

Addressing Risk Taking Behaviour of Young Males in Traffic

Some notes on the Australian Novice Driver Education Trial

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An elaborated version of a paper originally written for the Australian Traffic & Security Bureau, July 2005. This text is for my own responsibility and is updated beginning 2007. It's a good example of my work in which my vision of coaching is visible. If quoted, please mention source and website (www.laukwoltring.nl)

Transport Ministers in the Australian, New South Wales and Victorian Governments have announced a trial of a special novice driver education program involving 14,000 young drivers in New South Wales and Victoria. A further 14,000 will be selected for a control group. The program will provide novice drivers with an understanding of their own limitations and an insight into how they can reduce the risks they face on the road. It is to be aimed at reducing the shocking number of young deaths on Australia's roads. In 2004, 17-25 year olds accounted for 27 percent of all road deaths, even though they made up only 12.5 percent of the population. The progress of the drivers in the trial, as well as in the comparison group, will be monitored for at least a year after the program is completed. The trial will be one of the largest and most rigorous studies ever undertaken of post-licence driver education. More info: see www.atsb.gov.au

1. PREFACE

The Australian Novice Driver Education Trial is about education of licensed male young drivers: so we're talking about *their* behaviour, *their* car, *their* incidents or accidents and *their* responsibility for the life of others. It's about their own life, future and capability to make it worthwhile (and that matters!). They should learn, it is their responsibility. We can challenge and coach them, set some limits and restrictions and make arrangements for them to learn from their on-going experiences.

This text is especially about young men because they show the highest proportion of risk taking behaviour. As a European I have limited knowledge of everyday Australian (youth-)culture on the road and in the minds. See this as the interested view of an outsider.

In this paper some elements in the programme are treated referring to my Dutch and European experiences, hoping it is useful background material to facilitators and coaches in the Australian program:

- 1. Some basic notions on risk taking behaviour: what is it and how can we address it.*
- 2. Instruments for group sessions in the Novice Driver Education Trial like the development of a video (low key, scenes in daily life from young peoples perspective, focus on transfer into daily situations in traffic)*
- 3. Facilitating the group session and coaching; some hints and some skills needed.*
- 4. Some more general notes on youth, learning and traffic policies.*

A lot of research has been done into the technical aspects of traffic incidents (e.g. car, road conditions, etc.) and some behaviours (choices like speeding, gap selection, distance, hazard perception, night driving, fatigue, etc.).

Little research however has been done about what's actually going on in the mind of (young) drivers in the moments preceding an incident or real accident (and immediate after).

In this paper I unfold a concept on risk taking behaviour, including what *might* go on in the minds of drivers. I realise that there is little hard evidence, it's a very dynamic, layered and multivariate thing, many factors do contribute. The models presented are more or less hypothetical, lending from psychology, neurobiology, socialisation, social work, education and bringing together my own (and others) long experience and knowledge in this field and parallel fields. At the end I do a proposal for research that can be done.

2. RISK TAKING BEHAVIOUR; WHAT IS IT AND HOW CAN WE ADDRESS IT.

2.1. Introduction: learning or compensation, risks are part of life

Young people do grow up in their own environment. While doing so they make more stable connections (= learning) in their nervous system - body and brain - and for doing so they need all kind of experiences, challenges and also some risks to cope with. Risks do teach us to use our

danger-coping skills, vital for our survival, also in traffic. We learn very much of things that went (almost) wrong, it sharpens our mind and body. It's an evolutionary thing. Risky behaviour involves a lot of energy and challenges. Put shortly: if the 'body-brain'¹ does not experience any risks, it may look for them, even create them. This is especially true for many young men. Some youngsters, again particularly young men, are even extra risk prone as for a specific hormonal and neuronal make up. They face an extra developmental task to handle this property.

From another angle however risky behaviour can also be seen as compensating behaviour if young men do not have constructive goals, not feel part of society and its future, not enough challenges and chances in society to employ their own vitality, when they are subdued and kept short in many places. If 'we' do not guide and make use of their energy and qualities, we do not only lose them, but these qualities and energy can turn as well against themselves and others, be it in risky behaviour or violence. Adrenaline-amusement comes instead of cumulative development of skills and meaning.

Moreover: risky behaviour produces some endorphins in our neuro-biological system which have also a stunning effect, particularly effective if one has a low self-acceptance or cannot face negative feedback on failure or an inflated self-image. These endorphins reduce the world to the immediate (chosen) environment and all the things you can experience and act-out there.

This understanding is not to say that we should set no limits or restrictions, on the contrary, but they should be well explained and apt to the developmental stage youngsters are in.

Of course there are many dimensions of risk taking behaviour: youngsters do not have enough knowledge about dangerous situations, they lack perspective taking, do not anticipate enough, their pre-frontal cortex (responsible for anticipation and inhibition) is not enough developed, they lack driving skills and estimation skills, there is some bravado, disproportional high assessment of their own competences, etc.

Nevertheless, for the purpose of this programme on novice drivers it is constructive to *start* with the positive, the learning bit: *risk taking is also a kind of learning*.

When (young) people would really learn from every incident or (near) accident in traffic, traffic would be very safe by now. So the key question is: what prevents them from learning and what does facilitate their learning? Which constraints are necessary and which stimuli do we bring forward?

2.2 Modern society

Modern society has been able to get rid of a lot of risks. It also produces new risks we often can (learn to) cope with, but technical and social development is so fast that even our great flexibility does not always keep the pace. For example: when the Germans introduced the first ABS-systems in cars, the price of insurance for drivers using them went up because they took more risks. Risks are just part of life and we'll have to cope with them (= learning and reducing the risk), but they'll never vanish at all. Putting one risk down by all sets of instruments, measures and programmes, often introduces another². This may be true on society level (dynamics of technical development) but in my opinion *not* necessarily on the individual level. I do not think in raw concepts as 'continuous risk levels' and/or 'risk-homeostasis', anyway not for all risks; we'll have to differentiate. People can learn how to cope with risks, that's part of the civilisation process. Learning to handle risks and hazards is a developmental task in each individual life. To fulfil that task - and that is the basic argument - you'd have to allow it on a manageable level and there learn from it.

Risks are unevenly spread in traffic. Owners of four wheel drives with steel cage, high bumpers, ABS and many more built-in securities may be protected, but in collision with another car or bike the latter will lose. Children, youngsters and vulnerable participants in traffic are on the losing end. In highly individualised societies people tend to individualise security and protection. By doing so they contribute to the erosion of the very basis of society (= living together), see for example developments in health insurance. In society the technological developments lead us to a situation where individuals can bring about enormous damage to others, compare 9/11. It is an

¹ I mention 'body-brain' because we experience and sort of 'think' in all our cells. It's just not only in the head. Traffic is not just a technical but also a physical thing and we use all our sensors there; so it's good to address ourselves not only to the brain, the heads or minds but also to include more 'bodily' experiences.

² See for instance dilemma's on 'fly by wire' in modern airplanes: very safe under most conditions, but pilots do not learn routine and do not maintain their flying skills anymore, whereas these are just needed in hazardous situations.

illusion that only more (technological based) control can prevent this. In the end we will live together, realising that we are part of one big dynamic whole, or we will not live at all.

In traffic this individualisation of protection and security can lead to immediate danger. Traffic may produce the illusion that you only deal with other *things*: unknown people are reduced to 'that other car'. Face-to-face social control does not work hidden behind tinted screens or helmets in fast moving traffic and in countless anonymous contacts unless there is a certain degree of internalised morality already there and activated by the sight of other beings. So traffic education has also an important social task for society: showing youngsters (and their parents or other relevant adults) that traffic is in a way just another form of social interaction in very specific conditions, with human contact hindered by distance, speed, iron cages and tinted windows.

2.3. Raising children and education

Raising children and education is about love, safety, setting limits, giving stimuli to develop appropriate to their level and helping them to direct their energy on constructive goals, some discipline and more basically: sense of the meaning of life.

We should also help children and youngsters to learn how to cope with risks, learn from risks and reduce them where needed. Just prevention of any danger does not help. Withholding them experiences and stimuli makes them lazy and prone to risks. The 'use it or loose it' principle on neuronal development and on competencies applies here. A 'sterile house' with a clean shaven lawn and all protective devices around is not a productive developmental ground for children, more so with both parents out working, earning the money for all this shine, and a babysitter or caretaker with a lot of do's and don'ts.

Leaving youngsters to themselves, the influence of the peer group, the powerful impressions by media and markets isn't helping them either as far they are not up to handling these freedoms. We also should create places (sport, adventure, plays, just doing things together) in which we actually do *relate* to our children and youngsters, where *a bit* of risky behaviour is allowed, and where the risks can be acceptable. Then we can teach them to avoid risky behaviour in traffic, because the dangers and consequences *there* are far too big to learn to cope with these all by themselves. If we do not provide for 'development-in-contact' (modelling and rich communication) especially boys will dodge the constraints and find their own place to act and learn and this will often be in traffic. What they will learn there is not automatically positive.

This learning and teaching about risks in traffic is not an easy task; after all in the perception of many road users most traffic is really not risky, certainly once you've mastered the basic skills. We are continuously active in decreasing the objective risks (better cars, roads, etc.) but we have to increase the subjective risk (feeling for danger, hazard-perception), and that's a kind of paradox. Perhaps only two or three times per hour one's attention is strongly activated in traffic, and you may drive a week without noticing or remembering any moment that you were really in danger. Routine takes over. Traffic is even boring in the eyes of many people, so some will ('naturally') look for some excitement or diversion. Traffic is after all much more than effective transport from A -> B. It's also an emotional arena where people can compensate for many things, especially if everyday life is tightly formatted in many aspects. For many youngsters traffic is also amusement; cars are a way of life, symbols of 'adulthood' and freedom, and accordingly used and misused by commercial advertisement.

Concerning traffic we better start from a very early stage to teach children how to estimate hazards and risky behaviour in traffic and to take the perspectives of others ("*Have you seen that car, that pedestrian?*") and somewhat later in the development - when their brain is enough developed to take someone else's perspective - "*Did he see you?*"). From playing in public space we go on to their role as pedestrian on the pavement, using the tricycle, later a bicycle, in Holland often followed by a moped and finally comes the car. A Dutch 'think tank' in the late nineties was all about the different developmental stages from early childhood on in which children and youngsters can and do learn about themselves and others in traffic situations.

In this perspective it's a bit alarming that (even in Holland) some youngsters do not learn to ride a bicycle. Bicycle riding is a very good way for learning basic functions of fast body movement in restricted spaces: equilibration, balancing, knowing what gravity does in a bend, the importance of good brakes, illumination, sharing space with others, communication with signals, hazard perception with a more direct bodily feeling, anticipation and so on. Most bicycle accidents with

(young) children involved in residential areas, public parks etc. are light accidents. Grazes etc. are impressive, do cause sharp pain without being really dangerous, so giving a very strong bodily experience of danger. But some boys go directly from being pedestrian to the dangerous mopeds, on which they can add 50 cc to their own not yet stabilized and unproportioned energy. These mopeds have a far higher risk 'built in' and the accidents are much more severe... Learning to drive a moped, let alone a car, without these previous experiences on a bicycle can be harder and more hazardous, because these primarily body/mind experiences in traffic with low risk levels are hardly there, and not integrated in the danger detection ability on a emotional and cognitive level. Actually good traffic education starts very early.

In the here presented view on novice driver education it's all about graduated risks, graduated risk-experience, graduated learning and a graduated licensing scheme that provides for graduated limits, challenges and learning from it³.

2.4. Human beings are 'stimuli processing creatures'

Learning just happens all the time. It's hard not to learn, it happens automatically. But *what do we learn?* Important notes about learning (stimuli, emotions, feelings, social emotions, higher mental processes) can be derived from neurobiology⁴ and recent publications on findings in neurocognitive research. Here we can find important grips for understanding behaviour in traffic and how to learn from it. In this text I do regard people as 'stimuli processing creatures on the road for survival and significance'.

Stimuli from inside: survival, thirst, hunger, lust, need to sleep, need to be aroused, desire, curiosity, need to find balance and significance: "*What am I doing here?*". And lots of different stimuli from the outside world: visuals, vibrations, smells, auditive signals, instructions, 'do's' and 'don'ts', support, clues, punishments, threats, seductions, perils, etc..

The body-brain always looks first for survival and tries to rebalance and equilibrate every time into a favourable status. Our actions are based on continuously changing and compared 'body-maps' in the brain: "*What is going on in all parts of my body, including the observation systems?*", so detecting changes for the bad or the good. Memory is organized likewise. In evolution we learned to react fast on dangers: an immediate need, that's survival. Our most basic reactions - fight, flight and fright - can be very functional. Only if there is no direct danger (perceived by the body as low stress, 'rest' or even 'harmony') we can afford not to rely on basic and (trained) automated reactions and then we are able to think more properly on alternative behaviours. If the 'body-brain' detects favourable conditions ('joy') we dedicate ourselves to less immediate needs and develop longer perspectives (if the brain is far enough developed to do so, see further in this text about the slower development in boys of that part of the brain that enables us to foresee long-term consequences of our actions).

There are many levels of learning, varying from direct and basic learning, related to *Fight, Flight & Fright*, to more reflective learning. We need the latter as well for we cannot rely on FFF-reactions only. Man has made a 'civilised world', in which these primary reactions are often no longer effective, even can be dangerous. Fright, no movement at all in order not for to attract attention of enemies, may be effective for a rabbit in the field haunted by a bird of prey that only sees moving targets, but it's really dangerous on the freeway or a busy town crossing. Fighting on the freeway or take flight in big cities is impossible or indeed extremely dangerous, so we need to develop more complex reactions.

We can see 4 levels of processing stimuli (put very shortly, heavily leaning on Damasio 2003 - LW).

³ See my site (www.laukwoltring.nl/eng_index2.htm) on the concept of the *zone of proximal development* by the Russian educational psychologist Vygotsky.

⁴ See f.e. the work of the advanced neurobiologist and philosopher Antonio Damasio: e.g. *Looking for Spinoza. Joy, Sorrow and the Feeling Brain* (Heinemann London 2003). For more specific derivations for boys and girls: see also Woltring 1988, 1995 (only in Dutch, see my website for an English summary). In English available - and in many ways comparable - Steve Biddulph (Australian), *Raising boys. Why boys are different - and how to help them become happy and well-balanced men* Thorsons/Finch (Harper Collins) 1997/1998 (a popular scientific but rather well founded book) and Michael Gurian (US), *Boys and Girls learn differently* San Francisco 2001

1. **Simple/fast acting:** An external stimulus (coming from all observing organs like eye, nose, ear and skin, but also our balancing organ) or internal stimulus (coming from the system itself, hunger, thirst, irritation, sleepiness, a vague feeling of discomfort, etc.) leads to a primary emotion (joy or sorrow). In danger or stress it is soon followed by action. Our body/brain signals: “Act now!” (or “Freeze now”), at the very moment hardly reflected. The higher parts of the brain register this later; action goes first. You feel the burn after you’ve pulled your hand back from the hot stove. On direct level the local nervous system (skin, finger, arm), spine, lower and middle brain regions are involved because involving higher cognitive brain function takes too much time. The consequences of this action form a new stimulus and so on (feedback loops). When the feedback is also stressing one can end up in an ‘adrenaline tunnel’ reducing the world to immediate stress and handling).
2. **Complex emotional acting:** A stimulus (internal and/or external) leads to a primary emotion (joy or sorrow). Our body/brain signals: “immediate action is not needed”, followed by more complex emotions as delight, humour, jealousy, hatred, desire, etc. and actions related to these. Often this is only bodily expression, not immediate action, sometimes however we see direct emotional reactions in traffic (competition, revenge, following). Feedback loops may follow the reaction of the (human) environment.
3. **‘Sensitive’ action:** We feel the emotions (registered in our feeling brain), and act on rich feelings; a bit more conscious, often with expression, gestures, speech and more complex reactions; we are arriving now in the higher brain functions. The human environment may react and again feedback loops follow.
4. **Reflective action.** Now we are on the highest level of processing. After passing through the first basic emotional scans, the more complex emotional and feeling brain, the stimuli arrive in the frontal neocortex, on their way encoded with feelings and filtered as well. Now we talk especially about the frontal lobes in the neocortex, where they are compared with memory, leading to thinking, analysing, reflection and decision making, followed by (more aware) acting upon these. We are now using more of our higher intellectual functions in the neocortex.

Some stimuli from the ears and eyes (f.e. words, complex visuals) may go partially first through the higher process levels because of their complexity, but the registered tone and noticed direction and movement (alarming or calming down) will reach the primary level directly⁵. The same may go for immediate hazard perception (not for hazards a bit further away, they need observation, reflection, anticipation and so on). The traffic system (rather fast for our basic neuronal system) offers hazards that seem far away but reach us in split seconds... Hazard perception - involving higher order skills - is obviously a complicated thing, involving primary things that may or may not alarm (level 1), and more complex reasoning and anticipation (level 4) and everything in between. Hazard perception and adequate coping need to be trained, that’s for sure, by everyday experience, guided experiences and by education and reflection.

In the course of their development children and youngsters do develop more stabilised connections in their brain-body nerve systems. The already made and used connections will be isolated (myelinisation) and shielded and become much more effective; some unused branches fade away, are even actively ‘pruned’ to make room for the effective connections (cfr. the ‘use it or lose it’-principle). They may redevelop later, but that is less easy. During early youth and adolescence the window for learning in these fields is wide open.

Of special importance is the development of an area in the lower sides of the frontal cortex (the prefrontal dorsolateral cortex) where stored information is retrieved from the emotional and autobiographical memory. Here are things kept in one’s mind to form ideas, to plan and to make decisions (think before act). By this processes impulses can be suppressed or just lead. This part of the brain is only fully developed at 25 year old⁶. This ripening process takes more time for

⁵ For example; the pupil in the car reacts more and sooner on the tone of the voice of the instructor than the content. Cfr. In French: *C’est la tone qui fait la musique*

⁶ Gogtay, N., Giedd, J. N., Lusk, L., Hayashi, K.M., Greenstein, D., Vaituzis, C., Nugent, T.F., Herman, D.H., Clasen, L.S., Toga, A.W., Rapoport, J.L. & Thompson, P.M. (2004) *Dynamic mapping of human cortical development during childhood through early adulthood*. In: Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences PNAS, Vol. 101, No. 21, p 8174-8179.

males compared with females⁷.

Of course there are also lots of internal feedback loops. For example, the higher mental functions can influence the more primary ones, first by association, later, after training, also more reflectively. RET (Rational Emotive Therapy) is based on this thought: we can influence our emotions to a certain level. Feelings about past events do heavily weigh on our processing of new events like a kind of 'filter', but we can intervene by acknowledging these feelings and allocate them to where they belong: somewhere in the past under different conditions. Especially these dynamics happen on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th level mentioned above.

The 1st level (Fight, Flight and Fright) is harder to be influenced. Under stress people tend to relapse into the simple case (1st level), not using higher functions, because these are more complex and do need more time. And socially we may respond 'yes' on a command or question (level 4) and act 'no' (level 1 to 3). This is a simple question of *obeying* (1, 2 and 3 separated from level 4) or really *learning* (level 1 till 4 integrated to an inner logic).

Examples of these dynamics are not hard to find in everyday life. In the car we may find young men doing exactly what the instructor or examiners want them to do, even answer correctly all the questions in the words these officials want to hear, but once they have received their driving license it's all forgotten, not integrated in their own body-brain dynamics on all 4 levels, they reverse the cap on their head and it's full speed ahead..., 'freed' from the irritating voice of instructors, examiners, parents, teachers and alike.

Mankind has survived by a highly developed sensitivity for danger, so our stress-sensors work very fast. Only under relatively calm and safe conditions we fully 'switch on' the frontal neocortex (conscious memory, thought, ethics, planning, analysing, more complex decision making). This goes especially for (young) men (see also Gurian 2001), even more so when these parts of the brain have not yet fully been developed.

Amusement serves the need of the body to get aroused and relaxed again and humour or making fun (tension *and* relaxation) puts things in perspective. Laughing makes the muscles and nerves relaxed and so opens up the connections in the brain and the body (shake them up and 'giving them a good treat'). Tears can even clean some systems.

Some actions given in by reflective learning can be automatized as well. That will often take a long time. Compare various driving behaviours in complex situations like a busy crossing without traffic lights working, but then they are quicker. Some actions however can hardly be automatized.

For instance: skid control - no brakes, steering in the direction of the skid, regaining control - asks for immediate action opposite to those actions we have automated. Research shows that skid-control courses are only effective for those who have continuous skid experiences (like policemen, fire brigade, emergency ambulance and rally or racing drivers) and even then some will fail. Other drivers may have passed the test after a skid course, but will not be able to act accordingly half a year later in that suddenly and unexpected event where skid control is necessary but where the conditions differ from the skid course. Transfer to varying practice with low occurrence is hardly possible. This is one of the main reasons why in many countries traffic safety education has moved away from skid control courses, even in Nordic European countries with snow and ice. For young men skid control skills are extra dangerous because these add to their disproportional feeling of competence and they will engage in higher risks, thinking that they can control these. It's better to show them (let them actually feel!) that in most circumstances you can't control the car⁸.

2.5 Boys and girls

Boys tend to switch off the higher brain functions sooner than girls do (see a.o. Gurian 2001) and are more inclined to act swift in the 'stress-mode'; this can be very appropriate or just the

⁷ See: Giedd, J. N. (2004) *Structural Magnetic Resonance Imaging of the adolescent brain*. In: New York Academy of Sciences, Vol. 1021, p 77-85

⁸ The Dutch experience in the Cieca-NovEV pilot (2004) shows that it is very tempting for boys to develop the skills to get out of a skid, even when they were told that it won't work in reality. It was also very hard for instructors *not* to teach these skills, also because these skills give big prestige to the instructors as well!

opposite.

Of course we do better not reduce boys and girls to their sexes. There are more chromosomes than just X and Y and there is so much more what makes someone the one he or she is: think of environment, culture, the way someone is raised, education, socialization and so on. Nevertheless it's practical to acknowledge some average male-female differences in (learning-) behaviours, with of course big overlaps⁹. Here I plea for a *gender sensitive* approach (instead of a *sex-specific* approach in which boys and girls are just reduced to X or Y). On average we see for example big differences in handling impulses by young women and young men, originating in:

- The adrenaline-testosterone dynamics: adrenaline alarms us for action where testosterone¹⁰ provides energy for fast reaction. Girls, low in testosterone, generally tend to other strategies than direct action, they show more internalisation and awareness of fear and scan the environment for peril and shelter or safe actions, while young men, high in testosterone, show more externalisation, sudden action and aggression. They may tend to overrule fear by action (of course influenced by male socialisation processes as well).
- The relations between the primary, the small, the limbic brain and the frontal lobes in the neo-cortex differ: under stress boys tend more to switch off higher mental processes¹¹. See also the four levels of reactions described before.
- Girls' brain functions are - certainly at the start - less lateralised than boys'. Some left-right hemisphere connections in the neocortex grow in girls early, in males a bit later, especially if stimulated by experiences. Particularly the link between *space*, *felt* emotions, rhythm, intuition, creativity and *movement* on the one hand (the coordination of some of these is more or less located deep in the brain and for some predominantly in the right hemisphere) and *language*, *analysis*, logic and order (left hemisphere and PFDLC) is for boys very important. These links and the integration of these functions grow as well, but later and they do depend more on experiences and conditions, which is an environmental thing. Boys do need to be invited to tell what they feel, not in order to be put under control (then the FightFlightFright-system may take over, because control is confining and stressing), but just for sharing and supporting. So it's nature *and* nurture, resulting in maturing either partially or versatile, balanced and many sided. And this leads us also especially for young men to the importance of socialisation, examples and verbal mutual communication.
- There seem to be some differences in vision (girls in stress more wide-angle, seeing all dangers, boys more focussed on that one most direct experienced danger)
- and qua movement and physical problem solving (boys quick, girls more hesitant). Boys learn more by doing and phrasing/thinking afterwards, girls the other way around. Girls seem to follow examples by observation, listening, communication and seemingly obedience, but they enforce the learned with their own twist¹².
- Finally language and speech: in the boys' brain many related functions are later integrated and/or located 'mainly left' (except for the movement of lips and mouth which are more located at the right half, which may be the reason why stammering is above all a boy's thing). In girls speech is more located in both sides, dramatically shown in dynamic MRI brain scans. So - put very simply - it takes boys more time and effort to express verbally what they feel (and many filters may intervene...). Integration of many functions comes later in their development.

⁹ Research on these items is going on. The last 10-15 years there were many insights on male-female differences in brain development, often as side effects of other research, but it was 'not done' to publish them. The result of this 'political correct' practice is that some myths (f.i. notions on extreme left-right-hemisphere differences) reached popular scientific publications. There is a need for more systematic research; not for justifying different and sometimes negative behaviours, but in order to see how boys and girls learn, and what they need to grow up to their full and balanced potential. Important is also to know that different brain structures may in the end lead to the same behaviours as well.

¹⁰ The Y-chromosome turns the foetus into a male among other factors also via testosterone, which is also influencing brain development, sudden action energy, impulsivity, growth, defence and immune systems (see also books by Dutch Martine Delfos on my site). Girls have also testosterone, but on a much lower level. In early adolescence testosterone levels go up, in boys much more dramatic than in girls.

¹¹ A.o.: Gurian 2001 o.c.

¹² See for example the doll's house: a fine copy of mother's examples and an offence to emancipation? No. In the doll's house the playing girl is the boss, now she is in control... And in doing so - communicating with the dolls or with her girlfriend she enacts later emotional control over herself and her environment, only waiting for a bigger and richer environment.

There are also (even bigger) male/female differences in socialisation with again much variation: here we look for example at parent-boy and parent-girl interactions, changing perspectives of male and female roles in society, distribution of paid and unpaid work; lacking or absent fathers, the impact of media and advertisement, and so on. Society takes more care of girls, and tries to discipline boys who cause more irritation by their trial-and-error way of learning (and mastering of their own dynamics as well of their environment).

In many families fathers still haven't found the way how to support their sons, in our society there is a lot of neglect of boys, their qualities and their dilemmas. More specific: boys and girls with an aboriginal or many other than white backgrounds (for instance from Islamic, or stable hierarchical, gender-divided and patriarchal cultures) do have less experience with negotiating opinions, negotiating their values and seeking truth by discussion. Self-acceptance, self-esteem and not losing face is here extra important to avoid stress (for more info: see my website).

It's up to every instructor, facilitator or coach to decide whether these differences apply to a specific young girl or men in his or her car. They are only put here to foster more sensitivity on their ways of behaviour and to get a better picture why young males in traffic have such a poor picture in our graphs.

2.6 *Boys and girls in traffic*

Girls are mostly less risk taking, less risk prone. They are more occupied with possible dangers and have a stronger tendency to avoid known risks. Parents do warn them more often or may get their warnings sometimes better across. If not suppressing, society is over all more protective to girls, in some societies even overprotective, although in many aspects this protection is rapidly vanishing. Girls do communicate a lot more verbally in complex wording with their girlfriends (often 1:1) also checking their thoughts and so learning from each other, but sometimes also making each other frightened, sharing sorrows and withdrawal. They are more worried, but also are kept on a low profile by each other and by their parents (going out, traffic, alcohol, drugs, sex, etc.). Sometimes however they react and let themselves 'off the hook': they experience too much control in their mind, just want to free themselves and they can show overt care freeness, nonchalance. And where girls do develop risky behaviour as well (f.e. in drugs, sexual behaviours, alcohol, bullying and so on) they need in my opinion often a different approach than boys.

A part of the boys shows more risk prone behaviour¹³. They learn to connect their brain cells more by trial and error, thus involving some risk. This can already be seen very early: a boy of 4 thinks: "Can I put the video in the toaster, and put the sandwich in the video?" and he does it before asking permission. Very inconvenient for parents, but.... *it is learning behaviour*. They have looked very good and try to expand what they have seen.... Boys tend to communicate more physical or with short sentences.

Whereas girls tend to take sometimes too many factors in account, show uncertainty in trying to decide what to do, or show some exaggerated care freeness, boys tend to reduce their scope to immediate acting. If a little child runs after the ball from the pavement onto the street it's in 90% a boy I guess. So we have to keep an eye on them, and try to get them have some safety cues internalised.

Boys show also stress-related acting out and a disproportional high assessment of their own competences. In a world with the car as lifestyle they may compensate in traffic for lack of possibilities or too high demands elsewhere. There are also elements of bluff and bravado linked with low self acceptance and self esteem while they're still lacking some emotional and empathic skills. These come a bit later, if there are proper examples around, good guidance and education. Civilisation is not passed over automatically. That is also a learning thing.

The here presented perspective is to see their behaviour in cars *also* as learning behaviour: seeking limits and testing their abilities. It is a field in which they (can) learn much more than just handle a car. Like stated above: traffic is for them much more than going from A to B.

One may conclude that young men face specific developmental tasks once they're confronted

¹³ Some boys take it a lot easier, they mature slower; they can be victim of bullying by the 'fast matures', but in the end these boys often may get more balanced, are more caring They take fewer risks (also the type of the young intellectual). Other boys with a less high 'male profile' can try to compensate for that and they can be very much at risk, while showing off behaviour that does not suit them. The hanger-on is often more dangerous than the model. On the side: many men in research (and policy) may have been the more intellectual guys and may have a blind eye or bias towards the typical male risk behaviours. They may even have a grudge or something ambivalent towards the 'real boys': cherishing them and putting them down at the same time, being jealous and afraid.

with the demands of traffic. They have to relate to themselves, they have to learn how to direct their own energy and to relate to others in what is also *social* traffic.

The relation between stress and learning is crucial. Stress in a person, in a group, in the instructor-pupil relation or related to examinations. Under stress (equals danger for the body/brain) the primary reactions tend to dominate. This may work for skiing or solo's on the football grounds, but not for more complex strategies in group sports, where they are challenged to anticipate, think and share.

Learning during traffic instruction may under stress conditions easily transform into simple obeying (externally oriented, aiming at lessening stress) and may have therefore only temporary effects: "Wait till I have my license, than you'll see me doing what I want". In a less stressful situation, there is more room for reflection, the learning is more open and creative, the window is more open for intrinsic motivation, more experience based, coming from the inside and can more easily lead to autonomy and more responsibility.

In my experience with young high risk prone boys, I have seen surprisingly open and reflective thinking once they really felt free and valued. In a pilotproject I have taught a small group of 16 year old moped drivers with a quite low education level about how their own body and brain works. (The story put above but in simple terms). Their reaction was just great: "So that's why I do sometimes such stupid things!". I did give them their own body as a set of Meccano or Lego-Tech; they were very curious how it works and how to deal with it. It was just fun, and in between they did learn a lot!

Concluding: handling a car in traffic may be a different challenge for boys and girls (complex movement in space). Many parents and other adults may look at boys in traffic as a threat and to girls as threatened and in fact they are often right, but good traffic instruction and education offer great opportunities as well to learn girls how to cope with their uncertainties and to teach boys how to handle their own energy and motives in communication with others.

2.7. The learning brain

Conscious learning means giving words to rich experiences, not just 'words on a string' but linking experiences, emotions and feelings. The sheer naming of really felt experiences and sharing them with others, means stopping the fast revolving 'kaleidoscope in their heads' with all the revolving impressions, memories, messages and felt emotions. Reflection and consciousness is to a great extent lingual, although movement, rhythm and music can add and enrich them as well. Words and language ask for structure and decisions (choosing present or past; active or passive; adjectives, subject or object, singular or plural, and so on). So: giving words to an experience and the accompanying emotions leads to new connections and does kind of stabilise an experience, change it by giving it words (= giving structure) and makes a wider range of emotions and mental maps accessible, including memories and linked emotions and feelings. This type of learning asks for stress reduction.

Growing up means also developing an image of self. *First self acceptance* (this is me and that's good) and then while growing up and getting things done gathering *self esteem* are crucial and go hand in hand with developing skills to do things better. Logically this self image is not always very stable in adolescence with all its great changes in the brain/body system and in the social environment.

One of the pearls in my history of working with boys is to make a distinction between '*real*' self-esteem, originating in self-acceptance and self-efficacy to improve one's skills, and *acted* or inflated self-esteem, hiding a low self-acceptance and low real self-esteem, copying media and peers: a typical facet of 'the male shell'. This originates partially in the lack of close and communicative male role models in their childhood environment. Some boys bluff their way into masculinity. Media and peer pressure add to this. Bluff, bravado or 'acted self-esteem' do make young men extra vulnerable because someone might see him through, so here defence mechanisms are easily triggered and displayed. Boys with an inflated self-esteem tend to be more aggressive and less able to learn from feedback.

Some boys may easily feel 'endangered', challenged by others, in traffic or by the perceived expectations of their peers and the adult world, even when we don't see it at first glance. In fact their negative coping system (bluff) is under attack... So we need to create stimulating but safe conditions and also reduce stress in the communication itself. Eventually self-esteem is a major

emotion, so a good approach is: “*After these two or three weeks you really know better how to do it, let’s go on where you are now*”.

Adolescents or young adults are trying to make their own life and decisions, so they tend to have an ambivalent relation to adults: they are very eager to learn from them, and at the same time they may contest their authority. In practice there is for parents and educators in general a thin line between authoritarian and authoritative conduct. A good adult facilitator or coach tries to set the limits and challenges in the group or car in such a way that it gives enough safety and stimuli to learn. At the same time boys and girls test each other and do actually learn a lot of each other, but also these relations are somewhat ambivalent.

In the following paragraphs some elements of this vision are elaborated among which the construction of a special designed video, and the interaction and communication in the group and in the car.

Traffic offers an almost ideal setting for tailor-made learning experiences, direct feedback and contact, alternately in quiet and high-pressure situations. There are opportunities for direct action and reflection, all leading to basic automatized actions and so making room for more complicated reflective actions. New learning strategies are based on a mix of self reflection and internal goal setting on the one hand, and rich experiences, instruction, emotional coaching, cognitive guidance and limit setting on the other hand.

Traffic education and instruction in the car or at school offers good opportunities to relate to young men on an age where many of them do not have much constructive low-stress communications with adult men and women.

2.8. *‘Safe society’; pulls and pushes*

In our ‘Safe society’ we try to insure on every possible risk, but a claiming culture prevents learning. Society wants to be safe and in western highly developed industrialized societies there is little opportunity to learn from risk taking (quite opposite from the Australian outback where sometimes kids of 12-13 year old drive the utility vehicles of their father across the farm roads...).

At the same time the media show very risky behaviours, car ads in Australia are among the most overtly violent in the world, however in Europe we see very sophisticated but basically very aggressive ads as well.

When we stimulate people to buy a car that is depicted as very aggressive and yet ‘safe’ (for who?), we must not be surprised that the drivers act aggressively in those (and other) cars. Young men, faced with the difficult developmental task of proportioning their energy and investing their energy in some constructive goals and finding a personal sense of live, are extra susceptible for these media items (not only in car ads, but also in other ads, movies and on the internet).

One can judge a society by its advertisements: they refer to the not fulfilled needs of people and try to link them with the products to be sold. If people had no unfulfilled need for expressing their vital energy, these ads would not make a chance...

Actually we give a paradoxical message to young people: ‘don’t’ and ‘do!’. Let us not be surprised that some get confused and ignore the rules... So traffic education should also young people how to relate to these pulls and pushes.

3. POSSIBLE INSTRUMENTS FOR GROUP SESSIONS IN THE NOVICE DRIVER EDUCATION PROGRAM TRIAL:

- Influencing behaviour and ‘the fear-factor’
- Development of a video (low key, scenes in daily life from young peoples perspective)
- Development of dilemmagames
- Mix of both

3.1. *Influencing behaviour and ‘the fear-factor’*

Just convincing and persuasion often addresses only the cognitive levels in a person (i.e. level 4 in my model above), not integrated with own experiences, emotions, feelings and developed

attitudes. So, how can we reach their hearts and minds, their inner logic? (In my model let's say "How can we get all levels integrated?").

An important element is that we should not work with the 'fear-factor' unless we are very sure about its effects on long term behaviours. The basic question here is: how do the addressed youngsters handle these fear-messages? In 1995 on the occasion of the European Year of the Young Driver¹⁴ many videos of campaigns all over Europe were evaluated. Most of them were based on fear induction.

The basic structure was often: first detailed and sometimes exaggerated spectacular risky behaviour and then: "*Look where this behaviour is leading to*". Lots of bouncing cars, crashes, fine young male or beautiful female dead bodies, wounds, blood all over the place, blue flashlights, ambulances screaming, crying and tears at funerals or coma's, scars and handicaps after. Most of these video's were evaluated rather negatively by the assembled experts (for their short time effect, overburdening of the coping system, so more raising defences than leading to actual behavioural changes, especially in young men, also contributing to erosion of responsibility and moral power).

The same goes for the 'Safe Firework Campaigns' in Holland. Every year the campaigners had to raise the level of shock and fear in the visuals to prevent too risky behaviour at new year's eve where millions of people like to use firework, and after a temporary result the next year again a lot of casualties. Where do we go next? Exploding bodies?

Youngsters have seen a lot of horror in movies, on TV and on the internet, it's sometimes more a kind of 'adrenaline amusement' they are accustomed to. But are they really capable of transferring and integrating the messages in their own daily behaviour, with all kinds of pulls and pushes around? Thoughts as "*This will not happen to me*" soon take over: a defence for not being able to transfer the promises made to one self ("*I'll never do that again*") into daily life.

Intentions you can't live up to tend to become corrosive for one's self-esteem and notion of self efficacy - "*I am not capable of living up to my own intentions, so what kind of guy am I*". These are depressing thoughts, not easily to reason with.

On the other hand warning messages just at the cognitive level and reinforcements by discussion, convincing and persuasion may work for the moment, but will not stick that easy. We might just only reach the cognitive level, the frontal lobes in the neocortex, see the fourth level mentioned above, whereas fear and coping behaviour is nestled deeper in the brain (level 1 till 3), emotional levels that do have quite strong influence on behaviours. Feedback from higher brain levels (if it's not already 'blocked' or misunderstood there) as level 4 into lower levels can be effective, but only under safe conditions (no fear, no stress, or just enough to make us curious, no fight, flight or fright...), when the body/brain is relaxed, and open for reconsideration.

Some boys however will try to overrule or deafen feelings of not being able to respond adequate by exciting behaviour that switches off the higher brain parts.... After all being at rest makes room for all kind of difficult questions and disturbing feelings they don't like ("*Who am I, what do I make of my life? Life is just shit!*"). They may chase these ghosts away by doing something that occupies them (heavy music or going out in the car, seeing what's going on out there), and there we are back at risky behaviour and one of its functions. In my view playing the fear factor in traffic campaigning (and other risk behaviours) can have reverse effects.

3.2. Video with 'low key' incidents

Talking with youngsters about their behaviour can be difficult. In groups they can be vulnerable, keeping up appearances. Bluff and bravado may suggest strength, but these are often really strategies in which they cope with their perceived lack of skills or even low self acceptance, low self esteem and negative group pressure. Of course we can confront them, and that's sometimes just as wise, but we can also look at these and other troublesome behaviours of youngsters as coping behaviours: not knowing what else to do, defended if questioned, but replaced with more constructive behaviour once the basic needs underlying these worrisome behaviours are met (respect, perspective, knowing what do) and if they really see an alternative behaviour that meets these needs and leads to the basic goals reached for. A person with a firm belief in him- or herself and his or her perspectives and qualities has no need to bluff, boast or bully.

¹⁴ Madrid, 1995 National Spanish Research Centre on Traffic, European Conference 'Young Drivers and their Environment'.

In my own experience I've often seen boys that were turning away overtly in a group session and at the same time listening carefully what was being said. It's a way of keeping up the "Yeah, I do know that" and at the same time they're filling the gaps in their knowledge by listening. It's wise not to confront them with this, just say: "I do know that you know, but let's elaborate some details"; give them the credits where possible. They do know that you're playing, they're not stupid, but just that gives them an idea that they can trust you. It's just games people play, always offering them a way out in tricky social situations without losing face.

One can also address risk taking young men by not speaking about *their* behaviour, but about the behaviour of others (in the video or in their experience) and while discussing that behaviour (it's socially safe, they are not the ones at stake) we are leaving it up to them to make the transfer to themselves. Do not ask too quick "And how about you...?". That may work with Oprah Winfrey or Dr. Phil in a specific TV-setting with all powerful dynamics, support and perks around, but that's not every day life...

In a safe group setting, at a certain moment boys take over and will say, "Well, I myself", but then it's *their* decision to speak out. Do not force them, follow them and facilitate..

The video 'Young drivers experience'¹⁵ was specially designed for a small scale Dutch pilotproject on Novice Drivers. It gives 3 short sequences of quite normal road experiences of a group of 3 young men in the car and another 4 sequences with a girl behind the wheel (alone but sometimes talking with her girlfriend in a mobile).

During their ride they go through low key incidents, 'near-accidents'. After every scene there is a blue screen, the facilitator can click on the pause button and discuss what they have seen. First asking: "What did the driver do well?", so building on what is already there.

Only if several elements have been noted on the whiteboard, he follows up: "And what could he have done better?" (note well: not: "What did he do wrong' but what could he have done better?) followed with "Why?" and "How?", "What could have happened if...?" also going to the complexity of driving behaviour. In this video especially with the subtle and overt peergroup pressure around for the boys and the verbal communicating carelessness for the girl.

Stereotypes of course, but they're just material to raise questions, they are not models. It is not only about the exact what's, how's and why's, but even more also about gradually establishing an atmosphere in which any participant can speak freely and add with his/her contribution to the discussion.

In such an atmosphere peergroup pressure (positive and negative!) can be discussed ("What could the driver do or answer, when the others say.....?") without triggering defence (= not learning, or only learning to keep up the bluff...).

This is not just another spectacular video-clip: no blood, no sirens, no blue flashlights, no big drama. Those elements just heighten the stress and give sheer 'adrenaline-entertainment' - the good guys versus the bad guys - and are bad parameters for reflection and learning.

The advertisement industry makes it their trade to switch off the thinking and play on the primary emotions and link them to a product. We cannot 'sell' safety in this way, quite the contrary. Traffic has a strong impact on primary emotions and reactions. Man has made roads, cars and other fantastic, but sometimes also dangerous things. To cope with these, he needs *also, not only*, his more complex mental facilities. We try to enable youngsters to use these and develop them further.

This video meets the requirements of learning by scenario's, context bound dilemmas in which youngsters have to make their own decisions which can be talked about in an also socially safe environment. It enables youngsters to understand their own physical reactions, emotions and feelings and to develop thoughts about them. While asking for, and discussing these thoughts, we invite and enable them to 'steer' their own behaviour in a more constructive way¹⁶, they are behind the wheel.

¹⁵ Here I am referring to my participation in the development of the Video *Young Drivers Experience* and Teachers manual for group sessions. CIECA NovEV European Research Novice drivers (2nd phase drivers license) (2003-2004) ROV Gelderland

¹⁶ The video-part of the Dutch Novice Driver Pilotproject, interaction strategies and the accompanying group discussion are developed along some lines that are very similar to those in the Rock and Water project (a 'psycho-physical' program on feeling and understanding your own movements, getting grip on your own emotions and motives, starting from self-acceptance and developing self-confidence, self-control, self-respect and aiming for safety, integrity and solidarity, see also § 4.4 in this paper).

It would be 'rather simple' to offer youngsters a good day and fine group discussion using more spectacular situations, but it's harder to make it 'stick'. We focus on the transfer of our results outside the project, therefore we use low key incidents, happening every day, all around and quite easy to address, again without triggering defence. The ultimate goal is assessment of the situation, of others and 'self' (including 'the others in your own head'), and acting accordingly, also outside the traffic education programme. Transfer is the keyword!

3.3. Dilemma games

Another likely instrument to be used in group sessions can be a dilemma game¹⁷. In Germany there was in the early nineties quite elaborated research done¹⁸ on risk groups in traffic. Apart from some niches in the risk behaviour market (30 year olds, working on the stock market, fast style, driving Porsches, etc) one group stood out: 18-24 year old males working in construction, metal, electricity. Working hard, earning some money, investing in second hand cars, and going out in the weekend. Anyone can imagine why the accident rates and death rates were high: group pressures, fatigue, night driving, alcohol, macho style. This group could be reached (young labour force has one school day a week in Germany) and there was decided to develop a pilot. We had only one hour per group of 20 young men, and we developed a group dilemma game that mostly proceeds as follows:

(step 1) Short (not very much introduction), *This is about cars and going out or alike:*

(step 2) *Suppose, you're out on a Saturday night, big dancing, 20 kms from your own place. You're a bit drunk and you have met a very nice girl, she fancies you as well. The decision whether you will go to her place, or she may come with you, or you just say goodbye, is not yet made, but the odds are good... Now, your car is in service, so you have no transport. You have two options:*

(a) Your friend, with his girlfriend, offers you to bring the two of you home (with a wink in your direction), both rather drunk but he is riding his own car tonight,

or

(b) you wait with your girl for the night bus (quite cold, a bit of rain, love will cool off soon). What do you do? (No hints are given)

Result was often: *I'll go with my friend, he is after all a good driver, 'has never had an accident'.*

(step 3) Facilitator (no comment!): *OK, he drives away, tyres a bit screaming, your girl holds your hand tight. What do you do?*

Group: *Nothing or So what? (Jokes).*

(step 4) Facilitator: *The driver just misses a pole, your girlfriend turns a bit pale. What do you do...?*

Group: *Nothing, or I'll comfort her a bit, do my arm around her shoulder, or alike*

(step 5) Facilitator: *He crosses a crossing speeding where he had to give way. He missed another car. Your girl screams and says stop. Your friend goes on. And now what?*

Group: *He had after all no accident,...*

And so the facilitator escalates further until someone says *Stop!* The chicken-eagle game in the group (no one dared to say that the driver should stop) turns around, the one who says he has got to stop is now the eagle.

(step 6) Facilitator: *Ok, how you're gonna make him stop? He is drunk!*

And so on. Now the group gives comments how to stop... The clue is here that they were not at stake themselves, it is that driver, it's left to them to solve the dilemma's here and they begin thinking about what to do, and some begin to speak in me-words instead of he....

This game was played in 80 schools. Evaluation research showed little result in most schools, and only in 3 schools high effects (in memory and in evaluations by the participants themselves) were

¹⁷ Referring to my advice and participation in the development of a school based novice young drivers program, Bornheim/Germany/1994, with Horst Schulze.

¹⁸ Cfr. Schulze, H. Lebensstilanalysen. - Ein Beitrag zur Sicherheit junger Kraftfahrer/innen in Ostund West. Bast-symposium 1992, Bergisch Gladbach 1993

measured. After all a poor result. One researcher however was surprised by the high results in 3 schools, as schools not very different from the other schools. Secondary research showed that most facilitators, teachers, (ex-) police officers and driving instructors did not give way to the group without comments, offering the 'good answers', moralising, sometimes bitter. The group reacted adversely. Only in these 3 schools the facilitators succeeded in not commenting and only managed the escalation in a neutral way. That turned out to be a crucial factor.

3.4. Mix of video and dilemma games: video 'Cool'

It can be a good idea to use some of these dilemma techniques in the group session about videos that may be made for Novice Driver Programmes. Starting from the Dutch video, one can put the dilemma to the group: "How can the driver act safer without losing face with the other boys present in the car?". According to the presented traffic situations in the Dutch video: "How can he manage not to drive through red signal, not leaving before the sports bag is stowed away safely, everybody is buckled, or before" and so on "without twitted as 'mr. Good'."

This mix of video and discussion techniques was employed in another project¹⁹: 'Cool' about dangerous and aggressive moped driving. In research this video was quite positively evaluated. It shows in 4 minutes a short story of 2 young male moped drivers (with a female buddy seat companion and one girl on skates towed by one of the boys). The perspective is mostly that of the participants themselves (moped drivers and a car driver), sometimes also scenes from the spectators perspective to give an overview of what's going on. No shine, no glitter, just every day life on the road in Amsterdam. A whitish boy, another with a bit darker skin, nice girls, but no models. Maximum possibilities for identification.

The movie opens with rhythmic music, title: 'Cool!' and starts with very skilful skaters doing all their tricks. Three of our foursome are spectators to this skilful show and one of them gets a SMS on his mobile GSM-message: "Party, do you come?"

They leave the place in a pretty way, humour, laughs, a bit euphoric, the sun is shining, life is good. (Widescreen - also reflecting wide open mind, scanning the environment, no stress, joy, relax, everything is possible - colourful, medium slow camera change, the rhythm of music and picture changing is slow to medium - also reflecting the mood, low heartbeat, no stress). Low voice in the background, slow, grumbling, Hollywood style like Humphrey Bogart: "What we're dealing with here is a total lack of respect for the law..."

While continuing their ride they engage increasingly in playful but ever more risky situations. Euphoria changes in "We are the kings of the road" and turns into irritating and harassing others. The girl on skates has to give up (collides with a pedestrian) the others seem not to be bothered, and ride on. They frighten some bicyclists and come into competition with a young man in his car overtaking each other in turn (he had just left his house in an aroused state, thinking loud about troubles with his boss, etc.).

The whole story ends up in a chicken-eagle game (who gives in?), the boy with the girl on the body seat has also to give up (not handy enough, too heavy to move skilfully with his buddyseat passenger, the girl comments fiercely at the boy) and at the end the 'game' is between the one boy and that one young man.

We hear the crash, and we see after a short break stills with severely wounded youngsters. Ending with 'Cool??' (Technicalities: from wide angle screen we go more and more to tele, also representing the focussing, the heartbeat is higher and more pounding, the rhythm of the pictures is faster, the camera is trembling a bit as well), the 'adrenaline-tunnel' takes over, the focus of the boy is more and more on that car, adrenaline rushes through his veins, reducing his world to 'me versus him'. Loss of perspective, he does not think about safety, it has become a fight for status and prestige.

This movie (5 minutes) is shown the first time without stops. After the first show the public - youngsters - can give first reactions. In this phase there should be no discussion in depth, the facilitator just writes keywords on the whiteboard, showing that he takes every comment serious, and thereby lowering the threshold for later discussions. 'Stupid' remarks are just discharges and are dealt with in humour, trying to find real aspects in it or behind it, no confrontations, nobody has to lose his face (even when he is nearly 'asking for it').

¹⁹ Referring to my participation in the Dutch Campaign *Young Drivers - Aggression in Traffic* and the therefore produced video 'Cool' with Teachers Manual (focussing on moped drivers) (L.Woltring, ANWB (Dutch National Road Users Association), The Hague 1997 (with Victoria Kerkvliet-de Kleijnen)

Than the video continues, with the same pictures and sequences, the public knows how it will end, but this time the boys and girls in the movie get names (subtitled), and after several crucial scenes in this escalating process there is a still (video goes on, but the pictures are freezed, also giving the facilitator opportunity to push the 'pause button'). Questions here are:

- *Where is his breath? High in the chest or low in the belly?* (Under stress the breath is short, fast and high. It is very hard to be stressed with the breath low, also introducing the mind-body scripts: "Try it: Act as if angry or agitated but with a calm breath...").
- *Which muscles are tightened, which are relaxed ("Can you move easy on your moped with muscles tightened and breath high?")*
- *What does he see? (What not?), What does he think?*

And then the crucial question:

- *How can he step out of this escalation (we know the result) without loosing face in the eyes of himself and the others involved.*

Actually this last question addresses the underlying dilemma.... Stepping out? Loosing face? Or go on and try to 'win'.

This video is often used by moped-driving-instructors²⁰ and at schools. It is considered as rather successful and effective as long as the facilitators left the conclusions and the thinking with the participants, only guiding a bit, sometimes humour, a bit adjusting, keeping the atmosphere fine. Evaluation research showed that under those conditions many boys discussed and thought very vividly. They did remember this movie for a very long time. It was part of a somewhat bigger program after which (only) in the first year the accident rate dropped (moped accidents happen very often, so it was measurable). It is not fully understood which elements did contribute to this result.

Of course there is discussion about the end (yes or no bloody details, yes or no tragic end). In this video it is rather well proportioned, the accent is not on the bloody thing, the complete focus is on the process.

It is not simply 'yes' or 'no' on the fear factor, it is all about knowing what, when and where, a quite subtle thing.

4. COACHING AND FACILITATING THE GROUP SESSION. SOME COMMENTS, HINTS AND THE SKILLS NEEDED

4.1. Introduction:

Like put in the introduction of the Australian Novice Driver Programme Trial, "...such schemes can positively influence the behaviour of young drivers, but, if implemented incorrectly, they can also have a negative effect". This is also a very clear Dutch finding in the EU NovEV Project 2004.

A good programme can turn into something negative (provoking adverse reactions), and even bad programmes can turn out positive when they are handled by wise coaches and facilitators. This is not to say that we don't need good programmes. On the contrary, they facilitate the facilitators and coaches, but it enough resources should be invested in the facilitators and coaches (selection, training, their learning during the process, exchange, feedback, etc.). In many campaigns in different fields one can see that training, support and payment of the coaches, trainers, facilitators and so on is more of a balancing item on the estimated budget. All the resources flow into the development, consultants, experts, the printing and the communication about the programme...

Here it is important to realise that while implementing the designed program, these facilitators and coaches experience strengths, weaknesses, things to improve, and challenges that were not foreseen by the expert designers.

²⁰ In the Netherlands you need a theory certificate before you're allowed to drive a moped (from 16 years on) and some take a few lessons. Dutch government is now on its way to develop a practice exam as well. There is nothing much to it, but there are groups interested, especially their parents, while the accident rate among young moped drivers is very high!

So a good programme offers facilities to learn from these experiences, preferably in the pilot phase and than to be taken care of in the main programme - greater changes later are not to be advised for evaluation research reasons - but also getting along further in the process.

Of course evaluation research asks for some stability in all contributing elements, but we are here dealing with human behaviour not only in pupils, but also in facilitators and coaches. They do learn, it's impossible not to learn, so it's better to take the advantage of it, and set up evaluation research that is apt to a stable program and gradually develop skills of the people involved.

A very fine guide to coaching young drivers - and from there may be derived many clues and hints for facilitators as well - is *Coaching Novice Drivers*²¹. Roughly speaking, this guide fits well in the principles unfolded in this paper. Good principles for facilitating group sessions and coaching are to be found in the 10 'golden rules' of ADVANCED²².

The concept of the *zone of proximal development* by the Russian educational psychologist Vygotsky can enlighten us in our work. Just as cells continually divide and an organism grows, so children and youngsters have a strong instinct to grow, experience something and develop themselves. Their world is constantly growing, they are broadening and advancing their prospects and an increasing amount of active connections are being made in their brains.

Boys go through a lot and, if things go well, they want to take on an increasing level of responsibility. They may experience somewhat of a freakish passage through life: success, setback and sometimes relapse.

Learning is often a matter of trial and error. Being aware of which developmental phase that boys are in and the skills which they have already acquired is important.

Limiting someone in what he is already able to do is humiliating or creates laziness. However, if you can tune into what boys already are capable of, you will affirm their self-esteem and enable them to grow.

Setting a boy a task which is bound to go wrong or will endanger himself or others may lead to failure and disappointment. It can also be humiliating or may result in fear or resentment. And if he does not fail and gets away with it, it may foster a displaced trust in his own capacities.

It is better to limit a boy when he goes way beyond his own boundaries and those of others and support him in doing things which are just out of his reach but can be achieved with help. This 'real' success is within his reach and does not only boost self-confidence but also increases trust in the person who is helping. Boys require help and support to name or internalise negative experiences or events which have not been coped with (they do not show this very easily, just a knowing glance or some words will do in most situations, putting too much words in it can be counterproductive. In more serious matters giving words and discussing it may be better.

Otherwise the learning process stops, the boy will feel stuck, or they may develop some hidden bitterness, grief or anger; possibly also at those who brought him in this situation or did not stop him.

Looking at the role of facilitators: Here again (see also above) it is very important to have a clear view on the basic differences between *learning* from own experiences (processing stimuli and own reactions, etc.) and *obedience* (Of course sometimes youngsters have to learn to obey, but that's not the basic point being made here).

4.2. *Some instructions for feedback in the car and in the group:*

This is all about positive learning without neglecting firm boundaries or limits and confrontations where necessary, but always aiming at learning (internal control) instead of discipline and obedience (external control)²³. Bottom-line: Learning builds on already developed qualities: "*I do accept correction or hints from someone who also sees what I do perform well*". So:

²¹ Warren & Sharon Harrison (2004) in: '*Development of Novice Driver Education/Development Curriculum*' 'Novice driver Coaching program' for ATSB by R.Christie, W. Harrison and D. Johnston, Canberra (available via www.....).

²² N.Sanders, (2002) *The EU ADVANCED project. Description and analysis of Post License Driver and Rider Training*. Rijswijk (NL) CIECA

²³ In this view heated, psychopathic and/or always trespassing drivers, unable to develop some sane self-control, have to be met by police measures and are only under very special circumstances accessible for educational measures. Real madmen just have to be excluded from road traffic. Letting them go is a bad message to the risk group around these drivers.

4.2.1. In the car²⁴

Always first point out: *“What are you doing well?”* and after a situation that asks for some comments the tone or style is: *“No problem with that, although you perform mostly quite well, you’re still learning and it is ok to make mistakes, as long as they’re not dangerous and you want to learn from it. But let’s see what happened”, “What did you see, what did you do, what’s your own impression, what do you think I would do?”*.

We learn most from our errors, but in learning from them we rest on our qualities, our already mastered skills. The key is to find the qualities, even in a mistake! (Some details may have been right). Make it up together, that gives confidence and trust. Many instructors are focussed on errors, establish their authority in pointing at them, and find it hard to see the qualities of pupils or novice drivers. This leads to bravado or to doubts, low self esteem and stress: it may be good for disciplining, but bad for learning.

Second: “What needs some improvement?” Give them first an opportunity to find an answer themselves. (In the Dutch example we had two novice drivers in the car)

Then: “What does the other novice driver see?” (Again: *“What’s good and what can be done better”*) *“Does he have some advice?”* and at last: the observation from the coach (the message here to driving instructors is: *“Do not deny them your experience, knowledge or wisdom, but give it as an extra, a surplus on what they already found out themselves and what you have confirmed. It’s only then that your remarks may be welcomed”*). In the process they learn to judge each other and speak about it as well. First comes questioning, later speaking.

- How much control do you have: Over yourself? Over the car? What’s good? What needs improvement?
- How do you react in traffic situations? What’s good? What needs improvement?
- What is your risk-perception? What do you see? What didn’t you see?
- Where is your breath? Low in the belly (calm) or high in the chest (aroused)?
- Which muscles are relaxed? Which are tense? (These may seem silly questions, but they worked out fine... People can control their own stress levels with their breath... Like counting to three, although that’s not appropriate in traffic, but one can learn to breath in the belly and also relax the body, some boys really do appreciate these hints, see also § 4.4 the Rock and Water program)
- What effects do the road situations have on you? Can you master these effects?
- What is the effect of your driving on other participants in traffic? Flow or stress?
- Would you like to be a passenger in the car of your co-driver? Why yes? Why hesitant?
- And more alike.....

Here it is important that the youngsters, especially the boys, give words to their impressions and thoughts. Phrasing leads to structuring and reflection in a social context! Warding off under stress, but learning when the situation is right.

Evaluation of this type of coaching brings out that most boys learn to enjoy this - if it’s played ‘fair’ and not submitting and humiliating - and tend to spread this in their social environment as well! After all it is very cool not to be part of the bullying process, a real leader knows how to handle negativity.

4.2.2. In the group:

The best basic attitude of the facilitator who is leading the group discussion in our program is ‘questioning instead of instructing’ of course within reasonable limits. They give their assessment, their observation, their opinion and their knowledge only at last. Boys do know much more about their own and each other’s behaviour and its consequences than we often may think, but it is not yet put in words (or just defensive), so we offer learning situations, they can learn to trust their own insights or develop them further.

²⁴ In the program there are first group sessions and after that a drive. Yet here I follow another order; because it’s the in-car-experience is most present in the body and mind of the participating novice driver, as well as their experience with adults coaching and commenting on them (not always in a positive way..)

They are not stupid, even when it might sometimes seem so, most of the preferred insights are already there in their bodies and heads, but they do not yet use it always, they do not feel socially safe enough or they do not know yet how to act on this knowledge without losing their face or loose their image (also for themselves...).

A distinction is made here between knowledge stemming from their own 'inside' experience (or simulated nearby experience with vivid scenario's and videos) and knowledge coming from outside sources in fragmented rules, instructions, and so on. Whereas the first is more connected to their own emotions and motives, more linked with their body and bodily reactions, the latter is more cognitive, more associated with language-only, linked to their own incompetence, or with compliance and obedience to systems they do not always comprehend. See the 4 levels mentioned above.

On their own experiences and self management we add some hints, or even instructions where needed (in stead of starting with do's and don'ts and asking for discipline and obedience).

Without neglecting the importance of compliance with rules in traffic, we again focus first on self-management and we add traffic rules. These are explained as just social agreements on flow and safety in traffic as a necessary means in managing social interaction in the specific conditions of road traffic. Even a youth gang has its own rules; boys do know that they sometimes can be explosive and destructive to each other and to themselves, they know that they need rules to structure their relations and be safe for each other, but at the same time they want to test the rules of the adult world.)

Basically testing rules - are they real or fake, do they protect the group or just the interests of some 'leaders' - is a constructive process, needing to be steered by interested and dedicated grown-ups, who can discuss and transfer the value of traffic-rules. Without reliable agreements traffic would be a mess and slaughterhouse; even every risk prone boy will understand this²⁵.

A suggested structure of a group session on the video:

1. Short opening (*Who is who?* Give them opportunity to speak out and let them hear their own voices in this new space; this lowers the threshold for later participation and verbal contributions)
2. Why this group-discussion? Short!
3. Some simple rules (*"Together we know everything; everybody can contribute something; there is no such thing as a stupid question; the only stupid question is the question that was not put in words"*, etc.)
4. *"What was your most important impression in traffic last week? What did you see? What caught your attention? What did you learn out there?"* Short, in catchwords on the whiteboard. Only a wide spread of remarks; try to avoid in this stadium lengthy discussions. Here we just sample the richness of all their reactions.
5. Direct after this show the video scenes one by one.
Basic questions are every time in this order: *"What's happening here, what did the driver do well?"*
Second: *"What needs some improvement?"* (*"What is your own experience in these situations? What would you do?"* *"What would you need to do that?"*)

Slowly we divert from the video to their own experiences without blaming if they make themselves too vulnerable, even by bluffing. It's easy to burst their storytelling, but don't. It's better to neglect bravado, have some laughs and slowly come to the heart of the matter. If it comes too close (warding off mechanisms are starting) one can always go back to the video that is more neutral.

The whiteboard ('living minutes': you can wipe away old words and write down new) diverts from confrontation whenever that is blocking the learning. The whiteboard gives some focus outside the group with sometimes vulnerable identities. Scribbling down their notions means that what

²⁵ Once I had a small group experiment. My suggestion was: let's put all traffic regulation aside, and design our own rules. At the end they resembled much the official rules, but now they had made them...

someone says is useful and at the same time it diverts from the person who did the contribution to the group discussion, so there is less chance for competition, mutual degrading, etc. And if they say something in an exaggerated way or even coarse, try to peel the interesting thing out of it and present that without further comment than *"Do I get it right, you mean..."*. Pure 'rubbish' can be dealt with, *"Yeah, sure man.."*, *"In my garden, banana trees as high as heaven"* or something alike and go on as if nothing has happened... (he knows he is talking crap, he knows that you know, it's just positioning...).

Looking at the whiteboard not only activates vision extra to just listening but it also enables thinking and contribution. An extra merit of the whiteboard ('living minutes of each contribution') is that content is more important than the pupil who may feel endangered when he is saying something in a group. The facilitator can clarify what someone puts in awkward or stammering words, so he can make almost every contribution productive.

We do not only train them in awareness of their own traffic experiences, but also to communicate about these; we give living examples how to support and correct each other without humiliation. So we lower the stress and make reflective and social learning possible.

One of the major elements in communication in the group and giving feedback in the car is to deactivate defence mechanisms like withdrawal, bluff, bravado and to activate learning. Again: it is not our message that's most important, it's their learning!

6. Another important question to youngsters is: *"From who do you accept hints and corrections? How should they do it? How do you like to be addressed"*. It turned out that many boys did like these questions particularly, they have often had bad experiences with grownups, this question gives them a chance to clarify *how* and *what* they want to learn from *whom*. Saying these things corresponds also to inner speech, and that is very important.
7. At the end we put the youngsters in the chair of advisors: *"If we have another group like yours next week: which elements should we maintain, and what should we alter..."*. Here is double profit: (a) it will give us extra data for our own work, and (b) it reinforces their experience, because we take them as serious ones, so they are invited to take their own experiences serious as well. And they do!

Disorderly conduct must be stopped of course, in the group as well as in the car: be short and clear, explain why, don't discuss, one warning, if necessary expulsion. It's safer for all others. It will not happen often; especially not when the participants in a program have volunteered. These phrases are also necessary in the instruction of the coaches to make them feel safe in what they are doing; of course there are limits to understanding and 'enabling'. A coach who does not feel safe and does not act upon that feeling is a bad example for the young men; they have a sharp radar for that! It's like parents who do not intervene if a child is trespassing, in the end the kids feel unsafe with them.

The aimed process with the young drivers in discussing their needed improvements is: going from external attribution - *"It was the weather, that stupid other driver, the road, or the car"* - to internal attribution - *"How did I cope with these situations?"* - without blaming (blaming invokes defence-mechanisms that stop learning) but pointing to their responsibilities as far as they are able to make them come true. This is very important; our attitude should not imbalance their not yet fully balanced self-assessment. This is not soft on risky behaviour but wise in learning.

4.3. Group rules

One of the great pitfalls is with debates and discussions. It is sometimes easy to 'win' an argument or discussion, adults and experts do have after all more facts and figures, experience and debating tricks, but who is winning? Essential thing is the transfer from the group discussion to the daily life. If for example a boy had to admit that something he said was not true, or not well thought of, or unwise, he may give in during the group session, but what if he is alone or with his friends in the car... And two weeks later..? In the group he may *feel* humiliated, even if he was not, especially in the eyes of other boys he is competing with, and - in another way - feels deprived of his male pride in the eyes of female participants. So it is wise to set some group-rules: see §3.4 point 3.

4.4. *Basic message*

Our primary message to risk prone youngsters is:

*“You are too important, too valuable, to risk your life,
and the same goes for others life”²⁶,*

and:

*“This is good, that can be better, and that is dangerous;
there are other ways of doing, let’s talk and learn”.*

Confirm and reinforce the strengths first - look for them - and only then and not before, address the things they can be do better. Avoid the word ‘wrong’ as much as possible. This does not mean that they’re doing nothing wrong, on the contrary, but we try to address their motives, we are not in debate. Many risk-prone youngsters do know when they act ‘wrong’ - they are not stupid, but because it’s also a kind of coping behaviour and they have no functional alternatives (as they see it) any ‘wrong’ will be answered with defence...

It’s also wise to pick up *only one thing at a time* that needs some improvement, and let it be the one that’s most easy to improve, and go on from there. Do not overburden.

4.5. *Mixed or single sex groups*

In this programme there are mixed group sessions. This gives specific opportunities as well as it asks for some specific attention. As written above, we must not reduce boys and girls to that one aspect, sex and gender. There are big overlaps in skills and development. Having said this, boys can learn from girls (f.e. emotions expressed in language, multitasking, taking broader or other perspectives), and girls can learn from young men (being active instead of fearful, look for practical solutions, try before you say “*I can not*”, etc.).

On the other hand: in a mixed group setting *some* boys are preoccupied with their performance in the (perceived) eyes of the girls present and compete among each other about their attention, and *some* girls are preoccupied with the boys in the room; they have more eye for their looks rather than their performance, and drawing the attention of the boys, comparing their skills, feeling unable or act as if, etc..

It’s not always easy to solve these problems. In general humour will solve a lot of the tension, give a little way, and then “*Ok, all right, and let’s now...*” (or even tongue in cheek, “*Yes, yes, I know that girls are beautiful and boys are stupid*” or ironic: “*Yes, boys are technical and girls do talk a lot, but you are the exceptions, so let’s get on with ...*”.

Only if the mixed gender setting becomes really an obstruction for good group work, it can be tried to go on in single sex groups. Here again special attention is needed for specific challenges: In only male group extra attention is to be paid at group dynamics. A kind of structure and hierarchy gives rest, a bit of kidding or teasing can do no harm, just keep a sharp eye for the balance, but any kind of bullying should be stopped, for it raises fear and stress. Mix the use of language (not too much words) with many visuals on the whiteboard: scheme’s, graphs and so on, give visual structure for the things being said.

In single sex girl groups the learning can be accelerated, as often is seen in research on this point. Here there may be need for not too much talking, also focus on practical consequences.

In the end, all things said above should be balanced in practice with specific cultural backgrounds. As far as there is a white western bias built in, there is nothing wrong with developing things alike that do fit better in other cultures. Every culture indeed has it’s own coping styles, that can support or just hinder learning processes.

²⁶ Please do notice here the order: first you, and than the others. This is not for selfish reasons, but follows the development of the child, and tries to address them on the basis of self acceptance followed by self-esteem and the preparedness to develop further and to take the perspective of others as well. At the same time we try to respond to motives for risky behaviour that stem from low self acceptance and self-esteem (“*So what? If I die, the problems are over as well*”). In high risk behaviour there can be an element of suicidal behaviour (low self acceptance, low self-esteem, unable to cope with the demands society places upon young men, therefore choosing their own arena)

5. GENERAL NOTES ON YOUTH AND TRAFFIC POLICIES

5.1. *Advertisement and campaigning*

Australian Car Ad's can be extremely aggressive, surely if compared with many ad's in The Netherlands and other European countries with somewhat better traffic security figures. See here the remarks made in § 2.1. The basic skill of the advertisement industry is to play on the unfulfilled needs of people and link them to a product, playing the emotions and switching of reflection. If you really would *think* about buying car A or car B, than you'll see that car A may be more glamorous, but that in fact the performance you *need* (and that is not 180 km/h in 15 seconds) are already there in car B at half the price. For that money you can have three great holidays abroad, buy a swimming pool in the garden or whatever.

We should youngsters learn how to deal with these ads. Society could try to deescalate these car ads. This may need not the extensive research based debates as with smoking. Every dollar put in research about the damaging affects of smoking was countered by research funded by the tobacco lobby. When a car is advertised with the aggression you can act out frustration with this car while still being safe, one should not be surprised that the buyers will act like that, let's not be naive. A kind of advertisement court consisting of wise men/women could do the job, supported by law.

Traffic campaigns are often lead by advertisement agencies. Here some reserve is needed. Safety is not something to sell, it's our basic evolutionary heritage to look for it, and should be addressed like that. Reducing stress, not 'switching off' but calming down, investigating and addressing our involved emotions, *think, communicate exchange*, and look for your own actions, in stead of pure copying what the ad says.

a. Parent involvement and parent support

The Australian system of supervised driving has strengths, some weaknesses and elements to improve. It is very interesting for me as Dutchman, whereas in Holland a driving license can only be obtained by professional instruction²⁷.

The Dutch system may, together with other factors, contribute to higher safety (Holland has the lowest graphs on deaths in traffic) but yet the Australian system is interesting because it gives parents chances and challenges to offer something to their children in a very productive way, *when they are able to do so*.

In the Australian system perhaps a mix of professional instruction to learners *and* parents or other coaching adults as well as *many more* supervised hours might be worth thinking of. Furthermore it is important that provisions are made for youngsters who have no parents, or parents not capable of supervising them. Schools and youth clubs could do it. Here no market pricing, because what do we want: safe traffic, is not always marketable. For example groups at high risk cannot afford higher prices for better products.

5.2. *Schoolsupport*

Schools do offer a fine opportunity for reaching young people, but on the other hand schools are nearly flushed and overwhelmed by the number of demands from all corners of society and policies. Basically most of them are on things as going out, alcohol, drugs, HIV/AIDS, bullying, sexuality, food, traffic, discrimination, environment, etc.

All of these demands are giving signs that the classical upbringing and education of young people in family systems are no longer apt to give young people all they need for functioning in modern society. Or parents perceive themselves as not able to, as modern media give them so many signals about what's going wrong. Many parents can't cope with these messages and turn a bit frightened. Some of them feel helpless, some develop a '*don't!*- style', and many of them pass on the message of danger to their children, who sometimes refuse these messages (too much stressing, I want to enjoy life) and so the vicious circle goes on.

²⁷ It takes averagely 40 lessons and only 45-50% succeeds in its first attempt to pass the exam. A driver license costs mostly at least some 3000 A\$...

Umbrella programmes (not too much different 'silos' as for every problem a separate program) can be the answer. Many of these extra programmes are on self management skills and social skills in a rapidly changing and demanding environment. Once kids have a better self understanding, self management and social skills and a sense of direction (*what am I going to do with my life, what makes sense...*) they can implement that in different fields if extra information is supplied and exercised.

5.3. Sport

In the perspective of this paper and in our cultures, the world in and around sport has some strengths as well as threats, and in Australia even more so because of the high profile of sport. On the one hand it offers good possibilities for developing the body-brain system, controlling energy, controlling risk taking, socializing, developing some discipline, planning, character, learning to win and to loose, self-assessment, self management, social skills and so on. All things that are implied one way or another also in traffic education and coping with the risks in traffic.

On the other hand it can also put too much emphasis on competition and hierarchy. It may lead to a one-sided and disproportional self image, pushing a boy (or girl) beyond his own limits, producing disappointment or neglect of other functions, and may contribute to peer group pressure. It is also about far away heroes who may actually be not a very fine role model outside that sport thing. The pressure of the family expectations can be too high. The world of sports is often 'a high pressure system' associated with fast and best performance under high stress, a thing we would not like to see in traffic, where we better focus on calm and reflective action with enough space (literally and in time) to react quick on hazard situations.

This all is again related to ways we adult people guide stimulate and convey these youngsters. It is not good or bad in itself, it's related...

5.4. Rock and Water Programme

A very specific variety where sport, education and self-control meet, is in the field of self defence. An originally Dutch programme called 'Rock and Water'²⁸ is derived from martial arts and several language and social skill programmes.

It has also a spiritual content, a thing that many youngsters welcome very much, as long it is firmly rooted, concrete and understandable. It was successfully introduced in Australia in 1999²⁹. It provides for 7-14 lessons in school education (adaptable to primary school or secondary school / high school) but it is now also introduced in a wide variety of institutions varying from youth clubs, work with young aboriginals in their own communities, kindergarten and youth prison systems.

The basic idea here is to start with the body/brain itself, being able to defend oneself (this needs rest, breath low, all energy in the centre, focus and a sense of direction), also leading to self-confidence, self-knowledge and self-control.

Then it goes on with all kind of movements, relating to others, engaging or fending off, gradually also introducing language, communication and several psychological dimensions of living and moving in a social world.

The program works also in a psycho-physical way going through some steps in which young men (and women) can learn to trust themselves, building on their own strength and develop a sense of direction in their life.

Youngsters learn to be like water (communication, giving in, go with the flow, etc.) or like rock (standing for one's own moral principles, not being diverted by peer pressure, knowing what your goal is).

²⁸ The programme is developed by Dutch Freerk Ykema and is spread in Australia through 'The Gadaku Institute' of which he is the director, see also www.rockandwaterprogram.com. Ykema spends his working life now alternately in the Netherlands and in Australia (also New Zealand and some other countries). Since 1999 more than 10.000 teachers, principals, youth (social) workers and all kinds of educators, trainers and coaches have been trained in an intensive 3-day course. Some of them did advanced courses. At the moment a train-the-trainers program is being implemented.

²⁹ First Biennial Conference 'Working with Boys, building Fine Men' (Brisbane). There is now also research done about it's effects (Newcastle University, Family Action Centre) and the programme deserves now the certificate 'evidence based'.

This program can in fact be a very good ‘umbrella program’ under which several fields can be combined and covered with extra information. Whereas many schools in Australia have experience with R&W, it might be a good idea to start some pilots in which R&W schools introduce driver education as well along the same lines.

5.5. *Research proposal*

As I started with, the whole paper is rather conceptual, and only partially evidence based. We can look as experts at the risks that have been overseen by (young) drivers or deliberately engaged or taken, but we do not know very much about what really happens in the mind and body of youngsters (and also adult drivers) just before an accident.

In the hours just after an accident nearly all people involved are busy in their heads asking “*What went on? What have I done? What did I see? Is it my fault?*” (even so if everything points in another direction), “*What could I have done to prevent what has happened? If I had left my house later, or had taken another road...*”

These thoughts are naturally coming up. People attribute to themselves often more than is real, it is just a way of regaining control, (a process well-known by all kinds of crisis intervention and trauma teams; extensively researched). And when someone bears really responsibility for what happens, the load in his or her mind is very big. After a while this load is too heavy, insupportable, and the reframing, the excuses and so on begin. Basic thing is that ‘the window in the mind’ is wide open for only a short period, people like to debrief themselves and talk to others. This gives a fine opportunity not only to assist people in processing what they have been through, but also to learn about accidents and risk taking behaviours.

The idea is to investigate daily one or two accidents (of all kind, *not* only the serious ones) in depth as soon as possible after the accident happened. Set up a number of investigation units, consisting of two good in-depth interviewers with social help skills and knowledge of traffic and traffic behaviours, in cars equipped with video, audio recording and so on.

Police, ambulance (or alarm numbers dialled by people) should always inform a coordinating centre (just by giving that necessary bit of information that this centre needs to decide if this fits in the scheme). These centres coordinate over a period which accidents have to be covered, and they know where the teams are, spread over the state(s) involved, and ready to turn out at first sign.

There should be a ‘Chinese wall’ between the police, law, insurance companies at the one side, and these teams at the other side. “*Things you have said to the investigator about this accident, are not referred to the other side, whatever it is*” and this must be made very clear to the public.

Of course this type of investigation faces a lot of dilemma’s, difficulties and so on, but it seems worth the effort to try... It will need a good structure, implying help of trauma psychologists and so on. A list of possible accidents which are to be covered (different classes), question lists derived from a fine conceptual model (see *Qualitative Research* by Glaser & Strauss and more fine books published later), and a pilot to test infrastructure, the concepts and question lists.

So far.

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