

# WHANAKE RANGATAHI: PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES TO ADDRESS MĀORI YOUTH OFFENDING

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## Abstract

Young Māori continue to be significantly over-represented in the criminal justice system. Government, Māori and the community all share the goal of preventing or reducing Māori youth offending and re-offending. Government has put in place a range of programmes and services to this end. This paper reports on a study, *Whanake Rangatahi – Programmes and Services to Address Māori Youth Offending*, assessing Māori participation in programmes and services directed at youth offending and the outcomes. The paper highlights implications for government policy, programme specification and purchasing, research and evaluation. It concludes that government needs to work with Māori to build on successful models and develop a range of programmes and services that address the causes of offending for young people. Government also needs to improve its information collection so that we know whether interventions are working for Māori.

## INTRODUCTION

“Probably the reasons why I keep re-offending was because of my parents, I never actually had them there with me. I hung out with the wrong people, I guess and ended up drinking and drugs ...and then doing crime. My family also...watching older ones doing it...I thought it was life – I thought it was natural.” (young female)

“Sticking us in jail ain’t gonna do nothing ... you take us away from the community and then when we get out we don’t know what else to do ... and we go back to doing what we did before ... and when we come back [to

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### <sup>1</sup> Acknowledgments

This draws on *Whanake Rangatahi – Programmes and Services to Address Māori Youth Offending*, published by Te Puni Kōkiri in October 2000. The project team responsible for the report comprised Pat Bodger, Evelyn Ngamanu, Sefika Noa, Victoria Owen, Sandra Potaka, Peihana Spooner and Joanne Tarau, all of Te Puni Kōkiri.

prison], that's okay, we know how it goes, we've been here before. They're doing it all wrong – thinking why their jails are filling up. They send us to jail ... jail just makes us worse. Why stick us in jail if there's nothing to help us [in jail]." (young female)

These quotes (Te Puni Kōkiri 2000a) paint a common, and disturbing, picture for many of the young Māori that end up in our criminal justice system. Lack of family support, problems with schooling, truancy, drug and alcohol abuse, and lack of skills and employment prospects combine to lead many youth down a slippery slope to offending and, ultimately for some, prison. Many young people and their whānau never get the type of help that they need to address the factors that lead to offending, or to address the offending once it occurs.

The Māori population is young relative to non-Māori (Te Puni Kōkiri 2000b). Māori youth (aged 10-19 years)<sup>2</sup> make up a significant proportion of the total Māori population (21%)<sup>3</sup>. High levels of Māori youth offending in this generation will have major implications for the future of Māori society and the nation as a whole. The aspirations of iwi, hapū, whānau and Māori rest on the positive development and contribution of their rangatahi (young people). (See glossary, appended, for additional Māori words used in this paper.)

Government, Māori and the wider community recognise youth offending as a significant problem. Some measures indicate that there have been increases in levels of offending – particularly violent offending – by young people since 1989. Māori youth continue to be significantly over-represented at all stages in the criminal justice system: from apprehensions through to convictions and imprisonment (Te Puni Kōkiri 2000a:24-6).

Over recent years, reducing youth crime has been a priority for governments, and they have put a range of programmes and services in place to prevent and address it. Given the continued, and disproportionately high, involvement of Māori in the justice system, there is a need to consider the effectiveness of our current approaches in reducing this

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<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of the report, youth were defined as those aged 10-19 years of age. There is no consistent definition of youth across government agencies and sectors. In New Zealand the youth justice system deals with offending by children (10-13 years) and young people (14-16 years), while offenders aged 17 years and over are dealt with by the adult criminal justice system. Nevertheless, the adult criminal justice system does distinguish a category of young adults (17-19 years), for example, in the development of youth units in prison. Te Puni Kōkiri chose to take a broader definition of youth than that covered by the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act to encompass issues for young adults up to the age of 19 years.

<sup>3</sup> Statistics New Zealand population estimates, New Zealand resident Māori as at 30 June 1998.

offending. To this end, Te Puni Kōkiri undertook an assessment of programmes and services to address youth offending, in terms of Māori participation and their outcomes<sup>4</sup>. The findings of the study were released as *Whanake Rangatahi – Programmes and Services to Address Māori Youth Offending*.

The study drew on the views of rangatahi, their whānau (extended family) members, and those who work with them across the lower North Island. These participants identified a number of gaps in programmes and services available to address Māori youth offending. The research also suggests that Māori youth and their whānau may not be accessing the range of available programmes and services.

It is difficult to assess the overall effectiveness of current programmes and services for Māori youth due to a lack of adequate information. Most of the evaluation information focuses on short-term results, and provides little information on outcomes for Māori. Government agencies need to improve the information gathered so that effectiveness can be properly assessed and resources targeted to the most effective approaches. However, there are initiatives that have been demonstrated to be effective for Māori youth, in the short term at least. A key aspect of the success of such initiatives is their basis in tikanga and whanaungatanga. The research also indicates that programmes and services should be delivered in a coordinated way in order to address the major issues of social and economic disadvantage that contribute to offending, and support the development and maintenance of strong, positive cultural identities for the young people.

This paper identifies a number of implications of the research reported in *Whanake Rangatahi* for government policy, programme specification and purchasing, research and evaluation. The report provides important – and rarely sought – views of the end users of government programmes and services, that is, Māori youth and their whānau. If we are to stem the tide of Māori youth offending, their messages about the need for interventions must be heard and acted upon.

## RESEARCH APPROACH AND FINDINGS

Government has put in place a range of programmes and services to prevent and reduce offending by young people. In order to assess whether these services are working *Whanake Rangatahi* drew on a range of information sources including:

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<sup>4</sup> Government agencies have a collective responsibility to improve outcomes for Māori, and to ensure that their programmes and services contribute to the Government's objectives in this area. One of Te Puni Kōkiri's responsibilities is to monitor the adequacy of government services provided for Māori.

- national-level information on government programmes and services;
- previous research on youth offending and re-offending, youth and criminal justice, and programmes and services; and
- local-level research undertaken by Te Puni Kōkiri with a range of Māori youth offenders, whānau of young offenders, service providers and community members who work with Māori youth offenders<sup>5</sup>.

Together these sources provide a complementary understanding of the issues at a broad national level, as well as from a local perspective.

### Youth Offending in New Zealand

Offending by children aged 10-13 years and young people aged 14-16 years is addressed under the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989. The purpose of the Act is to ensure that all children and young people who commit offences are held accountable for their offending, while recognising their needs in an effort to prevent re-offending. People aged 17 or over who commit offences are dealt with under separate legislation, including the Summary Proceedings Act 1957, the Crimes Act 1961 and the Criminal Justice Act 1985 (Te Puni Kōkiri 2000a).

Rates of apprehensions, prosecutions and convictions for Māori youth have all increased since 1991. Māori youth are, on average, three times more likely to be apprehended, prosecuted and convicted than non-Māori youth.

### Factors Associated with Māori Youth Offending

We asked young people, their whānau, and those who work with them about the factors that lead young Māori to offend. They identified a range of factors including:

- unsupportive whānau environment

“Most of us have grown up by ourselves ... we might have had our parents there, but they weren’t there in the way that we needed them. ... We wanted to see more of them, but you know ...” (young male)

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<sup>5</sup> We interviewed 83 people: 47 young people (31 males and 16 females); 11 whānau members; and 25 key community informants (government and community service providers and community members) in Manawatu-Wanganui, Taumarunui, Taranaki, Hawkes Bay and Wellington.

- lack of positive identity and role models

“If [there were] more things for Māori young people to do ... like express their culture ... then they wouldn’t be in this place [jail] right now.” (young female)

- peer pressure and the need for acceptance

“I’d say pressure, peer pressure, following mates ... I just followed along. We all got drunk, got carried away with each other ... then they wanted to do this house ... they just told me to go over with them. And I just followed. That’s why I’m in here [prison].” (young male)

- lack of awareness of consequences of offending

“I didn’t ever expect to see myself in jail ... we’ve gotta learn – to think of the consequences. Nobody thinks of the consequences. Think before you do it ... you gotta show them [young people] the right way to use their head.” (young female)

- boredom

“There’s nothing for us to do, especially if you’ve got no qualifications, you can’t get a job. Sometimes it’s even hard to get on a course.” (young female)

- lack of places to socialise

“You know, if they had a place for us to hang out, you know and do that stuff, with a little bit of music or something, maybe it’d be all good, but, nah, they don’t do that – they want us out on the street doing what we’re doing or they wouldn’t get dollars in their pockets. They want us out on the street causing havoc or the police wouldn’t have a job.” (young female)

- drug and alcohol misuse and abuse

“Yeah, all my offences have been done under the influence of alcohol and drugs.” (young female)

“The way to block out the past is drugs, alcohol, offences.” (young female)

- desire for money and possessions

“The main thing is money ... they want money, they want gears.” (young female)

- poverty

“Cos most of the time we never had food in our fridge or in the cupboards. ... Yeah that was the main reason [I offended]. ... I wasn’t going to starve for no one.” (young male)

- problems with schooling

“That’s why I left school. Because I didn’t believe the teacher’s messages were right. You’d sit there and [the teacher would] say “What do you mean ... well, how can you not understand, everyone else has understood it. And [if] you didn’t you must not have been listening”. Yeah, I was listening but I didn’t quite understand it. Then they think you’re just being smart. Next thing, they send you out and then you get angry and you leave school.” (young female)

- lack of basic skills and qualifications and difficulties finding a job

“Oh, I tried to get a job heaps here.”

“It’s hard ... for us to do it.”

“They don’t hire thieves.”

“No transport.”

“Most people round here, they don’t have respect for the brothers ...once they hear your name, [they] just throw the applicant out.” (young males in a group interview)

- discrimination against Māori youth

“When I was out there [outside prison] it was hard for me to get a job ... and I went everywhere and I couldn’t find a job – no one would employ me. Mainly because I was black and young.” (young female)

- mental health problems

“There’s probably the need for ... psychological and mental [health services] ... from a Māori perspective. ... When you’re talking about Māori there’s spiritual type things that the family ... [and] grandparents will be saying, hey, there’s something with this family that’s been going on for years, and maybe a tapu needs ... lifting or something like that. ... And I think that avenue needs looking at when it comes to Māori mental health. ... There isn’t any here ... that I know about.” (service provider)

- abuse of girls and young women

“Some people say it’s a lot of them (females) have been sexually abused. Sexual abuse ... they don’t address it until they’re a bit older in life, and they realise ... that wasn’t meant to happen ... but [meantime] they carry on, they leave it to the side and can’t figure out why they’re becoming violent, why I hate this.” (service provider)

Previous research has identified similar factors contributing to the likelihood of offending for both Māori and non-Māori youth (for example McLaren 2000, Hema 2000, Fergusson et al. 1993). The key differences for Māori youth relate to issues of cultural identity and discrimination (see, for example, Singh and White 2000, Maxwell and Morris 1999, Maynard et al. 1999).

Our research also supports previous findings that the way the criminal justice system deals with young people may affect offending rates (McLaren 2000). The young people and whānau we spoke to were generally negative or ambivalent about their experiences in the justice system. They suggested that the system generally contributes to an increase in offending by Māori youth. Many found that the process of interaction with police, family group conferences, courts and prisons was alienating and intimidating, or at least ineffective in addressing their problems. Many felt that racial discrimination still played a role in the over-representation of Māori in the criminal justice system, which – combined with a lack of understanding of the system – only led to worse outcomes for Māori. Some young people felt that the justice system is set up to keep people in the system, rather than to prevent crime or rehabilitate offenders. On the positive side, some young people and whānau had positive experiences with agencies, particularly the Police.

## What Programmes and Services are Available?

There is a range of programmes and services provided or funded by government that aim to address offending within the broader context of the young person's life. Due to problems with the information supplied by government departments, it was not possible to comprehensively identify the entire range of programmes and services available to Māori youth at risk of offending. However, previous research and consultation have identified gaps in the provision of programmes and services, which have been recognised by government agencies (Ministry of Justice 1999, Department of Child, Youth and Family Services 1999).

Our local-level research indicates that many young people and their whānau who need assistance are not receiving appropriate programmes and services. Most young Māori and whānau members we spoke to had very little involvement in programmes and services to address youth offending. Where Māori youth had experienced programmes, these tended to be short term, of varying quality and, importantly, lacking any follow-up.

"[It] keeps you occupied ... throughout that whole course. That's all. Then you finish it and you can't get no other job, then back to your normal."  
(young male)

"Well, nothing changes at home and also no change in circumstance when they come back. It's just straight into the mould. And they do well up there [at a particular programme], every kid we've sent up there has done well up there. Glowing reports you know. And come back and it's not long that they're back into the fold again. Waste of ... money." (service provider, provincial city)

Whānau members we spoke to generally felt unsupported in trying to deal with the young person's offending.

"The hardest thing I found with them [DCYFS] was that the only solution they offered me is that I had to kick my daughter out, cut her off completely, give her absolutely nothing. ... But I said 'I don't want to pick up the pieces'. There must be a preventative thing somewhere along the way. ... I mean, I'm having a real hard time finding it." (whānau member)



This and previous research (Ministry of Justice 1999, Department of Child, Youth and Family Services 1999) points to a lack of programmes and services, particularly well-resourced Māori services, to address the factors that contribute to offending by young Māori. The common gaps identified by participants in our research were:

- mental health services – particularly kaupapa Māori mental health;
- counselling services – particularly abuse and sexual abuse counselling, and counselling based in kaupapa Māori;
- drug and alcohol abuse counselling and programmes;
- alternative education opportunities for young people outside the school system;
- direct assistance and support for whānau and rangatahi in crisis;
- intensive residential programmes for repeat young offenders;
- accommodation including affordable emergency housing and support for homeless young people;
- holistic services which address the range of needs of rangatahi and whānau;
- affordable recreational activities;
- educational and vocational training for youth;
- life skills, such as interpersonal skills, communication, budgeting, personal hygiene, cooking, etc.;
- opportunities for young people on remand within prisons to engage in programmes;
- legal and court support; and
- well-resourced Māori-developed and Māori-focused programmes.

A related problem may be a lack of awareness about existing services. Many youth and whānau members we spoke to had little knowledge or awareness of programmes and services in their community. The provision of programmes appears to vary across regions, and the gaps in programmes and services may be more acute in some areas.

### Māori Participation in Programmes and Services

Although Māori generally represent a high proportion of programme participants, our local-level research indicates that many at-risk Māori youth may not be participating in programmes and services to address their offending or offending-related behaviours.

Available information from government agencies shows that Māori participation rates are generally proportional to Māori representation in the “at-risk” population and the local population. For example the majority of participants (53%) in the 14 Police Youth-at-Risk programmes throughout the country are Māori (Office of the Commissioner of Police 2000). In contrast to this, however, many of the Māori youth and whānau we

spoke to had not participated in any programmes and services to address the young person's offending.

It is not possible to determine the proportion of the "target group" of Māori youth at risk who are (or are not) accessing available programmes and services<sup>6</sup>. Therefore it is entirely possible that a significant group of Māori young people and their whānau are missing out on potentially valuable assistance from programmes and services. This problem applies both to preventative programmes for youth at risk of offending, and to programmes targeted at preventing further offending.

Māori youth and whānau may also be deliberately limiting their participation in programmes and services, where these are not appropriate to their needs. Some young people spoke of services they had experienced that were ineffective or inappropriate, and consequently they chose not to use them.

Some providers were particularly concerned about a lack of culturally appropriate services for Māori youth and at the corresponding use and imposition of culturally inappropriate models of therapy, social work, programmes and services (similar issues have been raised by Māori providers in other Te Puni Kōkiri research, e.g. Te Puni Kōkiri 2000c, 2000d, 2000e). Some participants felt it inappropriate for non-Māori to be dealing with Māori youth, particularly where issues of abuse were concerned, and they declined to refer young people to non-Māori service providers.

"And the red tape that our Māori people have to jump over to actually become an ACC-registered sexual abuse counsellor is ... ridiculous. At the end of the day I wouldn't trust any of those counsellors to deal with our rangatahi. We deal with our rangatahi, and go to our Māori counsellors for sexual abuse who are not recognised on that list." (service provider)

While there is a need for Māori to be more involved in the design and delivery of services to Māori youth, government processes may act as a barrier. In our research, programme providers spoke of their commitment to providing services to Māori

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<sup>6</sup> There are two reasons for this. Firstly, there is no information available on the number of individuals who are apprehended and/or convicted for offences. The criminal justice data only count the number of events, not the number of individuals involved (see Te Puni Kōkiri 2000a:Appendix 2). This means that we cannot say what the total size of the "target group" is. Secondly, it is not possible to assess the total numbers of Māori youth accessing programmes and services to address offending. This is partly because the ethnicity of participants is not recorded for many programmes and services. It is also because it is not possible to look at the participation of individuals across programmes and services to count the total number of people on all programmes (without double counting).

within Māori frameworks and based on Māori processes and ideals. However, they also said that government funding criteria and processes place constraints on their ability to design and deliver effective services. Rigid funding criteria, poor inter-agency coordination, and silo mentalities of government funding agencies made it difficult, costly and time-consuming to secure the necessary funding (again, similar issues have been raised by Māori providers in other Te Puni Kōkiri research, e.g. Te Puni Kōkiri 2000c, 2000d, 2000e).

### Māori Outcomes of Programmes and Services

There is limited information on what works to reduce Māori youth offending. Some programmes and services have been demonstrated to be effective in reducing youth offending in the short term, but there is little information on outcomes for Māori specifically. International and local research identifies a number of approaches that are effective in reducing youth offending and re-offending (see McLaren 2000, Hema 2000). What works for Māori appears to be similar to these approaches, but a critical factor for Māori appears to be whānau involvement and addressing issues of culture and identity (Singh and White 2000, Oliver and Spee 2000).

There are examples of initiatives that reduce offending and improve life outcomes for Māori youth in the short term at least. Examples include the Māori Community Initiatives for Youth-at-risk of Offending (Oliver and Spee 2000), Police Youth at Risk of Offending Programmes (Office of the Commissioner of Police 2000), and the Wraparound initiative (Centre for Research, Evaluation and Social Assessment 2000). Programmes that are shown to be effective for Māori generally take a holistic approach, involve whānau, and incorporate tikanga and whanaungatanga (Singh and White 2000, Oliver and Spee 2000).

Our research indicates that interventions should be tailored to the needs of individuals and their whānau, and for many Māori this includes support for their cultural identity. Rangatahi wanted programmes to be delivered by people who have shared similar life experiences to theirs. They wanted programme providers to be caring, and firm, but fair. They also stressed that a successful programme has to provide follow-up.

It is clear that programmes and services need to be delivered in a coordinated way in order to address the major issues of social and economic disadvantage that contribute to offending. Participants generally agreed that successful programmes and services, designed to address the range of factors which affect young people and contribute to their offending, will include:

- opportunities to (re)discover identity, whakapapa, reo, tikanga and history;
- alternative opportunities for schooling and education which are appropriate to their needs;
- vocational skills and training leading to employment;
- counselling to address issues of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, drug and alcohol abuse programmes, and mental health services;
- a range of life skills including communication, cognitive skills, thinking about consequences, budgeting, sex education and legal advice;
- physical activities; and
- opportunities for recreational and outdoor activities that might not otherwise be available to young people.

Young people also emphasised that the use of drugs and alcohol, together with a lack of places to socialise, were significant factors leading to youth involvement with the police and the criminal justice system. Many young people we spoke to felt that there was a great need for places where young people could socialise, and perhaps drink alcohol, in a safe and controlled environment.

#### WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

It is our view that there is a lack of appropriate programmes to deal with the range of factors contributing to Māori youth offending, in particular lack of well-resourced, Māori-developed and Māori-focused programmes. Government and Māori need to work together to develop a range of appropriate programmes and services. Young people and whānau are clear about the issues, and many of the solutions. They need to be involved – on an ongoing basis – in deciding what is needed in their communities. At the same time, there has to be ongoing evaluation to ensure the programmes and services work for Māori.

There are many approaches to addressing the issues that contribute to Māori youth offending, and many opportunities for government to improve the range and nature of its responses. Clearly, many of the solutions lie in addressing in an integrated manner the key risk factors that contribute to crime – such as improving health, education, training and employment outcomes. However, there is also a need for additional, specialised services for some young people at risk of offending. These services need to address the needs of young people across the many areas of their lives – family, peers, school and community – and provide ongoing support. Government needs to work with Māori to ensure that there is an appropriate range of programmes and services at a community level that address both generic risk factors and more specific issues facing

young people (e.g. mental health problems). If these services are to have any impact, it is imperative that Māori youth and whānau are made aware of them.

Our findings suggest a number of priority areas for further action by government agencies that will contribute to reducing offending by Māori youth.

#### Government Agencies Must Adopt an Integrated and Holistic Approach

- There is a need for government agencies to work together to develop an integrated approach to the problems identified in *Whanake Rangatahi* relating to education and training, employment, health and justice sector services.
- More holistic, multi-faceted programmes and services are required to address the wide range of factors related to offending across the many areas of the young person's life – family, peers, school and community.

#### Māori Must be Involved in Programme and Service Design and Delivery

- Government agencies must reassess existing specifications and funding criteria to encourage greater Māori involvement in service provision.
- There is a need to address the gaps in programmes and services for young Māori offenders and their whānau, particularly the shortage of Māori-focused programmes.
- Māori communities must have greater opportunities to both design and deliver programmes.

#### Government Agencies Must Collect Robust Information on Participation and Outcomes

- Deficiencies in criminal justice data need to be addressed urgently, in particular the poor quality of ethnic data and the inability to count individuals, rather than just events (such as apprehensions and convictions).
- A detailed analysis should be undertaken of programmes and services for Māori across regions and communities, to ensure that there are adequate and appropriate services in all areas.

- Government agencies need to collect adequate data on Māori participation in programmes and services and assess whether the programmes and services are reaching the target groups.
- Evaluations need to provide better information on outcomes of programmes and services for Māori individuals, whānau and communities.
- Government agencies need to work together to evaluate programmes and services across communities, rather than continuing with ad hoc evaluations of discrete initiatives.

#### Government Agencies Need to Provide Māori Youth and Whānau with Better Information on Programmes and Services

- Government agencies need to improve the information available to Māori individuals and whānau on programmes and services that address Māori youth offending.
- Government agencies also need to increase the awareness within Māori communities of the opportunities to develop new programmes and services.

#### CONCLUSION

The youth of today are the leaders of tomorrow. We need to support them now, and help them to grow and learn to engage in positive and fulfilling activities.

Offending by Māori youth is a significant issue in New Zealand. If we are to stem the tide of this offending, we need to ensure that resources are targeted to the most appropriate interventions. Currently we lack the information to adequately assess whether interventions are targeting the right young people in the right way.

What is clear is that Māori youth and their whānau are struggling to address the problems that can lead to youth offending. While government supports a range of interventions, our research indicates that there is a lack of appropriate and effective support available for these youth and whānau in their communities. What is needed is a more holistic approach to the provision of services for young offenders, incorporating education and training, lifeskills, and issues of personal health and safety. We need services that fit the people, and not the other way around, as has so often been the case.

Many agencies and sectors both within and outside the justice sector have a role to play in making this happen.

It is of great concern that, although Māori make up around half the young people in the youth and adult criminal justice systems, government knows so little about the impacts of its programmes and services on these Māori youth. We need to know if interventions are leading to positive lifestyle improvements for Māori youth at risk of offending and young Māori offenders. The little information we do have indicates that Māori approaches to addressing offending are very successful and deserving of greater government support.

Government agencies, researchers and evaluators can play a role by ensuring that they collect data on Māori participation in programmes and services and that all evaluation and research provide information on outcomes for Māori. In this way we will learn more about what works for Māori and can target our resources to achieve the best results for young people.

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## GLOSSARY

<b>kaupapa Māori</b>	Māori-based methodology, theme or strategies
<b>rangatahi</b>	youth
<b>tikanga Māori</b>	Māori cultural practices
<b>whakapapa</b>	genealogy, ancestry
<b>whakawhanaunga</b>	to build relationships
<b>whānau</b>	family or extended family, including aunts, uncles and cousins
<b>whanaungatanga</b>	relationships within the (extended) family, or family-type relationships