"Tell it like it is": Empowering Year 10 Boys to Share Their Stories Through Yarns

Penny Horsley & Jonathon Mayall
SHORE, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Introduction
Our action research was designed to empower boys to embrace their vulnerabilities and build mutual trust—to cultivate a belief that their peers would accept their thoughts, personal insights and stories as genuine and worthy.

Research Context and Participants
SHORE is an independent, Anglican, day and boarding school for boys, located in North Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. Twenty Year 10 boys participated in our action research. They were chosen because they were high academic achievers who tended to develop competitive rather than community-focused mindsets in their senior studies.

Data Collection and Analysis
• Pre-questionnaire
• Direct observation
• Teacher and student reflective writing
• Video recordings
• Interviews – structured, semi-structured, and unstructured
• Final review questionnaire

Key Findings
• Boys were open to being vulnerable and sharing personal experiences
• The stories that were told were characterised by honesty and sincerity
• Boys were respectful in their responses to the stories shared by their peers

Conclusions
We found that the boys’ capacity to share yarns was indicative of their ability to be vulnerable, honest, and respectful. This led to an emergent culture of community in the Year 10 classroom. Sharing personal yarns proved to be a successful approach in giving the boys a voice and helping them feel like they belong and are worthy; one of the most crucial aspects of our jobs as teachers.

Key Readings