brainiacs' by their friends and being rejected for 'acting white' (Fordham and Ogbu 1986 in Brown and Theopold 1998). So, being part of a group they identified with meant norms were set for their behaviour. To go outside these norms was to risk loneliness and ridicule, even when breaking the norms held the promise of a better job and income and hence a better future. Even among one ethnic group there may be more and less positive identities. Among Latino youth in one school, some were part of the 'cholos' crowd who were seen by teachers as disruptive, uninterested and unreachable. Others were part of the 'Mexican' crowd, who were highly regarded by teachers for their courtesy and sincere efforts to do well at school (Matute-Bianchi 1986 in Brown and Theopold 1998). Again, this choice of identity, peers and activities has far-reaching implications for qualifications, career, income, family circumstances if they have children and teen pregnancy – in short, the degree to which they are able to make choices about what to do with their lives. Similarly, for the 'brains', 'criminals', 'jocks', 'princesses' and 'basket cases', the identity, activities and friends they chose were found to be related to how well they did at school and whether they were in tertiary study at age 21 (Eccles and Barber 1999).

Swedish research also found a link between peer group and choice of activities. As this did not follow young people over a number of years it is impossible to know what led to what, but there was definitely a link between unstructured activities and having an antisocial peer group. Those young people who tended to be involved in unstructured activities (whether solely or together with structured activities) also tended to have the greatest number of peers they saw after school. These were older friends, friends doing poorly in school and peers involved with the police. In contrast, young people involved only in organised and supervised activities had the lowest number of risky peers and the highest support from activity leaders of all the young people.

It may be that youth who are involved in antisocial activities like drinking, using and selling drugs and stealing may seek out unstructured activities where they can do more of these without being caught or punished. A study over several years is needed to check what leads to what. But it seems likely that the choice young people make about what activities they will be involved with is related to who they see themselves as being and who they become friends with. Once embedded in a certain identity and peer group it may be hard for them to change without losing a great deal. In this context it is interesting to revisit the research on the impact of extracurricular activities on vulnerable young people that we discussed in the section on the influences of school on young people. In this, vulnerable young people were most likely to show positive educational and career outcomes when not only they but also their friends were involved in extracurricular activities at school (Mahoney 2000). It may be that having all your friends change their activities has two effects. First, it means you do not lose face or friends by doing things that they are not into. Secondly, it means the friends are less available as distractions and temptations away from new activities and acquaintances. All of this suggests that when encouraging young people to make new friends and try new activities that will lead to better outcomes, it makes sense to get their friends involved in the new peer group too. It goes without saying that close adult supervision will be needed to stop the influx of risky young people and their antisocial values taking

over. At the very least, if an attempt is being made to move young people to a more prosocial peer group, it should be done in such a way that they have plenty of support while they are doing it, and do not become lonely or isolated as a result.

OVERALL KEY POINTS SUMMARY FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD/COMMUNITY INFLUENCES

Key points summary:

- Neighbourhoods can have a positive impact on outcomes for young people, but while significant, their influence is fairly small compared with families.
- Neighbourhoods with many strengths can help young people have better outcomes academically, with regard to criminal behaviour and drug use, emotionally and in terms of delaying parenthood until education is finished and careers are established.
- Neighbourhoods tend to have these effects both directly, by providing experiences and opportunities for young people to learn skills and behaviours, and indirectly, through reducing parental stress and increasing support for parents so they can parent more effectively.
- Parents and neighbours also have an impact on young people by affecting whether they are more likely to mix with and be influenced by positive or negative peers.
- The characteristics of neighbourhoods that have an impact are income and occupation of residents (strong effects), how well neighbours get on and work together for the common good (strong effects), how often people move, ethnic diversity (moderate effects) and characteristics of buildings and land use (weaker effects).
- These factors have a cascading effect on each other and on parenting and youth peer groups.
- A greater cumulation of neighbourhood strengths means a greater overall likelihood of positive outcomes, even when parenting is poor.
- When families lack strengths, neighbourhood characteristics grow in importance and vice versa.
- Effective parenting is more likely in strong neighbourhoods because of decreased stress, but effective parenting can protect young people even in neighbourhoods with few strengths.
- Neighbourhoods appear to have more of an impact on young men than young women, in part because young men experience fewer parental restrictions than young women and so are free to spend more time exposed to neighbourhood influences.
- Adults other than parents can have a positive impact on good outcomes for young people by providing support, modelling positive mood and behaviour, showing disapproval of poor behaviour and providing counsel and sense of meaning and purpose in their lives.
- A number of strengths can help young people succeed despite growing up in disadvantaged, deprived neighbourhoods. These include nurturing but firm parents, parent involvement in local institutions like schools, the presence of supportive adults locally, close ties between parents and positive neighbours, stable neighbours and participation in organised community activities.
- Participating in community activities, particularly structured and supervised activities, has a positive impact on young people including more moderate drinking, less drug taking, better school attendance, better education and career outcomes, more prosocial behaviour and better attitudes and behaviour regarding sex.
- Parents can increase participation by young people by being involved in community activities themselves or showing a warm response to young peoples' involvement.

The impact of different environments on young people

Having looked at the influence of the family, peer group, school, workplace and neighbourhood, and found they all have an influence, it is now timely to ask how much influence each environment has. A number of studies have been carried out recently that go some way towards answering this question.

HOW MUCH IMPACT DOES THE FAMILY, PEER GROUP, SCHOOL/WORKPLACE AND NEIGHBOURHOOD HAVE ON YOUNG PEOPLE?

Key points:

- Most studies show the impact of the family is greater than the impact of the neighbourhood
- Peer influence on young people definitely appears less than family influence, based on the research looked at in earlier sections.
- The research covered by this review did not make it clear whether peer or school influence was greater, but it is highly likely that both are greater than neighbourhood influence.
- Individual factors, including genetic inheritance, are the biggest influence, but these are shaped by the environment.
- While neighbourhood factors account for quite a small level of influence, in practice they can make a big difference.
- Overall, it is the total number of strengths and weaknesses across all four environments that make the biggest difference to how young people turn out.

Most of these studies show the impact of family is greater than the impact of neighbourhood, which makes sense. It seems likely that the people who live in the same house will influence a person more than the people living in houses down the street. For example, brothers and sisters showed more similarity in outcome than similar neighbours of the same age when it came to how many years they spent in school (Solon, Page and Duncan 1999 in Duncan and Raudenbush 2001). When family factors that are known to affect outcomes were taken into account – ethnicity, income, family structure and mother's education – the similarity in outcomes dropped even further. So, quite a lot of the similarity was due to neighbours coming from similar backgrounds, rather than influencing each other. Links outside the home have been found to be less important than those inside the home (Klebanov, Brooks-Gunn, McCarton and McCormack 1998 in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000).

Another study compared identical and non-identical twins, full siblings, half siblings, best friends, neighbours and classmates with two measures – achievement ability and delinquency. Identical twins showed the most similar scores on both, followed by non-identical twins and full brothers less than two years apart in age at around the same score. Next were half brothers and mutual best friends (meaning that both saw the other as their best friend), followed by non-mutual best friends. Neighbours and classmates at ages 13 to 14 years followed at about the same level of similarity. However, classmates at ages 16 to 18 years showed far less similarity for delinquency, although similar levels to neighbours and younger classmates for achievement ability. Similarity in scores for achievement ability was far higher

than delinquency for all categories and mutual best friends showed much more similarity on delinquency levels than everyone other than twins (Duncan, Boisjoly and Harris 1998 in Duncan and Raudenbush 2001). When income was taken into account for friends, neighbours and classmates, similarity dropped greatly, suggesting that a sizable amount of it was due to similar family backgrounds.

So, family members showed much more similarity than friends, who showed more similarity than neighbours and classmates. This indicates the level of influence each environment was having on young people, and again family outweighed other environments. Close friends were next, being stronger than neighbours and classmates. This suggests peer group rates ahead of school and neighbourhood in terms of influence. Although, there may be aspects of school that are more influential. While these are correlations and could be due to similar people living in the same neighbourhood and going to the same school, there is a suggestion the effects of environment are strongest in the family and decrease with subsiding levels of closeness of relationships in each environment. Overall the effect sizes for each environment are relatively small, suggesting none of them have a huge impact on youth outcomes. But that is of less concern here than the ranking of effects.

A further study took into account the relative impact of genetic inheritance and shared environment. Genetic inheritance accounted for 30 percent of the influence on delinquency and shared environment 15 percent. Shared environment includes those aspects of life that are fairly similar for all the children growing up in a family. While these are largely to do with family factors, they can include school, friend and neighbourhood factors. So, while genetics accounted for more, environment was still having a significant impact (Duncan, Boisjoly and Harris 1998 in Duncan and Raudenbush 2001). Another study that accounted for genetic inheritance was carried out in the United Kingdom. This found that after taking into account genetic and environmental influences on children's behaviour problems, neighbourhood deprivation accounted for around five percent of all the environmental influence (Caspi, Taylor, Moffit and Plomin 2000 in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000).

The amount of influence each environment has on how young people turn out can be thought of as slices of a pie. Using the example in the previous paragraph, genetic inheritance would account for a 30 percent slice of the pie, while shared environment would have a 15 percent slice, leaving 55 percent of the pie to be explained by other factors (including statistical 'noise' or error). Comparing the influence of family affluence and neighbourhood affluence on IQ in children, a United States study found that family cut a 5 percent slice of pie and neighbourhood a one percent slice (Duncan, Brooks-Gunn and Klebanov 1994 in Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn 2000. This is not much in absolute terms but as the reviewers explained, while small, these numbers reflect meaningful differences in IQ scores. Again, the overall figures are not our main concern here. The more important point is that family had five times as much influence as neighbourhood.

A 21 year study found that the effects of neighbourhood factors steadily decreased in strength as family factors were added into the analysis. This again suggests that the effects of neighbourhood are not as strong as those of families (Ginther et. al. 2000). The strongest effects were found for neighbourhood characteristics that were more directly related to the outcome being looked at. For example, having fewer young people who had left school early without qualifications in the community was associated with more chance of young people doing well at school.

However, even though neighbourhood influences make up only a very small slice of pie, they can have quite a marked effect on positive outcomes for young people. For example, young African American men are three-and-a-half times more likely to graduate from high school when they live in neighbourhoods

with high numbers of white-collar workers. This is true even after taking into account family background, early school performance, family supervision in adolescence and marijuana use (Ensminger et. al. 1996). So, despite accounting for very little pie, neighbourhood effects were still of significance.

This descending order of importance from family through to neighbourhood can also be seen in the study of Very Important Adults (Greenberger, Chen and Beam 1998). The most common significant adults other than parents were older family members, then younger, together making up almost half of the Very Important Adults. They were followed by neighbourhood support, including older friends, comprising almost a third of support. School personnel formed a smaller group, with the smallest group of significant adults overall that of community members in the form of church representatives. This illustrates the centrality of family members to young people, even when they are not parents.

And, while genetic inheritance accounts for the biggest slice of the pie, it is influenced by family environment. In one study, 40 percent of young people who were brought up by biological parents with a history of criminal behaviour became involved in petty criminality. But only 12 percent of their siblings who were adopted into homes with effective parenting became involved in petty crime (Bohman 1996 in Collins et. al. 2000). In a New Zealand study, young people who were adopted into families with a lot of strengths did better on outcomes like bullying, lying, stealing, aggression and drug use than those who stayed in families with single parents similar in background to their birth mother (Fergusson et. al. 1995). However, they did not do quite as well as young people who grew up with both biological parents. This suggests that the impact of environmental strengths was to offset the impact of genetic trends to antisocial behaviour.

Unfortunately, research which carried out analyses of influence for school and peer groups were not located by this review. A clearer picture might emerge if a larger group of studies were considered. But, on the basis of research reviewed in the earlier section on the outcomes of relationships with peers, it seems very likely peers do not have as much influence as families. This conclusion is based on research that shows:

- Parents have a greater scope for influencing young people than their friends, by virtue of influencing how well they get on with their peers, levels of social skills, the likelihood of rejection and who young people mix with.
- There is evidence parental influence lasts longer than the influence of peers.
- Part of what looks to the casual observer like peer influence is actually due to young people selecting friends who are like them. While peers do influence each other, particularly for drug use, the impact of this is generally not as strong as the impact of selecting similar friends.
- Peer influence only becomes a significant factor when parental influence wanes for some reason. This may be due to parenting style or family problems, but even then, when parents act more effectively, the influence of friends is greatly undermined. This is true even for drug use, where peers are documented to have the strongest influence on each other (Frauenglass et. al. 1997).

So, it seems safe to say, families have the greatest influence, exceeding that of any other environment. But it is not clear whether peers, schools or neighbourhoods should be ranked next in their influence on young people. It may be that this varies depending on which outcome is under discussion. There is good evidence antisocial peers are a bigger influence than school factors for young people becoming involved in crime (Lipsey and Derzon 1998). However, peer influence and school influence are strongly linked. Young people are more likely to leave school when they get on poorly with their peers. Both rejection by peers and leaving school increase the risk of being influenced by antisocial peers.

It is likely peers and school factors are equally influential and slightly more so than neighbourhood factors. But they are all inextricably linked (for example, schools are in fact part of neighbourhoods). One thing the research makes completely clear is that good outcomes are most likely when there are strengths in all environments, and not just one.

HOW THE EFFECTS OF ENVIRONMENTS CAN VARY IN STRENGTH

Key points:

- The impact of different environments may vary in strength depending which outcome is being looked at.
- The importance of environments to young people's well-being definitely changes depending on the weakness or strength of other environments, so that strong environments (for example, good neighbourhoods) become even more important in the presence of weak environments (for example, family difficulties).
- Environmental strengths that would normally be less important have a much greater impact when family in particular has many weaknesses.
- When parenting is weak, peers, neighbours and community resources all become even more protective in young people's lives.

Are the effects of the four environments the same in every case? Research cited above on IQ and behaviour problems suggests neighbourhoods and families play varying roles for both – in one case taking a five percent slice of the pie, in the other only a one percent slice. Although, this may due to different techniques used in each study. Likewise, in the case of delinquency and achievement ability, genetic inheritance appears to play a greater role in the latter and peer influence in the former.

There is also a suggestion in the research environments may change in impact when one environment lacks strengths that another possesses. An example is the research on the impact of neighbourhood support and supervision on emotional well-being (Stevenson 1998). Depression was greatest when there was a low level of support and supervision from both family and neighbours. From this one would expect levels of depression would be lowest when both family and neighbourhood support were high, but this was not the case. In fact, the lowest levels of depression were found when family support was low and neighbourhood support high. This suggests neighbourhood support becomes more influential when family support is missing. A usually less important strength grows in importance when another, usually more important strength, is missing.

This point of view is supported by longitudinal research by Werner and Smith (1992). They found young people who grew up in families with less than effective parenting tended to grow up more positively when they had support from the wider family and/or community members such as teachers and church members. Since it was longitudinal, this research suggests this support led to good outcomes which the Stevenson (1998) research could not establish.

The same seems true for friendship. One of the studies reviewed earlier showed that when families were not providing an optimal level of support, the support of friends had far more of an impact than it normally would (Gauze et. al. 1996). Looking at the importance of community resources, the links families had with local institutions, such as schools and libraries had an impact on how well young people did in school, but only in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Cook, Kim, Chan and Settersen 1998 in Duncan and Raudenbush 2001). For children of drug addicted parents, who were severely compromised in their

ability to parent well, neighbourhood factors accounted for two to five times as much of the pie as maternal factors did, although, actual parenting style was not looked at (Luthar and Cushing 1999).

These studies suggest the normally less important protective effect of environmental strengths comes into play when families lack strengths. Previous research has established that the effects of parenting become even more important when neighbourhoods are disadvantaged (Rutter 1985 in Luthar and Cushing 1999). But it seems that this also applies in reverse. When parenting is weak, factors such as supportive peers and neighbours and community resources become even more protective in young peoples' lives.

FAMILIES AS A FILTER FOR ALL OTHER ENVIRONMENTS AND INFLUENCES

Family effects are likely to be stronger in part because families have more contact with young people and in part because they have an impact on every other part of a young person's life. Families:

- have a direct impact on how young people do at school, how they get on with friends, their mental health, behaviour, extracurricular activities, career, adult relationships, income, through the parenting style, and the behaviour and values they model and encourage
- affect how much impact genetic inheritance will have by providing an environment that enhances positive genetic influences and compensates for negative ones
- have an impact on how well young people get on with others and who they get to mix with, which in turn moderates peer group activities and influence
- influence attitudes to school and learning, study habits, behaviour in class, relationships with teachers and readiness to learn
- influence which neighbourhood they live in, how they are affected by the neighbourhood, who they can mix with in the neighbourhood and how well young people can access resources outside the neighbourhood such as libraries, recreation activities and schools.

As noted researchers Steinberg, Darling and Fletcher (1995:457) put it:

> Family is the primary proximal setting through which community influence on children's development is transmitted".
> (in Damon and Eisenberg 1998:494).

In other words, the effects of all the other environments are filtered through the family that in a positive scenario can either enhance protective effects or compensate for weaknesses in schools, friendships and neighbourhoods. In the more negative scenarios, the failure of families to provide sufficient strengths can put young people in the position of relying on other environmental strengths to compensate or falling prey to negative influences in the environment.

◐ Achieving the best outcomes for young people

Taking into account all the studies reviewed above, the worst outcomes for young people occur when many or all of the environments are weak. The best outcomes occur when all the environments – family, friends, school, training, work and neighbourhood/commmunities – have significant strengths. This is when:

- **Parents**
  - use authoritative (nurturing) parenting (including inductive discipline)
  - have adequate income
  - value education
  - have close friendships
  - model non-violent relationship skills and problem solving
  - encourage young people to participate and contribute in the family, school and community
  - have positive links with neighbours, schools and friend's parents
  - monitor and supervise adolescents (including neighbours' children)
  - have warm, accepting relationships with their teenagers.

- **Friends**
  - have prosocial values and activities (in line with community norms, honest, caring, altruistic, do not abuse drugs, and are not involved in crime)
  - are interested in school
  - are involved in extracurricular activities
  - have social skills including conflict resolution
  - are non-violent
  - have parents who use authoritative (nurturing) parenting techniques.

- **Schools**
  - are safe from bullying
  - well-resourced
  - have high expectations of all students
  - focus on individual progress rather than competition
  - do not stream students
  - are small in size and have good extracurricular activities
  - treat all students with respect and interest'
  - have clear rules and consequences.

- **Neighbourhoods**
  - have more people with higher incomes (including a significant group of professional/ managerial families)
  - have part-time employment for students with good adult supervision and challenging work

- have well-resourced schools, child care, libraries, recreational opportunities with adult supervision, community centres, medical and social services, churches, and volunteer organisations
- provide support for vulnerable families and young people through neighbours, friends, family and institutions
- have neighbours that supervise young people and intervene in violent or antisocial behaviour
- residents live there long-term
- there are accessible employment opportunities for parents
- more two-parent than single-parent families
- close ties between neighbours, shared values and a high willingness to help each other.

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