

Edith Cowan University  
**Research Online**

---

ECU Publications 2013

---

2013

## Identity on the line: The meaning of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal youth hanging out on the streets and train stations in the south-east corridor of Perth

Andrew Guilfoyle  
*Edith Cowan University*, [a.guilfoyle@ecu.edu.au](mailto:a.guilfoyle@ecu.edu.au)

Sasha Botsis  
*Edith Cowan University*, [a.botsis@ecu.edu.au](mailto:a.botsis@ecu.edu.au)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ecuworks2013>

 Part of the [Child Psychology Commons](#), and the [Sociology Commons](#)

---

Additional information on the title page:  
Prepared for: Save the Children WA  
This Report is posted at Research Online.  
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ecuworks2013/37>

## **Identity on the Line: The Meaning of Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Youth Hanging Out on the Streets and Train Stations in the South-East Corridor of Perth.**

Prepared for:  
Save the Children WA

1074 Hay Street, West Perth WA, 6005  
GPO Box 9912, Perth, WA, 6848

### **Andrew Guilfoyle & Sasha Botsis**

School of Psychology and Social Science  
a.guilfoyle@ecu.edu.au | P: +61 8 6304 5192 | F: + 61 8 6304 5834  
Faculty of Computing Health and Science  
Edith Cowan University | 270 Joondalup Drive | Joondalup | Western Australia | 6027

May 2013



**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Executive Summary .....	3
History of the Project.....	4
Analytical Approach .....	5
Sample and Data Source .....	7
Findings.....	9
Table of Themes .....	10
Criminology .....	11
Identity .....	13
Safety .....	19
Risky Behaviour .....	27
Other Places .....	31
Programs.....	34
Conclusions and Recommendations.....	36
References.....	44

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We performed a critical analysis on data originally collected from young people, service providers, and parents, contained in Save the Children's Photovoice and Participatory Action Research projects.

We employed an interpretative phenomenological approach with thematic analysis examining participants' ascribed meaning, personal experiences, and observations of youth 'hanging out' on the streets or trains in the South-East corridor of Perth.

Criminology and Identity themes emerged, and we drew attention to the merits of a positive, holistic view of youth, growing up in today's society; for the development of social programs, future interventions, and participatory action research.

We identify several sub-themes within Identity:

- Forming a strong cultural identity, particularly for ATSI youth
- The relational aspect of street presence
- The concept of safety for youth
- Grandparent care in ATSI families
- The concept of 'free space'

We formed the following recommendations:

- Avoid framing problems and solutions based in a criminology rhetoric;
- The need to move from the scoping, to the first phase of the PAR project;
- Consultation with youth towards establishment of culturally appropriate programs, which empower emergent identities;
- The formation of local youth working groups, with an opportunity to design and work on specific interventions;
- The formation of local parent working groups, to ensure involvement of family with young people, increasing attachment and building relational identity;
- Immediate, proximal interventions with the whole family: Family Support programs/local parent working groups and primary caregivers
- The implementation of cultural programs run by Elders;
- Ensuring that local working groups are involved at all stages of planning and implementation of 'alternative' spaces or programs for youth,
- School/Education based initiatives involving family; and
- As a general recommendation, we point to the advantages of early interventions.

*The adolescent now looks for an opportunity to decide with free assent on one of the available or unavoidable avenues of duty and service, and at the same time is mortally afraid of being forced into activities in which he/she would feel exposed to ridicule or self-doubt (Erikson, 1968, p.129)*

## **ANALYTICAL APPROACH**

Our objective was to complete a critical analysis of existing findings, utilising available data from both reports. Qualitative enquiry is deeply embedded in a social constructionist epistemology (Gergen, 1985). This asserts the need to examine multiple perspectives, and how social realities for any individual or group are constructed within their local community and their everyday interactions with the local physical and social environment. From this position we adopted an interpretative phenomenological approach following Smith and Osborn (2008), subjecting the data to a sequential thematic analysis which aimed to reveal, from within the confines of the data provided, how young people and service providers ascribed meaning, across various dimensions, to their personal experiences or observations of youth 'hanging out' in the streets or on the trains in the South-East corridor of Perth.

### **Critical data analysis method**

Save the Children supplied copies of existing reports pertaining to the Photovoice project and the scoping phase of a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project conducted in the South-East corridor of Perth. The main data for analysis arrived from the scoping phase of the PAR project. In essence, the questions asked participants to identify or scope their definition of the problems in relation to youth being on the street.

#### *Stage 1*

Initially, we examined the quantitative responses to each question guided by the following criteria:

1. Drawing on our knowledge of the literature, any salient findings, for example those which showed a large proportion of responses in one category, or an interesting spread, or a comparison between ATSI and non ATSI;
2. Considering what the responses showed, what questions this raised and whether further literature which might converge or diverge on this data should be sourced;
3. Any methodological concerns, such as limited response options, unclear questions that could cloud the interpretations; which could be made from the responses provided; and
4. Any critical findings, those which were most telling in light of literature, or potential recommendations to be made for further research, or community based interventions.

Not because we wanted to give primacy to quantitative over qualitative data, but because the quantitative data was the main data and was representing the voice of youth (albeit in a restricted form). This first stage of analysis provided an important guiding framework for the next stage.

### *Stage 2*

In the next stage, we examined the qualitative data available from service providers (PAR report) as further validation, looking at how this data converged or diverged with the interpretations that could be drawn from the quantitative data. Participant quotes were read several times, facilitating a deeper understanding of feelings and thoughts about the meanings made (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Significant statements which gave rich descriptions supporting any particular quantitative finding were identified and added to the respective quantitative responses. We repeated this process using the data from young people (Photovoice report). Utilising the quantitative data, the PAR, and Photovoice reports consecutively, we engaged in data source triangulation, first examining the quantitative data as representing the voice of youth, the PAR report qualitative data from service providers, and then adding convergent or divergent Photovoice qualitative data as a final validation point. We were confident that the essential meaning of street presence was being captured.

### *Stage 3*

The quantitative and qualitative data were combined as composite units of meaning. We then worked with these units, and they were arranged into thematic clusters and grouped together; ordered into issues, themes, and sub-themes (Edward, Welch, & Chater, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2008; West, Stewart, Foster, & Usher, 2013).

Based on Taylor and Bogdan's (1998) approach, we took significant time to read and re-read these across the units of meaning, together with the original reports, to obtain a sense of the overall data set, memoing where appropriate to ensure any possible important concepts were noted. We then went through the data again, taking note of recurring and significant statements and began grouping units into thematic clusters. Next, we began reducing the data by identifying overarching issues: Common elements and broad patterns underlying selected units of meaning. These issues were compared with all previous notes and memos, as well as the original reports supplied by Save the Children. Through this process, we began to develop prominent themes which captured the essence of meanings participants ascribed to youth street presence. Following the recursive nature of thematic analysis, we were able to concrete the overarching themes, and identify sub-themes. We validated our analysis by re-checking the issues, themes, and sub-themes identified, to ensure that our findings captured the meanings being ascribed by the participants to youth street presence. We completed our analysis by writing summary statements of each theme and sub-theme and we report the final themes with interpretations against evidence of selected meaning units.

At various stages of the analysis, themes were cross checked and re-examined by both researchers (De Witt & Ploeg, 2006; Finlay, 2009; West et al., 2013). All working drafts, tables, notes, and memos were shared and discussed at each stage, through regular email, telephone, and face to face meetings, to ensure the credibility and relevance of our findings and, thus building interpretative rigour (Kitto, Chesters, & Grbich, 2008). Any divergent selections of significant data, or interpretations of data, were subject to reflection and resolution, and often this meant returning to the full data set, or parts of it, to ensure the responses to what it means for youth to be hanging out in the South-East corridor of Perth was being validly captured.

In a similar way, an ongoing validation process through expert checking was performed with Save the Children. As these members were closely involved with the data collection phases, and the initial interpretations made in both reports, this was an important step to ensure the authenticity of the analysis, the themes that were being revealed, and potential for recommendations.

Here we will note that an essential ongoing validation processes by checking data and interpretations against extant literature was not performed at this point, and we would, given more time, add this validation process into our current report in order to build on the dependability, credibility, and transferability of our interpretations.

Notwithstanding this last point, our recommendations stem from the final set of themes presented below, along with exemplar units of meaning formed from the combined quantitative and qualitative data, which evidences each interpretation.

## **SAMPLE and DATA SOURCE**

Data were collected from young people and service providers/parents through a variety of means, including Qwizdom, online surveys, observations, and interviews. The YPAAG were involved in focus groups following data collections, and both YPAAG and AAG were engaged in the data collection process. Additionally, a Photovoice project was conducted with 18 students from the East Maddington Primary School. Two incomplete reports were subsequently compiled and the content of these reports formed the basis of our analysis.

### **Youth**

Young people in the South-East corridor of Perth experience higher levels of violence, crime, and substance use, as well as underfunded schools (Gee & Payne-Sturges, 2004; Williams & Collins, 2001). Youth are less likely to have high quality after school programs or access health services (Duffett & Johnson, 2004; Thomas, Temple, Perez, & Rupp, 2011). Balsano (2005) noted that youth in violent or poor communities often lack security and optimism and experience fear.

It is estimated that approximately 4.2% of youth in Australia are ATSI (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010). The location for the study was explicitly chosen based on the overrepresentation of ATSI youth. Fourteen percent of participants ( $N=64$ ) identified as ATSI, and a further 12% ( $N=54$ ) chose the 'it's complicated' option.

The highest proportion of ATSI youth surveyed were aged 11-12 years (44%) and 13-14 years (37%); whilst non-ATSI youth were predominantly 13-14 years (55%) and 11-12 years (31%). Further, those <10 years in the sample were 6% and 1%, ATSI and non-ATSI, respectively. This indicates that, on the whole, ATSI participants were younger than non-ATSI. Forty-nine percent of participants were female and 51% were male.

The majority of youth participants were from areas around the Armadale to Perth train line; however 10% non-ATSI and 7% ATSI were from a different area of Perth (although it is not stated where). Twenty-seven percent of non ATSI & 39% ATSI said they spoke languages other than English at home.

### Youth Participant Data

Source	N	Method/s
East Maddington Primary School	18	Qwizdom survey pilot, Photovoice project
Ignite Basketball	?	Qwizdom
Westfield Park Primary School	?	Qwizdom
Kelmscott Senior High School (lower)	?	Qwizdom
Cecil Andrews Senior High School	?	Online survey
Kelmscott Schow	?	Online survey
TAFE/University students	?	Online survey
Facebook groups focused on Armadale train line	?	Online survey
One Step Closer	?	Observation
Train line trips (incl. stations/carparks)	?	Observation and engagement
YPAAG	?	Focus groups, engagement in research
<b>Total</b>	<b>452</b>	

### Adults

Service providers and parents (SP/P) contributed to the research. Six percent of participants ( $N=4$ ) identified as ATSI, and a further 4% ( $N=2$ ) chose the “not sure” option. Fifteen percent were male and 85% were female.

The majority of participants worked in areas along the Armadale to Perth train line; however just under 10% were from the City of Vincent.



**Adult Participant Data (Service Providers/Parents)**

<b>Source</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Method/s</b>
Kelmscott Show	?	Online survey
Ignite Basketball	?	Informal interviews
Noongar Patrol	?	Engagement
Aboriginal Railway Police	?	Engagement
Transit guards	?	Engagement
Stakeholders/'key nodes' on line	?	Formal/informal interviews
YACWA	?	Online survey
Department for Child Protection	?	Online Survey
Key service provider populations	?	Online survey
AAG	?	Engagement in design/data collection
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	

**FINDINGS****Methodological issues**

Initially, it is important to note the limitation of working with restricted data sets; although we were able to discern significant themes, we did not engage in the data collection phases and thus were constrained by working only from data available in the uncompleted PAR and Photovoice reports. Unfortunately, this meant that the majority of data available directly from young people was quantitative in nature. We were however, able to validate and triangulate our findings through the voice of youth involved in the Photovoice project.

As part of Stage 1 of our analysis, we noted any methodological concerns underlying data collection. Predominantly, we found that the use of quantitative methods (Qwizdom and online surveys) limited the ability of young people to portray their experiences and ascribed meanings to being street present, and thus, in some ways, silenced the voices of youth. Some of the questions may not have been culturally appropriate; for example, asking youth where they live 'the most' does not take into account the strong values and extended family networks of ATSI communities. Questions around 'home' and 'safety' were of particular concern to us, in that their framing and limited response options was potentially clouding to interpretation, as well as possibly irrelevant to young people: This was apparent in the contradictory responses. Importantly, and pertaining to all questions posed, it is possible that none of the response options applied and thus participants were restricted, or 'forced' into an answer; without an opportunity for elucidation.

The YPAAG were involved with the research team throughout data collection and participated in focus groups following collection stages, to discuss the process, comment on, and enrich data, with their observations. We believe that the observations and engagement experiences discussed at these focus groups would have greatly enriched existing data and allowed us to seek further validation of our

analysis. Unfortunately, there was limited scope for utilisation, due to the lack of available focus group data in the existing reports.

### Themes

We identify several themes present in the data. It is important to assess each of these, as each will frame the potential for particular solutions. For example, if we frame the problem as ATSI youth are on the streets simply because they are avoiding problems at home, one solution is how we can work to try and fix problems at home.

We assess the data, identifying the available themes present, and form our recommendations for future research or programs towards potential solutions based on each. We will note though, problems are more complex than one theme, and often action is complicated simply because of the overlapping presence of many available themes. Our aim will be to try and simplify the complexity by arguing for a super-ordinate theme of identity under which other problem-solution interpretations should be framed.

### TABLE OF THEMES

Theme	Theme	Sub-theme
Criminology		
Identity	Cultural identity Relational identity Why on the streets/trains? Safety	Sense of belonging Family Zones of proximal development Unsafe home When they do not feel safe Free space Grandparents & ATSI families
	Risky behaviour	Culture/disadvantage & risk Sexual identity Alcohol/drugs, crime & violence
	Other places	School
	Programs	Cultural programs

## **CRIMINOLOGY THEME**

The first is a criminology theme. This positions youth behaviour on the streets or at the train stations within rhetoric about crime. It subject positions youth as aspiring criminals and therefore a 'problem' (Head, 2011; Leadbeater, 2003; Morsillo & Prilleltensky, 2007), leading to the association of youth with negative social behaviours such as delinquency, crime, and anti-social behaviour (Bessant, Sercombe, & Watts, 1998). A criminology discourse is commonly applied to youth living in low socio-economic contexts (Myers, 2012). This application was all too evident within some of the SP/P discourses.

*Many are brought up to steal. They are brought up with a 'chip on their shoulder'.*

*Need to be tougher on them. There just seems to be too many 'do-gooders'. The young people (YP) have all the rights; authority can do nothing about them. Police can only give cautions and the YP know this. Counsellors tell them it is OK to do drugs. Society is out of control.*

*my experience of travelling on trains is that there is a great deal of unsupervised young people who use the confined area to behave badly. The very fact that many people believe that travelling on this line after a certain time of day is not safe will attract more young people to this risky area. Trains need to be safe supervised.*

*Young 16 yr old who is "shouted" free crack by his pot supplier is the inbetween, other 14-17 yr olds contact the the young 16 yr old who is dropped off at bus stops by the 26 yr who then drives off and then the young 16 yr old does the deal with his shoppers. After the deal is done catch bus to someone's house to have a session*

*Legal issues, impending court dates*

Positioning youth as acting in ways, such as attending the train station or being on the streets, because these behaviours support their criminal intent, is reductionist on at least three levels. It locates the youth as the problem, not their environment. It stereotypes youth, generalising all youth as being criminally orientated and it will reduce solutions to ways in which youth behaviour can be shaped to prevent crime. Additionally, this can cause negative self reflections as youth are aware of being positioned under a crime-based theme.

In particular, as Palmer and Collard (1994) argue, an overemphasis on linking Aboriginal young people with substance use and criminality continues to uphold the perception that Aboriginal people are intrinsically more irresponsible, criminal, and overcome by alcohol and drugs more than other youth. Such negative discourse facilitates further marginalisation of, and discrimination against, ATSI populations (Bond, 2005; Lyons & Janca, 2012; Priest, 2011)

*This is my friend. He wanted this photo because we were asked to take photos of the stuff we don't like. Everyone always says he does bad stuff, like break in to places and steal. This is about what it looks like to put a kid in a jail.*

*Like, we get looked at badly cause we're Aboriginal. Just yesterday I got on the train to go to Carousel and um, these people start lookin at me badly, like I was gonna steal from them or somethin. I sat next to this lady on the train and she got up and went to sit somewhere else.*

This service provider highlighted the need to move away from a criminology theme.

*wish the 'systems' around them were set up to support them and not to make them fail. E.g 'stop and search laws, move on laws and the new social gathering 12 people is a party laws. It's disgusting and needs creative solutions, youth friendly education and training to people in 'power positions', financial backing and more positive images of young people doing the wonderful things that they are capable of doing spread for all to see- on billboards and at train stations and in the trains too.*

We are not claiming youth are not involved in crime. We are suggesting that actions by service providers, which frame problems and solutions as crime based (criminal intent, crime prevention) are limited in their interpretation of street behaviour and their functionality in supporting youth. Such 'solutions' are highlighted in SP/P data.

*Boot Camps, Leadership and Directional training, Cadets WA Programs or similar (I have been working with YP since I was one myself (30+ years), and a Cadet Unit Leader for nearly 10 years.*

*Restricting supply of alcohol and cannabis.*

*Kids need consequences until they have consequences both good and bad for their behaviour it will not change. They have way too many rights. THEY ARE CHILDREN FOR GOODNESS SAKES!*

*Everyone wants to be treated with respect... the point is that some children do nothing to be accorded such respect. When they are swearing and abusive towards "authority" they can't expect to be asked "hi! How are you? etc*

The SP data was therefore often criminology based. Our concern therefore is that by some of the people that are employed to help youth locating their perceptions in a crime discourse, adds to a negative environment for these youth, who seek to build their identities, when already disadvantaged, being framed as criminals, and as we show below, in the discourse of youth, being discriminated against in this way. Thus we develop below a set of themes which provide an alternative interpretation, giving evidence of how youth street presence can be interpreted as an identity discourse.

## **IDENTITY THEME**

A more powerful theme is an identity theme. We see this as the super ordinate theme which all others should fit under. It is best to interpret the data as youth engaging in activities which are helping them build or form their identity. With this definition of the problem, any solutions should be those which can help youth to build or form a positive identity. As Holter and Guilfoyle (2013, in press) have outlined; according to Erikson's (1968) theory of identity development, the main task for adolescents is to achieve a new identity by moving past an identity confusion.

This however requires negotiating a transition from a sense of self, defined by values of others such as family, into defining one's own values and character (Klimstra et al., 2010), and involves a progression toward a core sense of both 'continuity and sameness' (Erikson, 1968, p 128) taking place across several domains of identity (Roeser et al., 2008). Adolescents construct a sense of identity amongst an array of contextual influences, including family, school, and peer relationships; all set within a broader societal context (Choate, 2007). Marking the progression from childhood into adulthood; forming identity in adolescence is a developmentally tumultuous time (Klimstra et al., 2010). Negotiating the many demands of all these factors can present youth with developmental stressors.

We saw evidence of identity transitions in the data, where youth talk about issues of progressing through normal development stages. Each youth is subject to rapid psychological growth. Amidst new cognitive abilities, logical thinking, physiological changes, and social demands, the youth are moving towards new codes for behaviour, self sufficiency, autonomy, relationships, commitments to peers and family, social membership, and towards a secure form of identity. The major 'crisis' youth face is the search for a meaningful sense of identity: Seeking to understand their own interests, desires, strengths, and weaknesses, whilst also attempting to negotiate their social identity; who they are in the world (Erikson, 1968; Youniss & Yates, 1997)

Thus under this theme, the key questions are: What does a secure form of identity mean to these youth? Does this interpretation help us form recommendations about how can we support it through further PAR, programs, or interventions that shape a supportive environment for secure identity formation?

### **Identity formation**

One service provider correctly suggests that identity formation is the primary motivation for youth.

*They have no other interests and gain a sense of belonging by being seen by their peers*

As another adult commented, a sense of connection with others is the constant search of youth.

*The constant need to be around others and 'connected'*

It is therefore quite normal for youth to seek the membership of a large group as a safe space to negotiate their own identity.

*with their friends in large groups and feel anonymous in that large group*

Adults recognised the need for youth to find identity within their own cultural groupings or communities.

*They also go out to be with their own communities/racial groups.*

It is important to note that youth are aware of macro factors, such as geographical location, creating the social differences between themselves and others. For these youths, who they are, their identity, is being defined by where they live.

*Perth is home to lots of people. Just because we live in the suburbs doesn't mean we don't live in Perth.*

*Cause we live in the Ghetto bru, that's it, we need to be strong, that's how we survive out 'ere.*

Additionally the same barriers, framed as socioeconomic status, are highlighted by SP/P as an integral part of the formation of youth identity.

*family unable to afford to provide their child/ren with teenage currency (eg X-Box, Playstation, Wii, internet etc) that yp use to recreate with each other;*

*Young people do not have the money to afford other options/ activities.  
Many ""types' of young people enjoy street presence - its part of individuation.  
However, financially secure young people can afford to (have power to) choose other venues and activities*

Youth must negotiate these perceived (yet real) disadvantages in the process of forming their identity. These data indicate that despite certain adversities, the youth aspire to dreams and plans for the future, as is characteristic of a growing sense of identity, and were engaged in what Erikson (1968) referred to as major crisis of adolescence.

*'forge himself/herself some central perspective and direction, some working unity, out of the effective remnants of his/her childhood and the hopes of his/her anticipated adulthood (Erikson, 1968, p. 14)*

The data below evidence this.

*Wanting to attend TAFE or university featured prominently for non-ATSI (50%) and ATSI (33%) respondents. Additionally, high paying employment was a stronger dream for ATSI youth (39%) than non-ATSI (16%)*

*This photo [goat] reminds me of a story that I haven't heard in a long time; the story of Billy Goat's Gruff. It reminds me that if I really want something I can get it.*

The more critical point for support is; when asked whether they felt they had everything needed to achieve their dreams, the majority of youth indicated that they did, however the issue was not as clear cut for all youth.

*19% of non-ATSI and 27% of ATSI young people answered 'no' to this question.*

Literature has identified several issues that may impede ATSI youth's ambitions. These include difficulty accessing (or poor quality) career guidance, lack of family support / role models, institutional racism, and culturally inappropriate environments. It is possible therefore, that this may be a reflection of larger societal and community failures, rather an individual lack of aspiration.

### **Cultural identity**

For the ATSI youth in particular their perceived status as ATSI community members is critical. Literature indicates that the impact of oppression and colonisation on ATSI populations increases the importance of building a strong cultural identity, in order to increase self-esteem, achieve academic success, and develop resilience against discrimination.

Cultural identity is something ATSI youth will wrestle with. On one level, cultural identity is positively or negatively self defined one way or another.

*I like being Aboriginal, but when I tell people I am, they don't believe me because I am white. That makes me feel sad.*

On another level, youth are acutely aware of how their cultural identity is ascribed by others. Daniel and Cornwall's (1993) early study found that disadvantaged youth felt that they did not belong, and had few points of engagement; the authors posited these youth were victims of social and economic change within Australia society, marginalising them further. It seems the ATSI youth sampled here, in reflecting on their cultural identity, felt the brunt of this sense of marginalisation, more than most.

*Sometimes, I feel like I am not accepted anywhere. The white people that know I am Aboriginal, call me names, the Black people that look at me don't really accept me because I am white.*

It is critical to note the complex nature of cultural identity evident as only 14% of participants identified as ATSI. The YPAAG suggest any who indicate 'it's complicated' should be included as ATSI and a further 12% chose this 'it's complicated' option. The intricacy of cultural identity is also highlighted in the SP/P data; 6% of participants identified as ATSI, whilst 4% chose the 'not sure' option.

In addition, and closely associated with relational identity discussed below, we must recognise other cultures amongst youth, which play a part in identity formation. Issues such as inter-generational conflict in migrant or refugee populations may weigh heavily on the choices that youth make and ways in which they seek to shape their identities.

*In Cannington there are issues between African, Afghan/Pakistani, Turkish and Aboriginal boys in particular. The refugee/migrant young people have said to be before that it is easier to go out because their parents won't allow/won't like their westernised friends and their own westernisation*

Adults in the community clearly see the problem as an identity concern, and suggest they know youth want to engage in identity forming activities.

*I believe young people like to 'belong' and being with other young people 'hanging out' gives them sense of belonging*

*Include young people in the life of our city without driving them out of the areas they want to gather in. Understand that gathering together is a normal thing for young people.*

*Young people often don't want to be told what to do, especially if they just want to hang out- which may be a reason they avoid youth centres or community places that are specifically for young people.*

*Older teens dont enjoy supervised activities. Think they are already independant*

*It is 'cool' for them to hang out on the streets and trains*

*There may also be a culture of hanging out is 'cool'.*

Whenever their cultural self is threatened, youth will seek ways in which to come to terms with and build upon their identity; seeking out similar others.

*Well, I always get teased anywhere I am because I am Aboriginal. I don't like it so I just go and hang out with my friends. They're older so we do lots of different stuff. What's the point of staying around here, I may as well go out. It's more fun been in the street than been at home.*

The data raises questions in respect of the role of identity. The Qwizdom data point to the complication youth have in identifying as ATSI, but do not reveal the complication itself. Data from the Photovoice project provides some qualification about why identifying is complicated and connects to community psychology based research on the role of mixed heritage on sense of belonging, sense of place, and acceptance within communities. Those who do not easily fit into, or do not have a sense of belonging to a community, risk negative effects such as exclusion from the relational social supports that community membership provides. One complication



for youth around sense of belonging and the identity crisis is whether or how they are being accepted or where or how they fit within any defined community.

### **Relational identity**

Holter and Guilfoyle (2013, in press) describe that during adolescence a key factor in new identity development is that the range of peer contacts is potentially widening, and close friendships are typically experiencing a deepening of intimacy (McElhaney, Antonishak, & Allen, 2008). Becoming more stable than those established during childhood (Branje, Frijns, Finkenauer, Engels, & Meeus, 2007), friendships become less about mutual interest in activities with those in close physical proximity, such as classmates, and more about inward looking; interpersonal closeness with those who share values, secrets, trust and a sense of commitment to the friendship (Güroğlu, Cillessen, Haselager & van Lieshout 2012).

Holter and Guilfoyle (2013, in press) describe that the importance of friendships and peer relationships to adolescent well-being and identity formation is profound. A sense of inclusion and acceptance within a peer group has been likened to a 'security blanket' (Warrington & Younger, 2011, p. 153). This childhood analogy is somewhat apt when one considers the role that peer groups play in shepherding young people from their families to the larger world. Research has highlighted the importance of conforming to established norms in order to fit in and secure membership within a desired peer group (Laursen, Hafen, Kerr, & Stattin, 2012). Outside of desires for belonging, friendships clearly offer the advantage of peer support. Researchers examining identity construction refer to domains of 'representations of self', which are used by adolescents to organise perceptions of strengths and weaknesses across various areas of functioning (Caselman & Self, 2007). These factors are particularly important for all youth and particularly for ATSI youth; acknowledging the fundamental 'relatedness' of ATSI culture on peer memberships (Priest et al., 2005) is essential.

Throughout the data the relational aspects of belonging were present in ATSI youth discourse.

*This is a photo of my friends and I took it because they're always there for me. We all live close to each other and we hang out every day.*

*This is one of my best friends. We share everything. It's good that we live close to each other. When we are bullied or teased, we support each other.*

*It's always good to have friends you know have your back.*

SP/P also emphasised relational characteristics, such as the need to be with others; to 'connect'.

*to connect to other young people*

*just hanging out which is typical of young people's behaviour and style of socializing*

*Getting to a 'destination' such as Northbridge or the City may be fine, and good and fun if other peers are there,*

*Young people love to feel independant and explore and socialize and this can often mean they end up just walking around the streets or on public transport or in public places.*

*Youth culture influences teenagers more than parental values*

*If the whole group is not able to go to someone's house, they find public places to go. Getting there is usually by walking, riding/skating or public transport as young people value their independance, and also don't wish to rely on parents to get them places, or know where they are going.*

### **Why form identity on the streets/trains?**

The streets and/or trains and train stations are a vital space for youth in the context of their relational identity. Their friends, relatives, and similar youth can be located there; providing a familiar and open meeting place.

*35% of both ATSI and non-ATSI youth indicated that they like to spend time in public space. ATSI youth however were more likely to spend time on trains/train stations and in the city (31%) than non-ATSI youth (16%).*

*The main method of transport for our young people are trains as they don't have cars and buses are sometimes irregular: therefore they are always seeing/bumping in to friends at the train stations or on the trains. They can also be a meeting point for groups – particularly Perth trains station*

*At night it is great to be on the stations meeting up with everyone, e.g. friends, cousins, family's or just people who do the same thing.*

SP/P recognise that the streets/trains are utilised as a common and welcoming space by youth; one where they can build their identity.

*they are not safe or welcome in public space*

*they are not safe/welcome at home*

*Easy to get to places, catch up with mates,*

Adults do not see the streets/trains as safe places for youth however recognise that relational and cultural aspects of identity are formed in these locations.

*They are not safe places but they find other young people like themselves there.*

## **SAFETY**

From an adult perspective, the discourse of safety is often bound within a criminology theme; it is easy to construct the streets/train as unsafe. Here is the stark contrast in the two approaches; we argue for youth who are aiming to form relational identity and the streets/trains are seen as a safe space on various levels.

Both ATSI and non-ATSI youth predominantly choose where to go by whether it will be exciting, whether they will be safe, and where their friends are going (56% and 55% respectively). The streets and the train fulfil these criteria; they are seen as exciting, they are considered safe space for forming identity, and their friends are there.

Safety is an important element to where youth choose to spend their time.

*Young people congregate in places they do feel comfortable to do so  
meeting place that is mutual ground*

Youth have highlighted safety in terms of relational aspects.

*being with somebody or having company  
stay with friends*

Here, SP/P highlight the positive physical attributes of spending time on trains.

*safe and easy form of transport  
trains are always well lit with lot of traffic around.*

In addition, SP/P recognise that on a cultural and relational level, ATSI youth need to feel safe when meeting with others, and attribute a lack of provided space in which youth can engage and build their identities.

*What is wrong with our public or private spaces that Aboriginal people can no longer have meeting places where they feel safe and can engage in safe activities*

## **Sense of belonging**

The street/train is safe because youth can bond with others, to share and form new identity.

*Thats where they will find other young people who are similar to them (street family)  
no adultless space to hang out without scrutiny of adults*

*Because it is where other young people are. its a netrual place, that doesnt close or shut down. there are not always authority figures around*

This sense of belonging is tied not only to others, but also to the space itself; the street/trains are a mutual and common ground, belonging to youth, where they can negotiate their identity.

*I think it has become a space that they identify as one that can be theirs. As opposed to home which may belong to the parents,*

## **Family**

For ATSI youth there was strong family relational aspect to the sense of belonging on the streets/trains. Interviews with youth on train trips support this: Friends and relatives rode trains with them, it was a 'typical' night and they had 'nothing better to do'. Being with family promotes feelings of safety.

*being with an adult who can stand there ground and being in big grounds*

*stay with my friends and my mum*

When asked about what being safe meant, one ATSI youth answered so powerfully and so simply '*brother*', emphasising the power that a broad construction of family and friends has on his sense of belonging.

## **Zones of proximal development**

Youth will find spaces where they can interact with other youth in search of developing their own identity.

*Kids with low self-esteem may engage in risky behavior to be accepted by their peers.*

There was discourse around older youth looking after younger children, thus exercising their developing identity around new responsibility.

*in these places they can exhibit leadership rather than feel powerless, like at home*

One boy expressed his developing identity in terms of needing and gaining protection through interaction with friends.

*When the boys watch out for me, I feel like I can do better and achieve more things. Sometimes I can trust them boys to listen to me more than my family does.*

Again, adults described their awareness of the developing nature of youth identities and the need to support these development processes.

*Parents expect a certain level of independence and want to give it. Allowing young people out is seen to aid this.*

One service provider argued that the streets/trains were 'safe' or safer, in the sense of a being a place where older youth could look after younger children.

*Domestic violence is prevalent and older kids will take the younger kids onto the trains as a safety plan.*

### **Unsafe home**

There was a strong discourse, at times from youth, but in the main acknowledged by SP also; that the streets/trains are a safe space, and a space where youth seek refuge from troubles at home.

*feeling unsafe in other environments so they choose to spend time with friends on the streets*

*Overcrowding at home, other siblings, domestic violence and drug and alcohol use in the home make it unpleasant for many students to be at home.*

*The parents are often struggling themselves with issues such as drugs/alcohol*

On the whole, SP/P indicated that the main issues at home revolved around violence, overcrowding, drug and alcohol use, lack of involvement/interest by parents, and mental health issues. For some youth, this appears to be a daily reality.

*Lots of kids here run away from home because their parents hurt them or abuse them because they are drunk or on drugs. I know some kids who hid up there [air-conditioning return] because they didn't want people to find them. They stayed up there all weekend.*

Under the categories of 'family dynamics' and 'mood', young people indicated in their comments such things as wanting to be anywhere their parents weren't and if they were angry or upset, that influenced their movements and actions significantly. The data below can refer to the child autonomy valued by ATSI culture, or conflict, or both.

*17% of non-ATSI youth go where their parents say they can, whilst only 8% of ATSI young people do so.*

*Only 27% non and 25% ATSI suggested they were spending time at the 'Home-Family, friends'.*

Some SP/P used the technique of particularisation, suggesting it was in particular those who were outside of the normal peer networks, or disconnected from their family, that turned to the streets.

*Some young people also report feeling unsafe in other environments so they choose to spend time with friends on the streets*

*feeling as though they don't belong/disconnection from friends or family*

*Family conflict is a reason why some of these young people don't want to be home with their friends.*

One SP indicated that youth can feel disempowered and overwhelmed by violence in the home, thus going to the streets/on the trains may be used to disengage from the situation in an attempt to build an alternate identity.

*Home not safe – too much violence – Young people 'shame' about this*

Some SP/P suggested that it is certain negative parenting behaviours which influence street presence, and that being on the streets/trains is not a healthy activity and is not a positive identity building tool.

*Young people represent future generation and need to be valued both at home and in the community. My children are attending sporting activities and clubs, which encourage healthy, social activities that build character and resilience. I do not allow them to hang out without a purpose or access to an adult for guidance or supervision*

Whilst this is a valid comment in this person's context, we argue that it does not take into account the context in which young people try to negotiate their emerging identities. As demonstrated above, youth are aware of the barriers they face and we must recognise that the same opportunities are not afforded to all young people.

### **When they do not feel safe**

The youth did not construct the train line as an unsafe space. This is borne out of research team observations.

*34% of ATSI young people and 25% for non-ATSI respondents indicated that something happened to make them stay away from the streets or trains; that it is unpredictable and dangerous or that they do not feel safe.*

Photovoice data suggested it is not the youth per se, but others, possibly adults, who create the unsafe environment.

*I took this photo because the train is good. When we go to parties and stuff, it is the easiest way to travel. It's exciting to get on the train, but at night it can be dangerous for girls because there's all these, um old men trying to call you and they say stuff to you.*

*This is the first time I see a bottle that hasn't been broken at the park. Lot's of people once they get drunk they end up throwing bottles around to break them. Most of the time they end up throwing them at each other.*

*I took this photo of dead grass. For me this shows that if the grass was greener at school and in the community it would look better. I feel that there is too much graffiti and parky's (the people that sit in the park and get drunk). They often try to abuse people that walk past and try to lure them to go with them. This makes me feel scared and unsafe.*

This is also evident in SP/P discourse.

*transit guards fining young people with no money nor ticket then putting them off the train in an at risk environment scares the young people i work with*

*Stop fining kids up 18 on public transport as \$100 fine a pop does not prevent them from riding on the trains it just means they have already fallen in a hole where they cannot get of which will keep them unemployed longer as not being able get a driver's licence means they have yet another barrier employment and independence*

Youth did indicate that they sometimes do not feel safe in their community and expressed a desire for change. Again, the reasons behind feeling unsafe appear to come from adults, rather than other youths.

*not a good place to live because there are druggies everywhere. I wish my friends and I could live somewhere where everything is new.*

*it is a bad place to live because there are many people that do drugs and there is always too much trouble, like fighting, cutting and hitting.*

*This is where people from my school hang out and I feel scared for them because of all things they are exposed to like drugs and alcohol.*

*I feel that there is a lot of bad stuff that happens in this state like drugs, alcohol and crime. The police don't really do anything about it.*

A dominant issue that emerged for youth was the way they are treated by authority figures. Discriminatory or negative attitudes towards youth frame the way they build their identities. ATSI youth experience prejudice throughout many aspects of their lives (Kickett-Tucker, 2009; Mellor, 2003; Paradies, 2006) and are aware of prejudices ascribed to them, based in a criminology theme, and this adds another layer to the issues they must negotiate whilst seeking to construct a firm identity.

*we get called names, an um, looked at funny, and it's even worse for us because we're Aboriginal.*

Research by Guilfoyle and Taylor (2011) shows these perceptions of ATSI youth are quite real if you examine mainstream discourses such as the stereotyping discourse of University students talking about ATSI youth.

*Aboriginals at our school fighting each other pulling hair, screaming at at everyone*

*I mean you walk through the train station and they ask for money and think they have the right, or that you should give it to them*

*I have had a range of them of threatening to throw me in the pool threatening to drown me kill me whatever out on the pool deck*

*and I have had them yelling abuse at me on the phone or yelling abuse to me at the reception for petty reasons you know I think that some of them can be very aggressive*

*A lot of my friends think its such a huge problem I think because it is a minority in Perth and its just causing a huge amount of bad bad vibes maybe (yeah really bad associations with them) within the general population towards them because of that behaviour...)*

*it's a fairly major shopping area and they're yelling out things like white trash to you*

*They feel hard done by, and as soon as something annoys them, they just seem to take it out on frustration by hitting someone or firing abuse at people (source: Guilfoyle & Taylor, 2011)*

For the youth sampled it was not just the demeaning gaze of the general public, but that of authorities which constituted their lived experience.

*Oy, what about that time when we were at the park an' them coppers came and started askin us questions. They always do that. They always search us for drugs and stuff.*

At a time when the youth are developing an inner voice of moral conscience, or as Hoffman (1970) defined “a moral standard that subjectively has as its source in the actor himself/herself or in some reference group or person, rather than being based on concerns over external sanctions” (Hoffman, 1970, p. 286); the messages youth receive from authorities that they should be the target of control, is likely confusing and disruptive to their own sense of moral reasoning.

Research has found that young people who experience prejudice are more likely to feel that opportunities are not equal and that their identity and culture are not valued. This may encourage diminished feelings of self-worth, lowered self-esteem and lead them to question the identity they are trying to construct for themselves. This is particularly prominent for ATSI youth.

*I feel that Aboriginal people are just as important as White people. White people are on Aboriginal land and I feel that Aboriginal people should be respected in the way that White people are respected.*

*I feel that as Aboriginal people we can't be trusted because we are black. We often get blamed and get racist looks and comments for things that one person might do in our communities.*



*When I was in year 2 everyone was asked to put our handprint on the wall. It makes me remember all the kids that left. It reminds me of my culture and how Aboriginals did their paintings in the past. I feel that lots of people think that Aboriginals are bad and stuff because they drink.*

Some SP/P discourse concurs that discrimination is a problem for youth. Negative attitudes towards youth, on the basis of their youth, continue to perpetuate problem based 'solutions' rather than viewing youth as in the stages of cementing their identities and therefore building on this positive developmental stage.

*think that they are discriminated against for "hanging around in the city and being on the trains" and further marginalised by the stop and search laws, move on notices as well as the no more than 12 in a group or the "party" will be broken up and they can be arrested!!*

*There were two of them and they had 12 beers. They looked approx.. 17 or 18. I thought they were unfairly targeted and I think it is an infringement on their human rights. They were doing no harm at all.*

*Misunderstanding and scrutiny of how they use public space, they just want to wander, hang out and have fun.*

*I wish that young people were finally understood and treated with the respect and human rights that they deserve.*

*I have watched these issues grow for the last 8 years or since the Northbridge Curfew. We have had nothing but knee jerk political responses to this very much cultural issue. Young people are being judge and pushed around without supporting them in their local community.*

### **Free space**

Youth become highly aware of how others are framing them at this age. They would clearly prefer not to be framed as community members who have criminal intent. These youth described how the attribute of untrustworthiness was being imposed and, along with this, being subjected to discrimination. One reason we prefer an identity theme over crime prevention based solutions and any attached programs, is that the sorts of solutions a criminology theme promotes are very apparent to youth. They are acutely aware of being framed as the problem and that the policies or programs are designed to shape their behaviour away from implied crime.

*Lots of people reckon we are gonna steal stuff. We go into the shops and we have money to pay for things, but then the security just starts following us around. Then they tell us to leave. They even ask us to empty our pockets. I feel like I can't be trusted.*

There is a clear sense of group safety, or that the train provides some form of safe haven on several levels. One is being in a less bounded space, less easily the target of negative attributions from others.

*A small percentage of youth (7% & 8%) indicated the city/shops.*

*ATSI are less likely to spend time at 'the local shops' (4%) than non-ATSI youth (19%).*

The problem of hanging around the shops was expressed well in the young boy's quote above.

For youth the streets/trains clearly has a freedom to it; they can be on the move

*When asked when she hangs out there [train stations] she simply replied "this is where all the action is". 'you can't find it anywhere else except the shopping centres, but they are controlled by security guards and too many white people watch you when they walk past'. At the stations we meet and get drunk and have lots of fun. The transit officers may come sometimes and get off at the station but they go again and then we are free to do what we want.*

SP/P also acknowledged the freedom that streets/trains afford to youth.

*being out and about and moving on the trains might satisfy the need for movement, change and help disperse restless energy*

*on trains young people are not in one place all of the time.*

It is possible that the higher proportion of ATSI young people in the city and around trains, rather than the local shops, may be attributed to the bounded spaces of shops etc. Here their presence can be easily observed and targeted. Although there is no data, and it is not to say being on trains or in the city youth do not feel discrimination, but it might be the streets/trains are a preferred alternative; one in which youth feel less identified.

### **Grandparents in ATSI families**

ATSI youth do spend a lot of time in their grandparents' care.

*ATSI youth were more likely to be living with their grandparents (11%) in comparison to non-ATSI (1%).*

Grandparents in ATSI families are extremely important and highly respected sources for teaching traditional law and culture and, grandmothers in particular, are a source of security for ATSI children. On one level grandparent care, and care from other family members such as aunties, echoes the strong values of extended family networks of ATSI communities; and it does not suggest homelessness.

A common concern amongst service providers in Aboriginal communities is that the youth who are on the streets (in remote communities, simply around the community and not at home), are there due to family breakdowns, or because parents are away, and the youth are in grandparent care or under the care of other family members (not parents). The question 'Where do you live (the most)?' where participants were

asked to answer the question with reference to where they spend most nights; implies a problem of association that those in grandparent care are perhaps more likely to be involved in street behaviour.

If the question is, does being in grandparent or other family member care effect (increase) street behaviour, the answer is not clear from the present data. SP/P data suggested unstable home environments; violence/substance abuse/lack of support. The situation is complicated in that it is the healthiness of the home environment, which might affect ATSI youth development, not who is providing the care; as one SP suggested.

*Sometimes the parents have problems or are dysfunctional. other times students have ok family situations and parents/grandparents who really try to do things for them and are concerned about where they are and what they are doing.*

Another SP highlights the critical need to diverge from generalisations about caregivers and what type of 'care' does or does not contribute to street presence.

*I think its dangerous to make assumptions that the children of particuar parents will allow their children to be street present- some parents do not 'allow' it*

## **RISKY BEHAVIOUR**

Within a criminology theme, it is easy to construct the streets/trains as unsafe and also full of risk. Often there is a subtlety in the criminology discourse which suggests negative framing and punitive intervention is supportive in that it 'saves' youth from themselves. Framing risk taking as crime based can be used as discourse to 'help' them; a way of acting to protect them as much as protect society from them. For example, Gill (2007) argued that discourse around young people is often based upon vulnerability and the need for protection, and states that although this may be the case, learning opportunities may be lost through excessive interference from adults. There is a different discourse of risk premised on an identity theme. Risk is constructed as a normal part of healthy development, and the aim of adults should not be to prevent youth taking risks, but to guide them through their risk taking stages of development and create healthy environments in which normal risk taking can occur.

The problem of approaching risk from a criminology discourse is that it begins to label or target particular groups as more risky, or most risk seeking. While all adolescents seek risk as way of exploring and testing new identity, as discussed below, 'risk' can become attributed to marginalised populations. As one SP/P suggested, the links between these youth, their identity formation, and risk, was premised on socioeconomic/geographical location; comparing these youth with those in affluent suburbs. It makes the behaviour of these youth, not so much more risky, but possibly occurring in a more risk prone setting, less controlled or bounded, and often far more noticeable.

*Both groups get involved in risky behaviour and both share a binge drinking culture. Some are more seen than others; some have access to more money than others. This determines where they 'hang out', what they consume and what they do.*

The targeting of certain youth as particularly risk prone is not something lost on the youth themselves. Youth are acting within a stage of development where they will readily internalise labels, and the sense that others think they are taking unnecessary risks, can result in a further sense of exclusion from a supposed risk free society (Carson, Dunbar, Chenhall, & Bailie, 2007; Nelson, 2012). Literature has found that factors associated with risk are related more to individual behaviours, rather than as a characteristic of certain groups of people over others (Duff, 2003; Nelson, 2012). ATSI youth however will often perceive themselves as the direct, singled out target of risk preventions interventions.

Research seeking to 'close the gap' between ATSI and non-ATSI populations often regards Aboriginality as the core of being 'at risk', ignoring issues such as marginalisation, poverty, and racism (Brown, 2009; Nelson, 2012). Further, in identifying ATSI youth as 'at risk' we are acting to further marginalise this population. For ATSI youth we know that such labels may impact on cultural pride, creativity, and resilience and at the same time show them that we ignore larger societal contexts which have an impact on disadvantage, and therefore identity (Bond, 2005; Martin, 2006; te Riele, 2006).

All young people are prone to being drawn into risk taking behaviours by others as a normal part of their identity development.

*Students can get drawn into undesirable situations because of the friendships that they make at Education. Also they sometimes simply seem drawn to risk taking behaviors.*

A crime interpretation frames risky behaviour as crime related behaviour, which is behaviour that has an end point of criminal acts being committed. Thus its solution is that the crimes need to be prevented and; therefore that the risky behaviour needs to be prevented.

An identity interpretation constructs risky behaviour as a normal part of youth development, not something to be quashed. The literature on identity formation indicates that risk-seeking behaviour is healthy and common in adolescence, in searching for autonomy/identity/peer influence. Unger (2006), Unger et al. (2007), and Unger et al. (2008) suggests youth need to take risks in order to develop the resilience or ability to bounce back from adversity that risk taking can sometimes bring.

SP acknowledged that all youth will want to socialise with others, and it is fair to say that in the Perth metropolitan area (and as a recognised national problem) drinking is part of the general youth sub-culture (Borlagdan et al., 2010).

*Very few young people like to spend their Friday nights at home with Mum and Dad. Whether the home environment is safe or not, it is in the youth culture to go out, party and drink.*

SP pointed towards the typical identity development functions that engaging in risky group behaviour will have for youth. It is about establishing one's own identity, and for all youth there will be an element of gaining acceptance.

*looking for excitement and something cheap to do. Cheap thrills*

*its cool, exciting and they may be under peer pressure to prove themselves. Kids with low self esteem may engage in risky behaviour to be accepted by their peers.*

Thus there is tension over youth doing normal identity related things, which can involve some risk; and a crime based theme, where behaviour is being unfairly monitored.

*There were two of them and they had 12 beers. They looked approx.. 17 or 18. I thought they were unfairly targeted and I think it is an infringement on their human rights. They were doing no harm at all.*

*I recently saw two young people being stopped at and searched by two police simply because they had a bag.*

### **Culture/disadvantage and risk**

A critical point is, as one SP put it, the risky behaviour of these youths is common to all youths in the metropolitan area; the key difference is that their behaviour is more noticeable.

*ATSI youth spent much less time at parties (3%) than non-ATSI (17%)*

*Western Suburb kids hang out at parties, behind closed doors; Aboriginal kids hang out outside.*

The critical point here is one of social economic disadvantage.

*access to more money...determines where they 'hang out', what they consume and what they do.*

There is an ideological dilemma which forms around the idea that ATSI youth reach an autonomous stage, one valued by culture, much earlier than non ATSI youth, and are therefore likely to engage in risky behaviours at a younger age. These are then viewed as less mature and logical, more unreflective; and thus any risk taking of these youth is easily framed as reckless.

*Enjoy risky behaviour*

*Young person will not follow rules*

*the thrill or excitement is a huge drawcard*

SP/P acknowledge that risk taking is a normal part of structuring identity in adolescence, however also structure youth as immature and unable to determine when they should remove themselves from a situation. We argue that youth are simply attempting to build a secure identity, in the context of an available safe space.

*When I was a kid we used to make our own fun all the time. We took risks and that was part of life and we knew how we felt if something was not in our best interests. Most of these kids don't seem to be able to entertain themselves without being in risky situations*

There has always been an ideological line drawn between what behaviours are risky and which are reckless.

*Young person is risk taking or reckless*

### **Sexual identity**

During this developmental age, focused on emergent sexual identity, youth are focused on the excitement of opportunities for gendered interactions.

*All young people like to 'hang out with friends'; boys like to meet girls and girls like to meet boys. They all like excitement.*

Youth will take risks in respect of their emergent and developing sexual identity.

Photovoice data indicates that young adolescents are engaging in risky behaviour; however they do not construct their behaviour as 'risk' in the same way that adults might. They claim, quite accurately, that their social context provides the basis for ascribing meaning to what is considered 'risky' behaviour, based on experience; and thus these meanings are subject to a constant process of change (Ekberg, 2007; Lupton, 1999). For example, there will always be a range of adult opinions on the appropriate age at which sexual encounters can begin, and it is likely these are not shared by youth.

*Lots of girls aren't virgins anymore and they are 13. That's how the generation is now.*

*I think girls should stop going to parties and getting drunk and stuff, cause they are too young. They are like 12, 13 or 14 and stuff.*

### **The link between alcohol/drugs, crime and physical violence**

Of concern, is that 25% of ATSI youth indicated that they spend their Friday/Saturday nights 'drinking or doing drugs', as opposed to 5% of non-ATSI young people. In trying to build their relational identity, youth may be influenced by

the use of drugs/alcohol (modelling) in the community. This notion was exemplified by youth.

*Yeh, even like kids who are 8 or 9 do it [smoke marijuana] ... I reckon they do it cause they see their parents sit around and do it.*

*that's when people buy their goons and stuff and then they go and sit at the park and all the younger boys will go and sit there and have a drink with them.*

*the other day I went to a friend's house to sleep over and his mum's sitting there and um, she's like, do you want a bong or something? And I was like, um no. Her son is only like in year 4.*

The link between crime and behaviour is directly related to drug use.

*Other illegal activities such as drug dealing/couriering and stealing are occurring both in an attempt to support themselves/families and at times because families teach them to do this because it is expected that they will 'help out' the family.*

The only other link was to how the train facilitated graffiti.

*Another student engages in graffiti, either on the trains or uses the trains to get to locations for graffiti*

Another area where reckless behaviour was reported was physical violence.

*Another student was engaged in a lot of proactive aggression and found the trains to be good places to engage in fights*

Qwizdom data indicated that non-ATSI young people are more likely to engage in risky behaviour. We are not sure how valid these data are; that is how reliable the reports are. If they are valid, they challenge the long-held assumptions of successive governments who have enacted laws that are largely discriminatory toward ATSI people (Northbridge curfew, move on notices, stop and search etc) and societal discourses that ATSI youth are associated with street violence of this type.

*Risk-seeking behaviour (fights/action, thrill, torment/annoy guards/police) was more amplified for non-ATSI youth (26%) than ATSI youth (13%),*

## **OTHER PLACES**

There was strong discourse that other places did not afford the same identity formation opportunities as the streets/trains did. The streets/trains were seen as natural environment to 'hang out' in.

*There is action there. They can't get around themselves so it is naturally a place to meet*

It had a practical aspect recognised by SP/P; an easy informal place to socialise.

*easily access, cheap and they can easily socialize with others in this informal setting.*

*Cheap and socialize*

The point that the streets/trains are cheap was made consistently throughout the data.

*Lack of places that are affordable*

*Affordable and easily accessible*

*Because these areas are easy and cheap to get to.*

Weather was a very important factor in decision making for both ATSI and non-ATSI youth (30% and 32% respectively).

*It is a social and safe environment for them. EG: warm and dry in winter, light at night time.*

*easy meeting places, nowhere else to go that provides shelter/warmth/cool, provides variety in human contact*

SP/P often supported the streets/trains as the most viable space for youth.

*I think that they are using public space and services as they should be entitled to do so. I think that they are consumers and that they enjoy going into the city of the trains as it is social and fun...*

Under the rhetoric of 'nowhere else to go', no other spaces were really available for youth. There was a discourse of development of this space; youth supported the idea of organised group activities near train stations or to rework train stations and use these spaces as an alternative. Suggestions included dance parties or discos and also a space that would allow them to exhibit their own talents.

Here, a SP suggests that youth are in a desperate struggle to access belonging (from family, society) or spaces which afford it.

*No access to mainstream society which have driven the young person to access the little belonging they can find in their peers hanging out on the street's*



## School

Educational settings play a major role in relational identity for ATSI youth.

*Seeing friends was a very important component of school for ATSI youth (65%) as compared to non-ATSI young people (38%)*

Assumptions around levels of truancy in ATSI populations were challenged by Qwizdom data.

*7% of non-ATSI youth stated they 'stay away from school 'a fair bit', as opposed to 2% of ATSI youth people.*

The question here is, is it that schools provide a positive space for youth to negotiate their identity, or are education settings lacking, in that youth frame school as simply another place in which to connect with peers. Youth have indicated that the school setting is often at odds with their needs and aspirations.

*I feel that I am always told off and I am told negative stuff when I come to school and this makes me not want to come back*

Research indicates that ATSI youth are less likely to stay in school and achieve similar academic outcomes as their non-ATSI counterparts. The reasons for this are often attributed to lower socioeconomic status, family dynamics and substance use. However, literature has also noted that education should be culturally relevant and meaningful to ATSI students. Further, cultural exclusion, teachers' expectations, and non-inclusion of ATSI worldviews in the curriculum may be related to these statistics. Researchers have also posited the importance of teaching Australian history, from an ATSI, rather than colonial view. One youth highlighted these salient points.

*The two flags represent the culture of the Aboriginal people and the people of Australia. James Cook wandered into Australia without permission from the Aboriginal people.*

School is a space that comes with its own difficulties that youth must manage in the course of constructing a cultural and relational identity.

*It's hard to walk in our shoes sometimes. For us girls, it's hard anyway. You have to look a certain way and if you don't, we get called names, and um, looked at funny, and it's even worse for us because we're Aboriginal.*

In addition to cases of bullying and pressure to conform, youth must also negotiate ensuing discrimination, heavily embedded in a crime based theme.

*all us boys got called in to the office once cause some people broke into the school on a weekend and we got blamed for it. It wasn't us. Then that teacher told us to go and find out who did it. How are we s'posed know?*

## PROGRAMS

*ATSI young people were highly influenced by personal interests/wants (30%), friends' interests (19%) and less so by any events being held (7%). In contrast, non-ATSI youth were equally influenced by personal interests and events (14% apiece) and less so by friends (9%).*

The streets/trains are a free space, where youth can explore identity through personal interests and connect with friends in ways they determine. If programs want to emulate this or vie for the attention of these youth, they must connect with youth in this same way, or provide the youth the same opportunities. ATSI youth, according to the data above, are not interested in events per se; they simply want to explore interests with friends. Friends were not as important to non-ATSI young people. This possibly suggests, in terms of the extent of social networks, non-ATSI might be referring to interests with small groups of close friends, whilst ATSI are referring to broader networks of friends, and the streets/trains allows them to connect with friends more broadly.

Youth appear to enjoy the outdoors, and social and leisure activities. This links with literature into sport and physical activity, which shows such pursuits reduce boredom in youth and aid in social and personal development, thus allowing a space in which youth can build their identities.

*Both ATSI and non-ATSI youth spend time engaged in recreation/sporting activities, or at the beach/pool (53% and 52% respectively).*

Young people indicated that engaging in sport provided a positive space for them, and that other youth should also engage in these activities.

*This is a photo of a netball ring. This photo is about kids that don't play as much as other kids. There are quite a few out of school programs that help kids play sport in the community. We need to get out there and be more active.*

SP/P noted that there are issues around current programs and that there is lack of spaces which youth can identify as theirs, and thus engage in activities which afford the same attraction as streets/trains.

*there is NOTHING exciting nor engaging for young people in the city of Armadale*

*Free activities in the area may not be seen as 'cool'*

The concept of '*nothing to do*' was repeated consistently throughout SP/P data.

Youth discourse around activities designed for them indicate that there is a lack of certainty and continuity.

*We were photographing each other, to show that Photovoice is real.*

Research has noted that disadvantaged youth are less likely to participate and stay involved in organised programs, however when becoming involved, usually do so on the basis of their experiences, culture and ethnicity. Therefore if we are to engage youth in activities alternate to streets/trains, we must do so with the formation of cultural and relational identity in mind.

*People trying to make them fit into their programs not making programs for them, and judging them in their programs.*

### **Cultural programs**

What has been established here is that youth are in a process of developing a secure identity, which is based in cultural and relational factors. The need to connect with culture and spirituality is strong in youth discourse.

*I like going bush. It's where I feel good about life. I am not allowed to go up there yet, cause they Elders haven't taken me there yet. Us boys, we get taught about spiritual things and it's really cool.*

*I am Aboriginal and I am very proud about being different. The people in my family all tell me stories about how important it is to know our traditions.*

SP/P are similarly aware of the need for youth to develop their cultural identity within a traditional space. The inclusion of Elders, as well as other family and community members, in the formation of cultural spaces within which youth can safely negotiate an identity, was highlighted throughout SP/P data.

*Local community groups providing activities. Not NGO's but the local community, fathers, uncles etc. it's a cliché but it takes a village raise a child*

*A bit like the Noongar patrol model but with a focus on the young people and activities. the young people will have far more commitment their own culture then this white man's intervention via "Hired NGO's" that only operates as long as the funding (political will) is there.*

*Back to country is good.' Also give young people a purpose in life- get them involved in a community project or event.*

*Consult with the elders in the areas to be a part of the solution with young people*

Furthermore, respect for programs within the community play a part in participation. For respect to be accorded, the community must be given the opportunity to engage in the formulation of such programs.

*if the program is respected in the community*

*Encourage a community inspired approach that can increase the local community's capacity to engage the young people living in the local area.*

*There are very little activities for youth at risk that are appropriate and consistent.*

*I think it has be a joint consultation with the Aboriginal community and elders, Educations and police, City of Armadale and strategies put in place that will be supported by the Aboriginal community and the local Educations, police etc I don't think it is any use picking up kids and returning them home as there needs to be something to replace what they are doing.*

In addition, youth must also be afforded the opportunity to voice their opinions on what spaces they want and require, in order to concrete a secure cultural and relational identity.

*Engage young people in community development of youth space/activities from young age - create partnership and 'ownership' by young people*

*Young people need be consulted with find out what they need, cater for their recreation and leisure activities in their communities.*

Finally, if cultural programs are to be developed in order to provide youth with an alternative space, other than streets/trains, in which to negotiate a developing identity; families must be able to play a part to ensure that relational and cultural identity needs are met.

*Working with the whole family*

*There are no short term solutions people need work with the family*

## **CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS**

Overall, the data reveal a unique context of youth behaviour in being present on the streets/trains and we believe, by extending the work through a full PAR approach; some unique outcomes can be achieved. We note our recommendations are limited by working with restricted data sets; although we were able to discern significant themes, we did not engage in the data collection phases and worked only from data available in the uncompleted PAR and Photovoice, reports rather than our own observations in the field. Thus the recommendations below are broad and not too specific to the realities of the local environment, and they should be read with an eye on what will be pragmatic, given the local conditions.

### **1. Avoid framing problems and solutions based on a criminology theme.**

This theme suggests that youth are motivated by crime; a reductionist logic in that if they do not use other available spaces, they choose the street or the train because they are 'up to no good'. Framing youth in this way leads to problem based, preventative interventions (Cunneen & White, 1995) facilitating additional negative societal discourse and criminalising non-criminal behaviour (Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia, 2003).

Outside of the criminology discourse present in the data, we found the data we viewed did not reveal anything particularly toxic about the way that youth engage in street/train behaviour. We would argue the discourse was one of youth being youth, engaged in a normal cycle of struggle for identity. There was evidence of youth active in the formation of a positive identity, intertwined with youth's sense of social competence; feeling valued, belonging, and wanting to contribute to society (Gullotta, Adams, & Markstrom, 2000; Gullotta, Adams, & Montemayor, 1990), and we must therefore view youth as seeking to build a strong identity, so that we may frame support, services, interventions, and future research in this local context, from a positive identity perspective.

What characterises this local context was the struggle was occurring in an environment which includes developing their identity:

- a. Cognizant of their low socio-economic, culture of disadvantage;
- b. In face of a lack of alternative spaces to hang out; and
- c. Shifting nature of primary care givers.

## **2. The existing study is a scoping phase of a Participatory Action Research project.**

It aimed at identifying or scoping some parameters around problems with respect to youth behaviour in being present on the streets/trains. The data does not focus on solutions or actions. We therefore recommend moving to the first phase of a PAR design, engaging youth directly in identifying solutions and implementing actions they suggest, then subjecting these actions to evaluation.

## **3. Consultation with Youth.**

While the data does not provide for specific recommendations about actions; given the complex nature in which youth identity revealed itself, our strongest recommendation is for investment in culturally appropriate youth based programs which offer an opportunity to participate in social/physical activities which empower their emergent identities. To fulfil the participatory element of Action Research methods, these programs must be designed in consultation with youth. For this next phase, we would recommend open forums, in the style of the SBS Insight program, where diversely sampled youth are afforded the opportunity to have their say on the issues which affect them, problems and concomitant solutions, and workshops where youth draw up action plans.

We need to develop and offer a broad range of programs as options for youth. Programs that can target key issues defined by youth/parents which are suited to the developmental stages of the youth will be the most effective. To achieve these we need to consult youth and determine what programs are appropriate for them and the identity and developmental issues they want addressed.

For example, sporting activity is a space for positive identity development. Research as shown, in particular for many ATSI youth, that participating in formal/informal sport is highly functional in the development of positive identity.

Participation in competitive school based sporting programs has been linked with higher rates of secondary school completion (Broh, 2002; Feldman & Matjasko, 2005; Herbert & Sabina, 2003; Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003), academic aspirations and identification/commitment to school (Herbert & Sabina, 2003), improving interpersonal competence (Eitle & Eitle, 2002; Mahoney et al., 2003), development of an internal locus of control, increased number of academically minded friends, an increase in parental association with school (Broh, 2002), and the development of initiative (Larson, 2000).

One risk in using sport as 'catch all' category for programs is conceptualising youth as either being involved in sport, and thus being 'positive', or engaging in illegal behaviour, and hanging out on the streets, and thus 'negative' (Ekberg, 2007; Lyons & Janca, 2012). Participation in programs should be used divisively or as simplifying dichotomy, such that youth who are involved in positive activities such as sport are fine, and those who are not are the problem. While it is good to engage youth in sport and activities, it is the actual program support provided within the activity that counts. Further stereotypical programs such as sport should not be the only option or space in which youth can develop their identity. As Coram (2007) and Gridley, Hampson, Wheeler, and Bereded-Samuel (2010) argue, we need to ensure Indigenous people are not categorised as 'sporting', as an out for not providing targeted interventions to address Indigenous disadvantage.

#### **4. Local Youth Working Groups.**

In the next phase, we also recommend the development of some youth working groups, where diversely sampled youths are given the opportunity to design specific interventions and work on these as a group. The group would define its terms of reference, working processes, and rules, meet regularly, and implement defined interventions. A project facilitator would need to be appointed and act as a facilitator for each of the Local Youth Working Groups and support, record, and monitor progress.

#### **5. Local Parents Working Groups.**

We agree with SP/P who say "*Working with the whole family*" and "*There are no short term solutions people need work with the family*". Research which links a positive relationship with one's family in adolescence and an overall sense of wellbeing (Ben-Zur, 2003) does support the primacy of adolescent relationships with family. It has been reported that adolescents with close family ties are less likely to suffer from anxiety and depression (Vernberg et al., 2006). These benefits extend to the adolescent's parents as well, with some research showing that the level of emotional closeness within the family also increases the wellbeing of adults (Vandeleur et al., 2009).

For example, Shomaker and Furman (2009) explored the link between attachment quality and interactions with friends amongst 100 adolescent girls, showing poor quality interactions between adolescents and their mothers predicted more conflict in friendships and poorer communication. The

researchers found that girls who reported insecure attachment tended to avoid problem solving with their friends, and preferred to direct conversations away from emotive topics. Insecure girls who find it difficult to divulge personal information and discuss their feelings may have trouble participating in mutually satisfying relationships of the type most others their age are aspiring to (Shomaker & Furman, 2009).

## **6. Family Support.**

We call for immediate, proximal interventions with the whole family, but see below. Given the heavy discourse of SP/P on family dysfunction as a causal factor, of course as per recommendations from SP/P, interventions focused on Family Support are warranted. These programs must be best practice and aim to work with the whole family. With Family Support programs we need to be mindful of the primary caregivers being targeted; parents, grandparents, or related family members. Family Support should combine with the need to create and maintain youth connections and a strong cultural identity. Here, we recommend inviting parents to participate in Local Parents Working Groups. The aim would be to offer Family Support as well as the development of parent lead programs for their youth, developed in consultation with Local Youth Working Groups.

Again, a project facilitator would need to be appointed to act as a catalyst for each of the Working Groups and support, record, and monitor progress and facilitate directly in identifying solutions and implementing actions these suggest; then subjecting these actions to evaluation. This stratagem would have the overall aim of connecting parents, youth, and their identity, in respect of local problems and solutions. Thus we strongly recommend that cultural programs are developed in a way where youth are working with their families. For example, the Local Youth Working Groups could be run with youth and parents/grandparents present or collaborating through their own groups.

## **7. Elders running Cultural Programs.**

In particular we need to acknowledge, as McConnochie and Russell (1982) noted a while ago, that the process of becoming an adult for ATSI youth traditionally is affected by social conditions and change which are affecting the ways in which ATSI young people achieve adulthood. These shifting conditions are even more rapid in the contemporary social climate.

There is work done on having Elders engaged in early child hood activities (see Guilfoyle, Sagers, Sims, & Hutchins, 2010) and the merits of developing culturally strong programs incorporate a firm understanding of a community's history, standards, beliefs, values, and practices extend to any youth programs. The inclusion of culture and tradition helps ATSI youth focus on spiritual, emotional, social, and physical aspects of their identity formation related to pride in self and the community, self-esteem, and confidence (Priest et al., 2005; SNAICC, 2004a; SNAICC, 2005). As Guilfoyle et al. describe:

*Identity formation for children requires the provision of a safe and nurturing environment wherein children [and youth] are free to explore the self in relation to others and the environment, through connection with social and physical elements—people, parents, siblings, family, community and nature (Fasoli et al., 2004; Martin, 1994; Priest et al., 2005).*

For ATSI youth, the programs must be focused on strengthening their cultural identity and lead by Elders. Culture appeared throughout the data, including youth confusion over culture, the possibility of in and out groups forming over cultural identity, dislocation from family, and the strong sense of belonging between youth groups on the streets/trains.

There are various best practice programs and models within the literature which the local programs can be premised on, (Back to Country etc; see 'justice' based prevention programs in the Eastern States). The aim is not impose these, but use these as suggestions and ask the local youth to develop their own ideas in light of what might be applied or has worked within these. Elder run programs should emerge from the Local Parents Working Groups and Elders should be directly resourced to run these cultural programs once developed to protect the fundamental 'relatedness' of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures..

#### **8. No new spaces (yet).**

We suggest, inside a criminology interpretation, it is not risky behaviour per se; it is the particular type of risky behaviour, or more exactly the location/setting of risky behaviour which seems to be the concern. For the youth though, if we take an identity interpretation, future work needs to explore what would be the alternative space/s which would be appropriate for these youth.

From an identity perspective, we know that youth operate with a sense of an 'imaginary audience' (Elkind, 1967), their behaviour is being watched by others and they easily interpret and will internalise any negative ascriptions. Youth are sensitive to spaces/programs being targeted at them and if they perceive these as framed as for 'at risk' youth, this may decrease interest and attendance. One alternative is to be inclusive, and literature states that engaging 'mainstream' youth prevents spaces/programs from becoming 'ghettoised' and therefore appear accessible to youth who may not identify as 'at risk'. Another is to ensure youth are fully consulted on what they desire as programs for them, and that they can design these to suit their needs, and fitting with their youth culture. That is, any new spaces must be those which youth deeply desire, would utilise to engage in their desired behaviour, and in which they are free from the feeling of being watched over.

Ideally these youth should be consulted on what these alternate spaces could be or would look like and have an active hand in their design. The Local Working Group should be structured towards this. The question is how these youths normal desire for securing identity through peer interactions relates to their street behaviour. We were heartened by the way adults in the community clearly see the youth within an identity theme. They suggest the youth want to engage in



identity forming activities, but within this particular local community; there are environmental barriers. The community does not afford mainstream opportunities for connections and belonging, outside of youth being allowed to be with each other on the street. Here youth are driven to access or create their own resources; the streets/trains are available to them as a space to find what one SP/P suggested too desperately as *'the little belonging they can'*.

From this data, we would not recommend or point to the simple design of new physical environments as a pathway forward. The risk is supplying another empty space supposedly designed for them, but not essentially useable by youth or functional for identity development, not offering real alternatives or attraction for developing an identity in the same way as the free spaces of the streets/trains (for example, a new skate park) afford.

In too many disadvantaged communities, empty, ghostly, spaces which were designed for youth stand as constant memorials to wasted efforts which clearly have not consulted the local youth on their needs, and remind them of just how forgotten they are. Unusable spaces, for example those targeted at a small percentage of young people, will only further marginalise these youth and remind them of how adults do not understand their plight or needs. We recommend the structures above, which if designed and implement properly, will lead to building social over physical capital in the first instance. Through this structure and well facilitated processes, specific and new ideas for new designs of the physical environment and spaces might emerge.

The structure of Local Working Groups we believe has potential. The ability of these new designs to create a sense of belonging, sense of place, and a culture building, well guided, strong identity development, will be dependent on the facilitation of authentic processes. It is the Working Groups themselves where we think funding needs to go, over and before any investment in new spaces of programs per se. Local Working Groups will empower these marginalised youth, more than hollow spaces, which they might feel are further token gestures about spaces where they should huddle. Thus future research and any future environmental re-design or social programs, should never forget the powerful role that socioeconomic disadvantage is playing on the identity formation of youth. This cannot be relegated as a general background or contextual factor. It must be put at the forefront, as this will be one of the most powerful and active forces shaping the identities these youth. They are acutely aware that this positioning affords certain parameters and that their development is experienced within a disadvantaged position.

Actions that can empower youth with a positive identity in the face of current disadvantages are needed. Well designed, inclusive, targeted, diverse, Local Working Groups would be a better immediate intervention. Our Social Capital theory here suggests; \$1,000.00 given to an Aboriginal Elder to run a cultural program for a day would be much better investment than \$1,000,000.00 on a new facility which is not being used.

**9. No new programs (yet):**

Although we refer to spaces/programs above, here the same argument applies explicitly to new social programs. For our interpretation of the data we would prefer to see, and thus recommend, the Working Group structures be put in place and (cultural) programs ideas which these groups initiate can be trialled, but the investment in the next stage should be into the groups to build social capital which can yield authentic programs.

**10. School/Education based initiatives.**

Spaces/programs need to be developed in consultation with youth; this is the only point at which we would be overruling. The schools in this area cannot be excluded as viable sites for program interventions and youth need to be offered the opportunity to design programs that can occur within the school grounds. Obviously this will take a great deal of negotiation with the schools and the Education Department; over the roles of teachers and other pastoral care/school supports, and the extent to which programs can be formalised with the existing, curriculum and strategies/programs. This recommendation is drawn more generally than from the data we have here. We make it based on two points.

First, as Maton (2000) suggests, “a central challenge for a social ecology of social transformation is to understand how intervention approaches can be fashioned that build upon and contribute to such transactions, within and across ecological levels.” (p. 41). Discussing programs for supporting children through parental separation; Guilfoyle, Banham, Cavazzi, and Napolitana-Lincoln (2010) outline a community psychology approach to social programs within the classroom. They suggest that youth spend a significant amount of their time on school grounds and the school presents a key ecological site for pastoral intervention. Guilfoyle et al. (2010) have argued that schools are increasingly accepting their role as the ideal setting for broadly targeted interventions and for dealing with social issues (Nicholson et al., 1999). Secondary schools worldwide have an established tradition, spanning 50 years, of pastoral care in an attempt to foster individual well-being amongst students and guide them through the challenges of adolescence and beyond (Calvert, 2009).

A meta-analysis conducted by Durlack and colleagues (2010) evaluated 213 school-based, social and emotional learning programmes and found significant benefits across a range of domains and indicators. The analysis revealed that the largest gains were made in social and emotional competencies such as recognising the emotions of others, stress management, problem solving techniques, and empathic behaviour. School interventions that work best involve parents (Holter & Guilfoyle, 2013, in press). For example, Short, Toumbourou, Chapman, and Power (2006) included the role of parents in their Resilient Families program aimed at promoting health and wellbeing in adolescents and their parents during the transition to secondary school. Short, Hutchinson, Chapman & Toumbourou (2007) further showed how central family are, along with school, peers, and individual influences on early adolescent alcohol use. Caffery, Erdman, and Cook (2000) have also argued strongly for ‘two systems’

and the need to bring families and schools together to support adolescent identity.

Second, as Freire (1970) points out, we need to highlight the importance of co-construction of knowledge in education, thus shifting power dynamics within institutions to allow marginalised youth the opportunity to gain empowerment through directing their social, cognitive, and developmental learning outcomes and building the environments which serve their own developmental needs. Schools which can hand over some power to students to develop programs within the school engage in best practice, and the schools in the South-East corridor of Perth are perfectly placed towards this end. We recommend Save the Children engage with these local schools in joint development of pastoral care programs and how the school setting connects with youth needs and aspirations.

### **11. Early Intervention/Prevention**

Again this is a general recommendation. Research has shown the importance of investment in the early years (Mustard, 2008a; 2008b) on all aspects of child/youth development. Early childhood experiences impact on developing brain circuits and physiological systems in ways that modify the stress response (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2005). For example, to focus on parental attachment; secure attachments serve as a buffer, moderating the young child's cortisol responsivity (stress) and protecting the child from the negative outcomes associated with atypical cortisol activation (Gunnar, Bruce, & Hickman, 2001; McCain, Mustard, & Shanker, 2007). Attachment theory posits that the early sense of worth and value derived from secure, warm, and responsive interactions with caregivers in infancy establishes internal working models against which all other relationships are compared (Dwyer et al., 2010; Harvey & Byrd, 2000).

Critically then, early developmental difficulties surrounding adolescents' identity can extend into adult development, resulting in increased engagement in illicit drug use, antisocial behaviours, suicide attempts, associated mental health issues, decreased socially competence, and adults who are less trusting or have difficulties in their relationships with their marriage/partners and as parents of children (Breivik & Olweus, 2006; Bockelbrink, et al., 2006; DeVaus & Graym 2003; Fabricius & Leucken, 2007; Gilham et al., 2007; King, 2002; Lansford, 2009; Leon, 2003; McIntosh, 2003; Pollet, 2003; Ruschena, Prior, Sanson, & Smart, 2005; Sarrazin, & Cyr, 2007; Scott, Booth, King, & Johnson, 2007; Strohschein, 2005; Williams, & Dunne-Bryant, 2006).

Any programs which can be developed in consultation with parents/schools as early interventions for supporting children and parents in the South-East corridor of Perth will act preventively and provide a solid basis for youth development.

---

**REFERENCES**

- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2010). *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* [Cat. No. 4704]. Available at <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4725.0Chapter110Apr%202011>
- Balsano, A. B. (2005). Youth civic engagement in the United States: Understanding an addressing the impact of social impediments on positive youth and community development. *Applied Developmental Science, 9*, 188-201.
- Ben-Zur, H. (2003). Happy adolescents: The link between subjective well-being, internal resources, and parental factors. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 32*(2), 67-79.
- Bessant, J., Sercombe, H., & Watts, R. (1998). *Youth studies: An Australian perspective*. Melbourne: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Bond, C. (2005). A culture of ill-health: Public health or Aboriginality? *Medical Journal of Australia, 183*, 39-41.
- Borlagdan, J., Freeman, T., Duvnjak, A., Lunnay, B., Bywood, P.T., Roche, A.M. (2010). *From ideal to reality: Cultural contradictions and young people's drinking*. Flinders University, Adelaide: National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction.
- Branje, S. J. T., Frijns, T., Finkenauer, C., Engels, R., & Meeus, W. (2007). You are my best friend: Commitment and stability in adolescents' same-sex friendships. *Personal Relationships, 14*, 587-603.
- Breivik, K., & Olweus, D. (2006). Children of divorce in a Scandinavian welfare state: Are they less affected than US children? *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, 47*, 61-74.
- Bockelbrink, A.S., Heinrich, J., Schafer, I., Zutavern, A., Borte, M., Herbath, O., Schaaf, B., von Berg, A., & Schafer, T. (2006). Atopic eczema in children: Another harmful sequel of divorce. *Allergy, 61*, 1397-1402.
- Broh, B. A. (2002). Linking Extracurricular Programming to Academic Achievement: Who Benefits and Why? *Sociology of Education, 75*(1), 69-95.
- Brown, A. (2009). Bridging the survival gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians: Priorities for the road ahead. *Heart, Lung and Circulation, 18*, 96-100.
- Caffery, T., Erdman, P., & Cook, D. (2000). Two systems/one client: Bringing families and schools together. *The Family Journal, 8*, 154-160.
- Carson, B., Dunbar, T., Chenhall, R. D., & Bailie R. (2007). *Social determinants of Indigenous health*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin.

- Caselman, T. D., & Self, P. A. (2007). Adolescent perception of self as a close friend: Culture and gendered contexts. *Social Psychology of Education, 10*, 353-373.
- Choate, L. H. (2007). Counseling adolescent girls for body image resilience: strategies for school counselors. *Professional School Counselling (1096-2409), 10*(3), 317-326.
- Coram, S. (2007). Performative pedagogy and the creation of desire: The Indigenous athlete/role model and implications for learning. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education, 36*, 56-64.
- Cunneen, C., & White, R. (1995). *Juvenile justice: An Australian perspective*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Daniel, A., & Cornwall, J. (1993). *A lost generation?* New South Wales: Australian Youth Foundation.
- DeVaus, D., & Gray, M. (2003). Family transitions among Australia's children. *Family Matters, 65*, 10-18.
- de Witt, L., & Ploeg, J. (2006). Critical appraisal of rigor in interpretive phenomenological nursing search. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 55*(2), 215-229.
- Duff, C. (2003). The importance of culture and context: Rethinking risk and risk management in young drug using populations. *Health, Risk and Society, 5*, 285-299.
- Duffett, A., & Johnson, J. (2004). *All work and no play?* New York: Public Agenda.
- Durlack, J. A., Weissburg, R. P., & Pachan, M. (2010). A meta-analysis of after-school programs that seek to promote personal and social skills in children and adolescents. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 45*(3), 294-309.
- Dwyer, K.M., Fredstrom, B. K., Rubin, K. H., Booth-LaForce, C., Rose-Krasnor, L., & Burgess, K. B. (2010). Attachment, social information processing, and friendship quality of early adolescent girls and boys. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 27*(1), 91-116.
- Edward, K., Welch, A., & Chater, K. (2009). The phenomenon of resilience as described by adults who have experienced mental illness. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 65*(3), 587-595.
- Eitle, T. M., & Eitle, D. J. (2002). Race, Cultural Capital, and the Educational Effects of Participation in Sports. *Sociology of Education, 75*(2), 123-146.
- Ekberg, M. (2007). The parameters of the risk society. A review and exploration. *Current Sociology, 55*, 343-366.
- Elkind, D. (1967). Egocentrism in adolescence. *Child Development, 38*, 1025-1034.

Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. W.W Norton & Company: New York, NY.

Fabricius, W. V., & Luecken, L. J. (2007). Post-divorce living arrangements, parent conflict and long-term physical health correlates for children of divorce. *Journal of Family Psychology, 21*(2), 195-205.

Fasoli, L., Benbow, R., Deveraux, K., Falk, I., Harris, R., Hazard, M., et al. (2004). *'Both ways' children's services project: A study of children's services development, change and sustainability in six remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory*. Batchelor, NT: Batchelor Press.

Feldman, A., & Matjasko, J. (2005). The Role of School-Based Extracurricular Activities in Adolescent Development: A Comprehensive Review and Future Directions. *Review of Educational Research, 75*(2), 159-210.

Finlay, A. (2009). Debating phenomenological research. *Phenomenology & Practice, 3*(1), 6-25.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Seabury.

Gee, G., & Payne-Sturges, D. (2001). Environmental health disparities: A framework integrating psychosocial and environmental concepts. *Environmental Health Perspect, 112*, 1645-1653.

Gergen, K. J. (1985). The social constructionist movement in modern psychology. *American Psychologist, 40*, 266-275.

Gilham, J. E., et al. (2007). School-based prevention of depressive symptoms: A randomized controlled study of the effectiveness and specificity of the Penn Resilience Program. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 75*(1), 9-19.

Gill, T. (2007). The shrinking horizons of childhood. No fear: Growing up in a risk averse society. *Health Sociology Review, 18*(1), 119-136.

Gridley, J. M., Hampson, G. P., Wheeler, L., & Bereded-Samuel, E. (2010). From access to success: An integrated approach quality higher education informed by social inclusion theory and practice. *Higher Education Policy, 23*(1), 123-147.

Guilfoyle, A., Banham, V., Cavazzi, T., & Napolitano-Lincoln, R. (2010). An ecological approach to supporting children after parental separation: Social capital, resilience and the school classroom. *International Journal of Learning, 18*, 1, 315-335.

Guilfoyle, A. M. & Taylor, C. (2010). Racism, cultural competency and Indigenous Australians: Critical reflections on the veracity of a psychodynamic discourse, *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences, 4*(12), 131-154.

- Guilfoyle, A. M., Saggars, S., Sims, M., & Hutchins, T. (2010). Culturally strong child care programs for Indigenous children, families and communities, *Australasian Journal of Early Education*, 35(3), 68-76.
- Gullotta, T. P., Adams, G. R., & Markstrom, C. A. (2000). *The adolescent Experience* (4th ed.). California: Academic Press.
- Gullotta, T. P., Adams, G. R., & Montemayor, R. (1990). *Developing social competency in adolescence*. California: SAGE.
- Gunnar, M., Bruce, J., & Hickman, S. (2001). Salivary cortisol response to stress in children. *Advances in Psychosomatic Medicine*, 22, 52-60.
- Güroğlu, B., Cillessen, A. H. N., Haselager, G. J. T., & van Lieshout, C. F. M. (2012). "Tell me who your friends are and I'll tell you who your friends will be": Consistency and change in social competence in adolescent friendships across school transitions. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, Advance online publication.
- Harvey, M., & Byrd, M. (2000). Relationships between adolescents' attachment styles and family functioning. *Adolescence*, 35, 345-356.
- Head, B. (2011). Why not ask them? Mapping and promoting youth participation. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33, 541-547.
- Herbert, W. M., & Sabina, K. (2003). School Athletic participation: Mostly gain with little pain. *Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology*, 25(2), 205-228.
- Hoffman, M. L. (1970) Moral Development. In P. H. Mussen (ed.), *Carmichael's Manual of Child Psychology* (vol.2). New York: Wiley.
- Holter, M., & Guilfoyle, A. (2013, in press). "Because She's Always on My Side": Identity, Friendships and Parental Support within a Whole School Pastoral Care Program for Adolescent Girls'. *The International Journal of Learner Diversity and Identities*.
- Kickett-Tucker, C. (2009). Moorn (black)? Djardak (white)? How come I don't fit in mum? Exploring the racial identity of Aboriginal Australian children and youth. *Health and Sociology Review*, 18(1), 119-136.
- King, V. (2002). Parental divorce and interpersonal trust in adult offspring. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64, 642-659.
- Kitto, S. C., Chesters, J., & Grbich, C. (2008). Quality in qualitative research. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 188(4), 243-246.
- Klimstra, T. A., Luyckx, K., Hale, W. W., Frijns, T., van Lier, P. A. C., & Meeus, W. H. J. (2010). Short-term fluctuations in identity: Introducing a micro-level approach to identity formation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 99(1), 191-202.

Lansford, J. E. (2009). Parental divorce and children's adjustment. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 4(2), 140-153.

Larson, R. W. (2000). Toward a Psychology of Positive Youth Development. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 170-183.

Laursen, B., Hafen, C. A., Kerr, M., & Stattin, H. (2012). Friend influence over adolescent problem behaviours as a function of relative peer acceptance: To be liked is to be emulated. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 121(1), 88-94.

Leadbeater, B. H. (2003). Changing contexts? The effects of a primary prevention program on classroom levels of peer relational and physical victimization. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 31(4), 397-418.

Leon, K. (2003). Risk and protective factors in young children's adjustment to parental divorce: A review of the research. *Family Relations*, 52, 258-270.

Lupton, D. (1999). Introduction: Risk and sociocultural theory. In D. Lupton (Ed.), *Risk and sociocultural theory: New directions and perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp, 1-11.

Lyons, Z., & Janca, A. (2012). Indigenous children in Australia: Health, education and optimism for the future. *Australian Journal of Education*, 56(1), 5-21.

Mahoney, J. L., Cairns, B. D., & Farmer, T. W. (2003). Promoting Interpersonal Competence and Educational Success Through Extracurricular Activity Participation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95(2), 409-418.

Maton, K.I. (2000). Making a difference: The social ecology of social transformation. *American Journal of Community Psychology* 28, 25-57.

Martin, C. (1994). Cognitive influences on the development and maintenance of gender segregation. In C. Leaper (Ed.), *Childhood gender segregation: causes and consequences* (pp.35–50). *New Directions for Child Development*, Vol. 65. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Martin, D. (2006). *Why the 'new direction' in Federal Indigenous affairs policy is likely to 'fail' as the old directions* (Topical Issue No. 05/2006). Canberra: Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research.

McConnochie, K. R., & Russell, A. (1982). *Early childhood services for Aboriginal children*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.

McElhaney, K. B., Antonishak, J., & Allen, J. P. (2008). "They like me, they like me not": Popularity and adolescents' perceptions of acceptance predicting social functioning over time. *Child Development*, 79(3), 720-731.

McIntosh, J. (2003). Enduring conflict in parental separation: pathways of impact on child development. *Journal of Family Studies*, 9(1), 63–80.



- Mellor, D. (2003). Contemporary racism in Australia: The experiences of Aborigines. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 29, 474-486.
- Morsillo, J., & Prilleltensky, I. (2007). Social action with youth: Interventions, evaluation and psychopolitical validity. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 35(6), 725-740.
- Myers, R. (2012). 'Society must be protected from the child': The construction of US juvenile detention as necessary and normal. *Critical Criminology*, 20(1), 395-407.
- Mustard, F. (2008a). *Early childhood development. The best start for all South Australians. A companion document to the Adelaide Thinker in Residence Report*. Adelaide, SA: The State of South Australia.
- Mustard, F. (2008b). *Investing in the early years: Closing the gap between what we know and what we do*. Adelaide, SA: Government of South Australia.
- National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2005). *Excessive stress disrupts the architecture of the developing brain*. (Working Paper No. 3). National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, Heller School, Brandeis University.
- Nelson, A. M. (2012). A risky business? Health and physical activity from the perspectives of urban Australian Indigenous young people. *Health, Risk and Society*, 14(4), 325-340.
- Nicholson, J., Oldenburg, B., McFarland, M.L. & Dwyer, S. (1999). Mental health interventions in the primary school setting: Perceived facilitators, barriers and needs. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, 9(2), 96-104.
- Palmer, D., & Collard, L. (1994). Aboriginal young people. *Family Matters*, 38, 26-31.
- Paradies, Y. (2006). A systematic review of empirical research on self reported racism and health. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 35, 888-901.
- Priest, K., Coleman-Sleep, B., & Martin, K. (2005). *Preparing the ground for partnership: Exploring quality assurance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child care: A literature review and background paper*. Canberra: Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services
- Priest, N. P. (2011). Racism and health among urban Aboriginal young people. *BMC Public Health*, 11, 568-577.
- Pollet, S. (2009). A nationwide survey of programs for children of divorcing and separating parents. *Family Court Review*, 47, 523-543.
- Roeser, R. W., Galloway, M., Casey-Cannon, S., Watson, C., Keller, L., & Tan, E. (2008). Identity representations in patterns of school achievement and well-being among early adolescent girls: Variable and person-centered approaches. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 28(1), 115-152.

Ruschena, E., Prior, M., Sanson, A., & Smart, D. (2005). A longitudinal study of adolescent adjustment following family transitions. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 46(4), 353-363.

Sarrazin, J., & Cyr, F. (2007). Parental conflicts and their damaging effects on children. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, 47(1/2), 77-82.

Scott, M. E., Booth, A., King, V., & Johnson, D. R. (2007). Post-divorce father-adolescent closeness. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 69, 1194-1209.

Shomaker, L. B., & Furman, W. (2009). Parent-adolescent relationship qualities, internal working models, and attachment styles as predictors of adolescents' interactions with friends. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 26, 579-603.

Short, A., Toumbourou, J., Chapman, R. & Power, E. (2006). The Resilient Families program: promoting health and wellbeing in adolescents and their parents during the transition to secondary school. *Youth Studies Australia*, 25, 33-40

Short A.L., Hutchinson, D. M., Chapman, R., & Toumbourou, J.W. (2007). Family, school, peer and individual influences on early adolescent alcohol use: first year impact on the Resilient Families programme. *Drug & Alcohol Review*, 26, 625-634

Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2008). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative Psychology* (2nd ed.). London: SAGE.

SNAICC (2004b). *Research priorities for Indigenous children and youth*. Prepared for the Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer Control, Curtin University and Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth. North Fitzroy, Vic: SNAICC.

SNAICC (2005). *Footprints to where we are. A resource manual for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's services*. (Vol. 110). North Fitzroy, Vic: SNAICC.

Strohschein, L. (2005). Parental divorce and child mental health trajectories. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67, 1286-1300.

Taylor, S. J., & Bogdan, R. (1998). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource*. New York: Wiley.

te Riele, K. (2006). Youth 'at risk': Further marginalizing the marginalized? *Journal of Education Policy*, 21, 129-145.

Thomas, J., Temple, J., Perez, N., & Rupp, R. (2011). Ethnic and gender disparities in needed adolescent mental health care. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 22, 101-110.

Ungar, M. (2006). Resilience across cultures. *British Journal of Social Work*, 38, 218-235.

Ungar, M., Brown, M., Liebenberg, L., Othman, R., Kwong, W.M., Armstrong, M. & Gilgun, J. (2007). Unique pathways to resilience across cultures. *Adolescence*, 42, 287-310.

Ungar, M., Brown, M., Liebenberg, L., Cheung, M. & Levine, K. (2008). Resilience across cultures. *British Journal of Social Work*. Distinguishing differences in pathways to resilience among Canadian youth. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, 27, 1-13.

Vandeleur, C. L., Jeanpretre, N., Perrez, M., & Schoebi, D. (2009). Cohesion, satisfaction with family bonds, and emotional well-being in families with adolescents. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 71, 1205-1219.

Vernberg, E. M., Greenhoot, A. F., & Biggs, B. K. (2006). Intercommunity relocation and adolescent friendships: Who struggles and why? *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 74, 511-523.

Warrington, M., & Younger, M. (2011). 'Life is a tightrope': reflections on peer group inclusion and exclusion amongst adolescent girls and boys. *Gender and Education*, 23(2), 153-168

West, C., Stewart, L., Foster, K., & Usher, K. (2013). Accidental insider: Living the PhD study. *Collegian*, 20(1), 61-65.

Williams, D., & Collins, C. (2001). Racial residential segregation. A fundamental cause of racial disparities in health. *Public Health Reports*, 116, 404-416.

Williams, K., & Dunne-Bryant, A. (2006). Divorce and adults psychological well-being: Clarifying the role of gender and child age. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68, 1178-1196.

Youniss, J., & Yates, M. (1997). *Community service and social responsibility in youth*. Chicago: University Press of Chicago.

Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia. (2003). Curfews: The public fight for young people to be in the city. *Indigenous Law Bulletin*, 5(27). Available at <http://worldlii.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/ILB/2003/55.html#Heading1>