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Youth worker perceptions of abused young women

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YOUTH WORKER PERCEPTIONS OF ABUSED YOUNG WOMEN

BY

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ABSTRACT

Youth workers across Australia are coming into contact with young women who have been abused. However the nature of that contact, and the ways in which youth workers are responding to these young women is not known. The aim of this study is to determine how youth workers in the metropolitan area of Perth perceive and act upon issues of abuse faced by the young women using their services.

The study draws upon literature dealing with issues of abuse facing children and young people. Within the study issues such as the problems arising from trying to define abuse are examined, as are the theories used by practitioners to describe and explain why abuse occurs within our society.

Feminist theories of abuse and work with young women are offered as the basic framework of the study. The technique of gathering data is also set within a feminist framework, involving 15 youth workers in a process of discussion and debate on issues surrounding young women and abuse and youth work practice with young women.

The study found that youth workers are prepared to support young women who have been abused, but that this support varies according to the consciousness, skills, confidence

and experience of individual workers. The focus of service provision in the majority of cases lies with young men, so the needs of abused young women using youth services are often not seen as a priority. Constraints of a work nature also impact strongly on the amount of time and energy that youth workers are able to give the young women with whom they have contact.

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signature.

Date.....3.11.92.....

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background and outline of the Study

There is mounting evidence to suggest that youth workers across Australia are coming into contact with a substantial number of young women who have been abused.

A national inquiry into homelessness conducted by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission for example found that "physical and sexual abuse are major factors motivating many children and young people to leave home" (1989, p. 90). An information service for young women in Melbourne which gave evidence to the Inquiry said that 80 - 90% of its weekly enquiries came from young women who stated that they wanted to leave home because of some form of emotional, physical and sexual abuse. Similarly, in a study conducted in Western Australia by White, Underwood & Omelczuk (1991), it was found that youth workers are encountering young women who have been abused as part of their daily practice, and that much of the abuse experienced by these young women occurs within the home or on the street.

However, what is not evident from these studies, is how youth workers are responding to the young abused women with whom they come into contact.

The focus of youth service provision historically has rested upon reforming and containing the behaviour of young

working class males (Nava 1984; Maunders, 1984; White, 1990). The focus of youth service provision in more recent times has continued to rest with young men. A study conducted in Western Australia by Delahunt (1991) found that the majority of young people using drop-in centres were male, and that young women were largely marginalized within these services. The issue of youth service provision focusing upon young men has implications for how the needs of abused young women can be met within youth services.

Feminists practising in youth work have highlighted the marginalization of women in youth services; developing practices and methods that question the social construction of gender (Nava, 1984; Spence, 1990). In Western Australia some attention has been focused on young women's issues by youth workers in the field, however, this work has been fragmented, under-resourced and not documented (Delahunt, 1991). 'Anti-sexist' work, or youth work that challenges sexist attitudes and assumptions in mixed settings, has been the exçeption rather than the rule in youth service provision in Western Australia.

Youth work as a field of practice has not attained professional status, and is characterized by low salaries, poor working conditions and uncertain funding arrangements. This situation is very different to the many other professional groups that deal with issues of child abuse and neglect in their daily practice. Youth workers are

subject to a range of bureaucratic, political, policy and resource constraints (White, 1990). Most youth agencies are tied to government funding, and it is important to consider the nature and effect of this relationship on what youth workers are able to do, and expected to do in practice. These issues, and those outlined above, will be developed within Chapter 2 of the study.

It is also useful to draw upon the substantial body of literature that has developed around practitioner understandings and responses to child abuse. Professionals involved in cases of child abuse and protection include welfare workers, police officers, doctors, lawyers, women's refuge workers, sexual assault counsellors, psychiatrists, psychologists and academics. Some of the major issues of concern to practitioners across the various occupational groups include: the on-going challenges of defining the different forms of abuse; problems with determining the extent of abuse; differing interpretations as to why abuse occurs; and the subsequent impact of intervention by practitioners. In the youth work field knowledge of these issues have not been given full consideration.

The basic characteristics of child abuse as reflected in the literature to date include the following elements:

> physical abuse - children being beaten or battered, scalded or burnt:

emotional abuse - repeated psychological ill-treatment or mental cruelty;

sexual abuse - children being involved in sexual activities for the gratification of an older person;

neglect - children being uncared-for, under-fed, with their basic needs not being attended to.

Accurate records of the extent of all forms of abuse are not kept within Australia because definitions of abuse vary from state to state, and reporting of abuse is not mandatory in all states and territories. According to Hamory (1980, p. 33): "the unpalatable but not unexpected truth is that no one is able to estimate the incidence of child abuse in Australia". However child abuse has been recognized as a huge phenomenon requiring attention.

The 'discovery' of child abuse as an issue requiring intervention is relatively recent. Within Australia, the existence of child abuse was officially acknowledged in most states from the mid 1960s with the advent of government services and legislation (Boss, 1986). The focus of professional concern began with the recognition of the physical abuse and neglect of children. During the 1980s this concern spread to the sexual abuse of children, with

much of this recognition being due to the work of the women's movement (Carter, 1986).

The sexual abuse of children has highlighted the vulnerability of young women as a group in society. This is clearly evident from studies undertaken concerning sexual abuse. A retrospective study conducted in Australia by Goldman & Goldman (1986) (cited in Child Sexual Abuse Task Force, 1987, p. 49) found that more than one in four women surveyed and one in eleven men, reported experiences of sexual abuse before the age of 17 years, that 90% of the offenders were male, and that half of the experiences reported by girls occurred when 12 years or under.

In a study conducted by Russell (1984, p. 194), it was found that: "over one-quarter of female children have experienced sexual abuse before the age of 14, and well over one-third have had such an experience by the age of 18 years". She also concluded that the highest percentage of first incestuous abuse experiences occurred within the 10-14 age group. When we consider that the majority of young people with whom youth services are coming into contact are between the ages of 12 and 17 years (White, Omelczuk & Underwood, 1990), it would seem that sexual abuse is a significant issue affecting many of those young women using youth services.

Young women interviewed as part of a study of girls in care in New South Wales, expressed the necessity for

> ...services and individuals to be sensitive to their own needs, their family situations and the effects of violence. Agencies that provide services need to be aware of the difficulties of disclosing violence or taking action to remedy a situation, and the impact or possible consequences of disclosure on the girls themselves. (Womens Co-ordination Unit, 1986, p. 93-94)

The issues raised by the young women in the study point to workers needing to have an understanding of the impact of violence in the lives of young women, and the impact of any interventions considered. It is important therefore to give an overview of the on-going effects of abuse on young women, and the types of interventions used by practitioners in dealing with cases of abuse. These areas, and those outlined above will be considered as part of Chapter 3 of the study.

The study is based within a feminist framework, which gives a context to the way that material is presented throughout the study, and fundamentally affects how the study should be conducted. Chapter 4 outlines feminist approaches to doing research, and critiques of established research traditions. The data gathering process involves youth

workers in an on-going dialogue and debate about their perceptions of abuse as these impact on the young women using their services.

Chapter 5 provides an overview of the results from the data gathering process; while Chapter 6 presents an analysis and discussion of these results.

Conclusion

It has been established that youth workers are dealing with young women who have been abused in the home or on the street. However, what is not evident from studies conducted to date is the nature of this contact, the understanding of workers of the issue of abuse as it impacts on young women using their services, and the types of interventions used by these workers.

The report by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (1989) highlighted the need to improve the level and quality of services offered to young people who are victims of abuse. This report was specifically concerned with agencies dealing with homeless young people. Youth agencies dealing with young people experiencing abuse and still living at home however, is an area that has not received any attention. This study therefore, will focus upon workers from those agencies in Western Australia who are dealing with young people still living in their home

environments. Agencies funded under the Youth Services Programme in the Department for Community Services in 1990, fit this criteria.

CHAPTER 2

YOUTH WORK AND YOUNG WOMEN

Introduction

As part of their daily practice, youth workers across Australia are encountering young women who have been abused. In a study conducted in Western Australia by White et al. (1991), it was found that young women using youth services face issues of violence in the home and on the street. Over 100 youth workers from agencies across the state were surveyed. Those workers in contact with between 25-49% young women reported two cases of suspected or known incest per month, four cases of parent assault per month, two cases of spouse assault per month, and ten complaints against police treatment per month.

These figures however, need to be understood within the context of youth service provision which has traditionally been aimed at young men. According to Delahunt (1991), the needs and interests of young women using drop-in services in Western Australia for example, are subordinate to those of the young men using those services. The reasons why youth service provision has focused on young men historically, and continues to focus on young men, has to do with the visibility and threat often posed by groups of working class young men in society (White, 1990).

Young women on the other hand, have not been perceived by society as a threat in the same way as particular groups of young men. When young women do come to the attention of the

authorities, it is usually because of their sexual behaviour rather than criminal behaviour (Omodei, 1981). These young women are seen to be in need of care and control; reflecting how young women's lives are regulated to a much greater extent than the lives of young men. There are expectations placed upon young women by their families to play a role in the domestic sphere; expectations not placed in the same way upon young men (Nava, 1984; Spence, 1990). Part of the reason that youth services have not had as much contact with young women has been because of the limitations placed upon the lives of young women. However, this is only part of the reason.

The nature of youth services in Australia

A number of researchers explore the development of youth services as having a controlling function on the leisure time of young working class males (Maunders, 1984; Nava, 1984; Spence, 1990; White, 1990). Economic and social changes taking place in Australia and Britain in the nineteenth century led to the state becoming more prominent in the lives of the working classes. Working class men agitated against this control and the exploitation of workers, winning the right to vote and challenging poor working conditions. With this came the enactment of labour laws and education acts, preventing the exploitation of young people in the work place. Middle-class fears of the rebellion of the working classes were also activated, and

with this came the setting up of voluntary youth organizations that

> ...worked as instruments to mould the minds, values and morality of working class young people to support and invigorate capitalism and develop a harmonious relationship between the classes whilst preserving the position of the ruling elite. (Maunders, 1984, p. 14)

Reformatories and public schools were set up with the transition to adulthood being fundamentally altered; adolescence became the phase between childhood and adulthood.

The fear of rebellion can be understood within the context of the out-of-school time of working class males. The street became a meeting place for young men who became known as larrikins or delinquents. Voluntary youth organizations emerged, seeing the need to "instill a sense of discipline, obedience, and patriotism in their charges" (White, 1990, p. 166). The underlying values were paternalistic, wanting to help the 'less privileged', wanting to reinforce the work ethic and Christian commitment; trying to reform the behaviour of boys, and the morality of young women (Nava, 1984; White, 1990).

Girls were only focused upon if seen in need of domestic instruction and moral surveillance. This would happen if

they were away from home as domestic servants, or simply if they were at home and seen to need to be protected from themselves (usually meaning they were financially independent). In Britain in the late nineteenth century, some working class girls were singled out for instruction so that they could take back that knowledge to their home environment to help 'civilize' it (Nava, 1984). In Australia in the early part of the nineteenth century, girls were prepared for domestic service with the parents having to sign a bond of 100 pounds, not to remove their daughter before she reached the age of eighteen (Maunders, 1984).

The youth organizations set up in Australia often followed closely the organizations set up in Britain; most often to 'rescue the larrikins'. In Victoria organizations such as the Try Society, the Gordon Institute and the Melbourne Newsboys' Society were set up for boys in the late nineteenth century. Other organizations that were established were the uniformed movements: the Boys Brigade, the Scouts, and the Guides. The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the Rural Youth Movement were also established around the same time. Here we have examples of organizations that actually catered for girls, but that focused upon reinforcing the traditional expectations of womanhood and femininity. Courses such as cooking and dressmaking were offered. The only youth organization to

challenge the status quo was the Eureka Youth League which was a mixed organization which had predominantly female leadership from 1942 (Maunders, 1984).

The state has played a greater role in voluntary youth agencies in recent times, particularly since rising unemployment of the 1970s. "In the 1930s the young unemployed who were not in education or training were kept off the street by agencies such as the YMCA; in the 1980s this role has fallen to a range of agencies, both government and non-government" (White, 1990, p. 170). Some agencies cater for the needs of young women, but continue with the tradition started by the Guides and the YWCA of preparing the girls as future wives and mothers. It is important to note however, that in some states of Australia, the YWCA is much more progressive in its work with young women, in that it tries to prepare women for a whole range of activities, not only traditional ones (See Szirom, 1982; YWCA of Australia, 1984; YWCA of Victoria, 1985). This brings up the on-going debate across the youth work field as to what youth work actually is; with some workers considering the work of the uniformed brigades as not youth work, but recreation work.

Youth work can be defined in terms of: the target group, (i.e., young people); specific ways of working with young people, (i.e., content of practice); and the self identity of practitioners, (i.e., consciousness related to a

specific field of practice) (White, Omelczuk & Underwood, 1991). This definition gives broad parameters within which to explore the nature of youth work. Within these parameters however, one must consider differences in age, gender, ethnicity, experience, and educational background of the workers. Also to be taken into account is where people work from, whether it be non-government or government agencies, volunteer or paid work, the nature of funding arrangements; where they are located, whether in the city or country; the focus of the work, whether it be drop-in or accommodation based for example; the worker's ideological position; the processes used, whether they be hierarchical or co-operative; the aims of the work, whether they be character building or political education for example; and the young people themselves, whether they be young women or men, their ethnicity and cultural background, students or unemployed (White et al. 1991).

Over the last twenty years youth work has shifted its focus from recreation to social welfare issues such as unemployment and homelessness. With this shift in focus, the content of youth work practice has changed, following the decreasing material circumstances of many young people. Youth workers therefore, deal with most areas of concern to young people. For example an accommodation worker will focus on securing shelter for the young person in question, whilst also dealing with issues such as sexuality, addiction and income. Their approach then, is generalist in

nature. Workers focusing exclusively on recreation for example may not actually be considered to be youth workers because their focus is essentially on only one part of a young person's life. According to Foreman (1987), simply providing activities is not youth work.

> There is, in fact, a fundamental incompatibility between the roles of youth worker and redcoat in that the former requires an appreciation of the social and political influences that affect the situation of young people and the latter only the presence of young people themselves (p. 12).

(A 'redcoat' is someone who provides activities). Feminist approaches to youth work are based upon drawing attention to, and challenging the social and political influences affecting the situation of young women.

Youth work and young women

A feminist approach to youth work would consider the needs of young women in the service or local area as being paramount. According to Dominelli & McLeod (1989, p. 23) work with women should focus upon:

> ...identifying the specific ways in which women experience their existence: drawing people's attention to the lack of resources, power and emotional

> fulfillment which hold women down; exposing the social relations and social forces responsible for creating this state of affairs; and placing the plight of women firmly on the agenda for social change.

This view incorporates how a particular problem actually impacts on the women involved. A feminist approach starts from the experience of women in order to understand the problem as it affects them; using the processes of consciousness raising to transform these understandings into social action. This approach would fall under a radical youth work approach. According to Nava (1984) and White (1990), the main political divisions amongst youth workers is between liberals and radicals. The liberal view predominates, and is closely associated with maintaining the economic, legal and political structures in society; favouring control and hierarchical forms of working and organizing. The radical approach on the other hand, is based upon working towards fundamental change in the way society operates.

Spence (1990) believes that feminist intervention in youth work has two aims: (a) to examine how youth services exclude and marginalize women, and (b), to question the social construction of gender, and developing practices and methods to do this. The second aim mirrors the approach to work with women outlined by Dominelli & McLeod (1989) above. The fact that Spence is referring to work with young

women does not call for a change in strategy, rather, the commonality of oppression faced by women is central to a feminist approach. The situation or context within which individual women find themselves needs to be explored. Issues of class, racism, sexuality, disability and ageism need to be challenged within groups of young women, and within the Women's Movement itself.

Nava (1984) distinguishes three types of feminist work with girls. What could also be said of these types of work is that they reflect some of the differences that span across feminist thought; differences which will not be explored within the context of this study. Most interactions with young women will contain elements of all three, but the delineation of the three types gives us an idea of the differences in ways of working with young women. The first type of work focuses upon access and interaction. This is about working with girls around their interests, whatever they may be. It could be doing cooking and make-up for example. Feminists who use this approach defend its validity by saying that the important thing is to involve the girls, however that may be, and to encourage them to make use of the resources on hand. The relationship between the girls and the workers is important, and this type of work tries to enhance the confidence and independence of the young women.

The second type of work with young women concerns getting the girls involved in, and encouraging and allowing access to traditional boys activities. This could mean playing rugby or going motorcycling or whatever. The rationale is that by involving girls in these activities the situations can be used to challenge traditional male and female roles.

The third way of working with young women is about challenging inequalities based on gender, which is similar to approaches outlined by Dominelli & McLeod (1989) and Spence (1990). This work involves consciousness raising, political and social education and can take the form of workshops and activities. I would see this third type of working with young women most akin to feminist practice as I understand it, while incorporating the other types of work as tools to achieve the same end.

Youth work has the flexibility to allow for the development of different ways of working with young women, but at present youth work can, and does, exclude girls because of the way youth services have evolved and are set up. According to Nava (1984), the fact that youth services are voluntary and not compulsory (i.e., like school) actually reinforces girls being discriminated against. She comments:

> But it is not only that boys monopolize facilities, that girls are uninterested in the available provision or are made to feel unwelcome; it is also that parents

> are able to forbid the attendance of their daughters at clubs and insist that they stay at home. (p. 24)

This links into two areas that need attention as they impact on young women's use of youth services. Firstly, that the lives of young women are much more closely controlled than young men; and secondly, that the development of youth services has concentrated on young men.

Nava (1984) and Spence (1990) highlight the importance of the relationship between working class young women and men and their families, but that the impact of this relationship differs according to gender. Young women are expected to pick up on their role as obedient daughters and future role as dutiful wives. Young men do not have such expectations placed upon them and find their leisure time much more their own. Girls are seen to need to attract a suitable male partner, yet if they are open about their sexuality they are seen to be in need of care and control. Girls have expectations about where they can go and what time to be home, and have "a keen sense of the significance for the future of present behaviour" (Hudson, 1983, p. 8). Usually their presence is demanded at home. (Higgins, 1989). On the other hand, boys that are out and about publicly are not seen as a problem to themselves; rather, they are often seen as problems for public concern. With so much of the abuse of young women occurring within the

family home, it is indeed a problematic situation for many that they are expected to spend so much time there.

"For young women, the period of youth is often experienced as one of restriction and repression" (Spence, 1990, p. 74-75). Not only are young women's movements monitored closely, their sexual relationships are also 'controlled' by virtue of their reputation. In a study of one hundred young women's views on school, friendship, marriage and the future, Lees (1986) found an area of concern to the young women was the double standard of sexual morality faced by them. A boy's sexual reputation is enhanced by his experience, whereas a girl's is tarnished.

Lees (1986) points to the language used by young men to control the sexual behaviour of young women. Words such as 'slag' or 'slut' are used in a derogatory fashion to describe young women; words which have no male equivalent. She comments on how often young women would talk about their sexual encounters as something that just happened to them, not something that they consciously chose. This could amount to rape, as she points out, but the scenario usually involves other factors. The young men seem to fall into treating the young women either as 'the virgin' or 'the whore'; wanting to make conquests, yet wanting also to treat the girls as friends. Although, once the young woman has sexual encounters (that may amount to rape) she can quickly fall into the 'slag' category. Lees cites this as

the reason why so few women report rape; and that these sort of encounters are the everyday and taken-for-granted experiences of young women; they are "extensions of the normal oppressive structure of sexual relations" (p. 26). The young women are not allowed to explore their sexuality without destroying their reputation, and putting themselves at risk of physical sexual abuse. The taken-for-granted part of the scenario is the daily verbal abuse and expectations put upon the young women. These sorts of interactions take place constantly within most youth centres.

How workers interpret such things as homelessness, racism, sexism, and class issues will depend on how they see these things or whether they see them at all. To enhance the status of young women in western society specifically, and to challenge the abuse perpetrated against young women in our society, requires a youth work approach that enters into the realm of political education, examining the role of power in all relationships. What this also requires on the part of the worker is a commitment to self awareness and personal change. An understanding of gender issues is crucial; not only as gender impacts on the work we do with young people, but our awareness of gender as it plays out in our daily relationships with other workers, management, and other people within our community.

Without this gender awareness or consciousness, there is a danger that any youth work done with young women could reinforce the stereotypical images of what a young woman should be. It could also reinforce the notion that violence against young women is an acceptable part of their everyday lives. Yet gender awareness is not commonplace across all youth workers in the field in Western Australia (Delahunt, 1991). Youth work with girls that challenges traditional ways of looking at what being a girl in this society means, does not happen very often.

The invisibility of young women

Another part of the scenario as to why youth work with girls is not commonplace amongst agencies concerns the extent to which young women come into contact with youth services. Young women can usually be contacted through school, but when they leave school it is a different matter. A number of women doing research and various workers with young women have commented on the difficulty in contacting young women after they leave school, and on the invisibility of young women in western society generally (Holden, 1989; Little, 1984; Young, 1985).

Marshall & Borrill (1984) discuss the invisibility of young women, both physically and psychologically. They attempted to contact young women for the purposes of research, finding two groups through institutional settings, and the

third group through a group of young men with whom they already had contact. The third group was made up of girlfriends of the boys, and the startling thing was that it took a year before the boys brought their girlfriends along to the group. The young men rarely talked about their partners or called them by name. It took the researchers nine months before they learnt the name of one young man's wife, and this was a young man with whom they had a fairly good relationship. They comment that the "problems that we encountered in contacting young women made us appreciate why so much research has been done with all male groups and with captive audiences in school and higher education" (Marshall & Borrill, 1984, p. 36).

We find that young women are also invisible within youth services generally. This has to do with the development of youth services historically, which is linked with the ways in which girls and boys are conditioned in western society. Young women do not seem to have a threatening public image like some groups of young men do. Therefore, youth services do not often recognize the needs of young women as pressing, and they slip into the background very easily.

In drop-in centres the boys lay claim to the territory and ensure that the girls don't have the chance to speak out and act independently, so as not to disturb what the boys consider feminine and masculine roles. "In this culture outside the home, girls are observers of boy's activity and

boys are observers and *guardians* of girls' passivity" (Nava, 1984, p. 11). And it is usually within a group of male boys that this control is exercised.

In a study conducted by Holden (1989), she found that internalized beliefs that girls hold about what is appropriate behaviour for young women, served to reinforce their invisibility. The young women she interviewed using a youth club, considered the only space available to them to be the toilets. They enjoyed sitting around and talking together, and would not get involved with table-tennis, snooker and pool because it was considered 'boy's stuff'. The only dilemma was, that the boys would intrude on the girls in the toilet, leaving them no space of their own at all.

Young women move from accessibility to invisibility for a number of reasons. Often when a young woman starts going out with a young man she stops going out socially, and becomes immersed in the relationship. Dobash & Dobash (1979) found in their study of violence against wives that after marriage the woman was usually left at home with her social life diminished, while the man continued on with his social life. Marshall & Borrill (1984) similarly found that the young women would stop seeing their friends, even though their boyfriends went out regularly. There was an expectation that they should remain at home. At this point they noted the difficulty in contacting the girls.

Another reason for the invisibility of young women is their 'disappearance' upon becoming unemployed. Then the young women may be found helping to run, or running a household, visible only to their family and neighbours (Marshall & Borrill, 1984, p. 38).

Spence (1990) also comments on the difficulty of contacting young women after they have left school. A drop-in service may not be relevant to young women at this point in their lives, and to contact them it may be necessary to find them in their home environment. This approach, according to Spence (1990), means that as workers with young women we need to relate to their "actual material situation" (p. 91). One way of doing this is through detached work, and this will probably mean becoming involved with older women and children. It also means becoming involved with local issues affecting the young women in their environment such as poverty, housing, and lack of community resources. This sort of approach again emphasizes the commonality of women's oppression.

Another approach to working with young women, according to Spence (1990), is to use building space usually reserved for 'mixed setting youth work'. Space needs to be made specifically for young women within the youth service, allowing them access to resources and power to direct those resources. According to Holden (1989, p. 25):

> The concept of space, physical space, the power attached to the use of space, who defines space and how space has become defined in terms of gender, are questions that need to be addressed when developing youth work practice.

Half of the workers interviewed for this study work in drop-in centres, so the issue of space is an important one. Spence (1990) emphasizes being flexible with the space usually controlled by the young men and involving the community to a greater extent. She suggests opening the building only to young women at certain times, and staffing the service with women. This approach however, would need the support of other workers and management (often just to keep the boys out), and should be seen as a long term strategy.

Other suggested ways of working with girls involve a variety of strategies including one day events, week-end events, regular evening sessions for limited periods, or full-time projects, such as suggested above. Summer programmes or festivals could also be considered ways of attracting and involving young women (Young, 1985). The most successful structure for work with girls has been the small group, which complements the tendency of women to socialize in small groups. Women working with small groups of young women have found that they have not needed to keep

'control' of the group in the same way as when working with boys; leading to a fuller realization of the group's potential.

Most agencies work with a mixed population of young women and men, with young men dominating the services. In a study conducted in Western Australia by White et al. (1990), it was found that young women make up 36% of the drop-in centre population, with the numbers of young women using street work services making up 38%. What the study did not determine was the amount of time young women and men spent at these services, and how often they used them. Several workers commented that they frequently saw young men much more often than the young women.

Anti-sexist work with young people

Anti-sexist work is "youth work practice which addresses itself to the effects of the many manifestations of sexism in young women's lives" (Yeung, 1986, p. 6). Anti-sexist work provides opportunities for young women, while challenging sexist attitudes and assumptions in mixed settings. Those agencies that have attempted work with girls in mixed settings have encountered a range of difficulties.

A statutory youth club in Britain, open for three nights a week, one of which was a girl's night, experienced very

severe problems with violent reactions from the local boys against the girl's night. The club was situated in an area notorious for violence and particularly, racist violence. Mary Kendall, a part-time youth worker with the club, recalled some of the incidents of violence perpetrated against the girl's night:

> They've been fairly organized over the last 5/6 weeks, sometimes they've come down with weapons. Sharpening sticks, accumulating boulders and various things. Other times it's mainly insults and mild assaults, if you like, pushing and shoving and then on two or three of the worst evenings they've actually done things like try to knock down the doors with 10 feet long poles, smashing windows and generally being pretty frightening and intimidating to the girls and women workers....Obviously you can't leave a situation where windows are being smashed and girls who are coming into the club are being hurt, so we now have two or three women on the door all the time and these women actually come under an awful lot of fire. We've boulders, slabs of concrete and sticks thrown at us. Our cars have been scratched up. All our energy is having to go at the moment towards dealing with the boys, which is exactly what they want. ("Violence: a part of the job," 1983, p. 10)

The level of violence in this situation is quite extreme, but not unexpected. In an article on setting up a girls' night by the Fulham Girls Project (1984), the authors state quite plainly that there may be some strong resistance from the boys when trying to set up a girl's night. They encourage workers to work out a strategy in advance for dealing with the boys' hostility and aggression.

This is not the only area of violence faced by women workers and young women using youth services however. Wolverhampton (1981) explores the interplay between power and violence in the work setting. She believes that the existence of unequal power relationships necessitates the use of violence. She sets out five areas of violence played out in the youth work setting from her experience. Firstly, actual violence towards a worker from young people. Secondly, actual violence towards young people from a worker. Thirdly, emotional violence played out against young people by the workers in the form of power games. Fourthly, power games played out against the workers by the young people. And lastly, violence of male staff towards female staff, either in the form of sexual harassment or sexism generally.

If, for example, a male worker has not looked at the ways in which he is violent in the context of everyday living, he may play out his violence within the youth work setting. It could mean that some of his actions are actually

threatening to the women workers and girls using that particular service. In this way, he is using power over others, which strengthens his position as 'the worker', not only the man.

The way that physical violence is handled within the youth work setting can reinforce the stereotyping of male and female behaviour. If the male workers always 'take over' difficult situations involving aggression, this will undermine the position of women workers and their way of handling situations; a situation I am quite familiar with in my work history. Unless male workers are very conscious of their own sexism, it makes it very difficult for women workers attempting anti-sexist work with young women and young men.

For example, a woman worker may be attempting to work with girls within a mixed setting. She may have established a girl's night in the drop-in centre in which she is working. The boys who also use the centre may be giving them all a very hard time. If her male co-worker colludes with the boys when they tell sexist jokes, or agrees that they should have their own boy's night without tackling the issues of their use of space, he is in fact undermining the work being done with the girls. A woman worker may find herself quite alone in attempting anti-sexist work, which will make her job that more difficult and isolating.

Little (1984) points to the need for self preservation in this type of work, as "working to change people's long and deeply held ideas is a complex and difficult task" (p. 9). If workers voice their displeasure or distaste every time a sexist joke is made, or a derogatory term is used against women, they may find themselves quickly alienated from the young people with whom they are working. It takes a lot of skill and experience and confidence to continuously challenge sexist behaviour and not become isolated in the process.

There are a number of layers of complexity in understanding and challenging sexism within a youth service; layers involving the relationship between woman workers and young women and young men; male workers and young women and young men; the relationship between female and male workers; and their relationship with management. Also adding to these layers is the position of the workers within the organization. All of this must then be understood within the specific context of each working situation. In the context of this study, drop-in centre work impacts differently on the situation of the worker as does street work. However a commonality between both is that most non-government youth work agencies are tied to government funding which can act as a major constraint on what they can or cannot do.

> Always looking over their shoulders at the threat of having their funding cut off, these agencies walk a tightrope: on the one hand trying to meet objectives related to grass-root demands, and on the other attempting to accommodate the political and policy imperatives of the government in power. (White, 1990, p. 179)

Challenging sexism and violence against young women is a long term project. If agencies are tied to one year funding as they are in Western Australia, it becomes very difficult to show 'results' within a one year period. Also as many services are under resourced, it is difficult for one worker working in isolation with many young people to even notice the young women, let alone do any constructive work with them around the issues of abuse.

Conclusion

Youth service provision can focus on the needs of young women to a much greater extent than at present. This means however, that youth workers must attempt to gain a greater understanding of the issues surrounding gender and the way that power is used in our society, and integrate this understanding into their practice. In this way, the issues facing young women will be highlighted, and attempts can then be made to address these issues.

To gain an understanding of the issue of abuse as it impacts on the lives of young women however, we must first explore how the term abuse is understood and used within a broader context. The following chapter will examine the issue by drawing upon the views and strategies used by practitioners across a number of occupations disciplines in encountering victims of abuse. The common term used to describe the phenomenon of the abuse of young people and children in our society, is 'child abuse'.

CHAPTER 3

CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF ABUSE

Introduction

Practitioners from a diverse range of occupations, including doctors, lawyers, police officers, refuge workers and academics, have been dealing with the issue of child abuse in some depth for a number of years. During the 1960s came a recognition of the problem of the physical abuse and neglect of children by government services in Australia (Boss, 1986). The women's movement then brought much recognition to the problem of child sexual abuse during the 1980s (Carter, 1986). However, child abuse as an issue within the youth work context was, until relatively recently, an area that did not receive much attention.

Since the recognition of child abuse as a social problem requiring intervention, a substantial body of literature has been generated around the issue. Debates continue to occur amongst human service practitioners as to how to best define child abuse and also how to measure it. The generally accepted categories of abuse are physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect. Within each category however, a number of definitions attempt to describe the phenomenon.

Several theories have also been developed to try to explain the causes of abuse. These theories include psychiatric perspectives which tend to focus on the abuser, labelling

them as ill and in need of treatment; to feminist perspectives which focus on the experience of women as victims of abuse, living in a society where men using their power over women is generally accepted as a 'normal' way of relating. A number of models will be set out in this chapter to allow an understanding of some of the major theories of child abuse causation. These models will be later used to assist in the analysis of the youth worker perceptions of abuse.

The ways that practitioners describe abuse and the types of interventions used are determined to some extent by their work context (Knight & Hatty, 1987). For example police officers will probably encounter situations of domestic violence often, and so perceive the problem as a large one. Doctors on the other hand, may encounter women who have been abused but not be aware that this is the case, and underestimate the problem. According to Knight & Hatty (p. 455) however, the common link with many practitioners is that they do not recognize the gender basis of violence directed at women, with this translating "into a professional neglect of women's needs". This view will be explored at greater depth within the feminist approaches to understanding abuse.

Another issue concerning working with abused young women has to do with how practitioners determine whether a young person has been abused. A number of studies have attempted

to describe the effects of abuse, and the outward signs of these effects (Bass & Davis, 1988; Lindberg & Distad, 1985; Mouzakitis, 1984; Stiffman, 1989). In Western Australia both the Health Department and the Ministry of Education have set out guidelines for the identification and management of cases of child abuse (Health Department of Western Australia, 1989; Ministry of Education, Western Australia, 1987). Within youth work practice however, no such guidelines exist. This chapter therefore, will also address the issue of the identification of abuse and the on-going effects of abuse.

Current definitions of abuse

There are many definitions of the various forms of child abuse, both legal and operational, in existence today. It is important to note that within Australia there is no single agreed upon definition of the various forms of abuse. Hence it is impossible to give an accurate picture of incidence across the country, but there is sufficient evidence to indicate that child abuse is a huge phenomenon (Dwyer, 1989; Hamory, 1980; Scutt, 1983). An area of abuse that particularly affects young women is that of sexual abuse. Follett (1989) in describing the results of large scale surveys, comments that most victims of sexual abuse are young girls, that the onset of abuse is around 10 years of age, and that they are usually abused by a male that they know.

Statistics compiled by the Advisory and Co-ordinating Committee on Child Abuse in Western Australia cited in Follett (1989) for the 1987/88 period, show that 1199 cases of sexual abuse were reported, with 969 of these reports relating to female victims. Even though these figures reflect only the reported cases of sexual abuse in Western Australia over that period, the numbers of young women victims in the 0-19 age range are substantial.

The different forms of abuse are generally categorized under the following headings: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect. Definitions offered by the South Australian Child Protection Council (cited in Dwyer, 1989, p.2) are useful in offering a general understanding of the various forms of abuse as encountered and defined by practitioners. These are summarized in Table 3.1 (see following page).

Within each category of abuse there exist a number of different types of behaviours that go to make up the particular category, as witnessed in the definitions presented in Table 3.1.

Attempts have been made to define the specific forms of abuse (for example, sexual abuse), however no standard working definitions exist amongst researchers and practitioners (Child Sexual Abuse Task Force, 1987). The

Table 3.1

Forms of abuse

Physical abuse

Any non-accidental physical injury inflicted on a child.
This may include beatings, burns and scalds, fractures, poisoning, bruises or welts, internal injuries, shaking injuries or strangulation.

Emotional Abuse

A constant attitude or behaviour towards a child which is detrimental to or impairs the child's emotional and/or physical development.
This may take the form of scapegoating, emotional rejection, isolation, or continuing verbal abuse.

Sexual abuse

Any sexual behaviour imposed on a child.
The child is considered to be unable to alter and/or understand the perpetrator's behaviour due to his or her early stage of development and/or powerlessness in the situation. The perpetrator's position of authority and/or trust enables him or her implicitly or directly to coerce the child into sexual compliance.
Child sexual abuse involves a range of activities, including the fondling of the genital area, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a finger, penis or any other object. It includes exhibitionism and suggestive behaviour or comments.

Neglect

Any serious omission or commission by a person which jeopardises or impairs the child's physical, intellectual, or emotional development.
A child who is neglected may be considered dirty and unwashed, without appropriate supervision for extended periods of time and, therefore, may be at risk of injury or harm, constantly tired, hungry, listless, and with medical conditions related to poor hygiene.

Source: Dwyer, 1989, p. 2

definitions used to describe child sexual abuse often "work to exclude what women and girls actually experience as abusive" (Kelly, 1988, p. 66). Kelly conducted a study on the sexual violence experienced by women, allowing the women themselves to name and define their experiences of violence. She found for example, that many young women cited experiences of being assaulted in various ways by brothers, cousins, boyfriends and acquaintances; experiences which would be excluded from the most often cited definitions of child sexual abuse.

Limited definitions can often serve to conceal the points at which various forms of sexual violence merge into one another. A definition offered by Mellody (1989) illustrates clearly how an inclusive definition can account for merging behaviours. She breaks sexual abuse into four categories, these being: (a) physical/sexual abuse which concerns direct hands on activity with the child, for example, anal/ oral intercourse, child asked to masturbate adult or vise versa, hugging, kissing, fondling; (b) overt explicit sexual abuse which concerns voyeurism and exhibitionism; (c) covert sexual abuse which concerns inappropriate sexual talk with the child and giving sexual information in the extreme, as in not giving the child any or giving them the wrong information. Also an unintentional form of covert behaviour concerns a lack of sexual boundaries in the environment where the child is living; and (d), emotional sexual abuse which concerns drawing the child into the

adult relationship sphere and expecting the child to be involved emotionally and intimately with the adult.

What cannot be accounted for within this definition however, is the range of experiences that would come under the physical/sexual abuse category alone. For example Kelly (1988, p.70), in referring to her study of women and sexual violence, found that thirteen women defined their experience as incest and within these descriptions were a wide range of experiences.

A feminist analysis of sexual abuse, as in the case of the study done by Kelly (1988), allows for the victims of abuse to come up with their own definitions. Within a feminist framework, abuse and violence against women by men is an everyday occurrence, ranging from very subtle forms of abuse to very extreme forms of abuse. This means that feminist definitions of abuse will incorporate the relationship between gender and power as it impacts on women (Dominelli, 1989; MacLeod & Saraga, 1988). If abuse is defined strictly, and without reference to gender, then how women experience abuse on a daily level will not be included.

For the purposes of this study, the concept of a continuum will be used to reflect both the problems of defining the forms of abuse and the range of ways that women experience abuse (Kelly, 1988). The concept of a continuum also

reflects the power relations at work between women and men in our society, and the connectedness between everyday experiences of sexism such as being whistled at when walking down the street, with violent acts such as rape (Dominelli, 1989; Driver, 1989; Kelly, 1988).

Within this broad context, it is the experiences of young women as a group that form part of the focus of the study. Young women not only experience abuse as part of the continuum, but are often powerless when viewed as children in a society where they are the property of parents (Driver, 1989).

If we examine child abuse as a discourse, we can see that much of the definitions of what abuse actually is comes from the practitioners, rather than the victims themselves. The following section will examine practitioner perceptions of the causes of abuse and interventions flowing from those perceptions.

Models

To establish how the youth workers in the study perceive abuse and act upon issues of abuse faced by the young women using their services, it is useful to consider how other practitioners perceive abuse and the types of interventions used.

A number of studies have attempted to describe the main approaches or theories of child abuse causation, and have been drawn upon for the purposes of this study. O'Donnel & Craney (1982a) argue two approaches to child abuse causation across numerous studies, these being the psychological approach and the sociological approach. The psychological approach "sees the personal characteristics of the abuser as being the major cause of the problem" (p. 186). The sociological approach, "emphasizes environmental factors related to class position and cultural expectations which produce stress that can result in abusive behaviour" (p. 186).

Libbey & Bybee (1979) also refer to two models: one which focuses upon the psychopathology of both parent and adolescent; the other focussing upon societal factors such as stress and poverty as they contribute to abuse. Libbey & Bybee (1979) also point to a 'developmental stage' that adolescents find themselves in as contributing to their own abuse.

Sweet & Resick (1979) refer to four approaches to child abuse causation. These are a psychodynamic approach, a social learning approach, a social psychological approach, and a sociological approach. The psychodynamic approach sees that abusive parents have a defect in their character structure, and that the child in some way contributes to the abuse. Practitioners using this approach believe that

if they can describe the abusers, they will be able to catch them. The social learning approach is based on the belief that parents who abuse have themselves been abused as children. The social psychological theories focus on "the interaction between individual and environment" (p. 49). For example the psychopathic state of all individuals involved, values held, role models for violence and stress factors would be considered using this approach. Lastly, the sociological approach emphasizes the impact of social factors such as poverty, stress and cultural belief regarding violence.

Knight & Hatty (1987) on the other hand, offer a slightly different understanding of the theories used to explain the causes of child abuse. They offer the psychological model which includes social learning and psychodynamic approaches, and a feminist model. They point out that the two approaches can and do interact; and that what most studies have in common is that they obscure issues to do with gender and power.

Butt (1986) argues that the number of explanations being offered for child sexual abuse specifically, may in fact be confusing to some practitioners; and that these practitioners may be more influenced by their personal beliefs and attitudes as a result. She discusses four types of programmes designed to treat intrafamilial child sexual abuse, examples of which can be found throughout Australia.

These four models are: the medical-psychiatric model, the dysfunctional family model, the feminist family therapy model, and the socioenvironmental model.

For the purposes of this study I will concentrate on four main theories or approaches used to explain abuse, similar to those offered by Butt (1986). These are: a psychiatric approach, a sociological approach, a situational approach, and a feminist approach. These models will serve as ideal types to organize the data gathered from the youth workers, and to use as a discussion point with the youth workers participating in the study.

Youth workers in this study may use a combination of approaches to describe why child abuse occurs, or their views may fall very clearly into one approach. I will argue that if youth workers do not draw from a feminist perspective and take gender relations into account in their workplace, the needs of the young women using their services will not adequately be met. In discounting issues to do with gender, workers will inadvertently perpetuate sexism and deny the sexual violence perpetrated against young women in their everyday lives. If however, an awareness of gender is brought into the workplace, I will assume that these workers will be actively working to reject the violence perpetrated against young women in all of its forms, from the most subtle to the most extreme.

I will now give a brief overview of each of the four approaches as they appear within the discourse.

Psychiatric model

Broadly speaking, the first approach outlined by Sweet & Resick (1979) could be included under the one heading of a psychiatric approach, and this would also incorporate the psychological approach outlined by O'Donnell & Craney (1982a), and the psychopathological approach outlined by Libbey & Bybee (1979). This general approach defines the offender as "the problem", and treatment usually centres around the offender. According to Dobash & Dobash (1979), the psychiatric approach emphasizes the negative portrayal of women and is still being accepted and used uncritically within the helping professions to explain the abuse of women and children.

As mentioned previously, this approach refers to those people who abuse as mentally ill, or having defects in their personality, being somehow inadequate or deprived. "Underlying this belief in individual pathology is the implicit assumption that the legal, political, cultural, family, and economic institutions in our society contribute little or nothing to the violence" (Dobash & Dobash, 1979, p. 193). This approach relies on blaming people for their own behaviour, labelling them after the abusive behaviour

has taken place, then using them to explain why it happened.

The key areas in this approach concern 'normal' relationships between women and men; parent child relationships; the importance of early socialization; and great emphasis on the individual. Psychoanalytic ideology of the relationship between women and men is patriarchal, with any deviations from this arrangement seen as abnormal (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

Child rearing is seen as very important because the male and female roles and expectations are taught to children. If these roles and values are not passed on properly, the child may become adults with personality defects. They will need treatment, or have to have these flaws corrected so that they are not transmitted onto the next generation. Women as the primary caretakers of children then, are seen as very important in this role.

> Given the emphasis this perspective places upon the mother-child relationship and the mother's responsibility for child care, it is not difficult to see how the mother becomes defined as the cause of the child's rage, which is later transformed to child abuse, rape, war, or wife beating. According to this theory, the woman, first as mother and then as wife, becomes the primary cause of all violence, even that

> which is directed at her. (Dobash & Dobash, 1979, p. 194)

The idea that women are the cause of violence in our society, has permeated western culture (Dobash & Dobash, 1979), and is especially evident in the theories explaining child sexual abuse. Young women victims also, are often portrayed as causing their own abuse by being seductive. This explanation can be traced back to the work and influence of Sigmund Freud.

According to Ward (1984), the history of the literature concerning child sexual abuse starts with the Freudian influence. Early in his career, Freud believed his patients (mainly women), when they reported being sexually abused as young children. However according to Rush (1980), he never seemed comfortable with these findings, and only once, in 1896, spoke publicly about them. The next time he spoke about his findings, he claimed that the seduction of young girls by their fathers were actually fantasies. Miller (1984) argues that Freud did not persevere with the seduction theory, because of the disapproval that it would bring him from his peers and society at that time. Herman & Hirschman (1977) believe that Freud discounted the experiences told to him by his women patients because he was unwilling to believe the extent of incest in respectable families at that time. Whatever the reason, Freud rejected the seduction theory and came up with the

drive theory, or as it is more commonly known, the Oedipus complex.

> The seduction theory incriminated incestuous fathers, while the Oedipal theory insisted that seduction was a fantasy, an invention, not a fact - and it incriminated daughters. (Rush, 1980, p. 95)

The effect of this theory on who is to blame for child sexual abuse has been, and continues to be to some extent, quite profound (Farrelly & Sebastian, 1984; Ward, 1984). The daughters are to blame for being seductive; not the father or male care-giver who perpetrated the violence.

Ward (1984) explores the shift in emphasis within the child abuse discourse from the girl child victims in the first instance, to the individual pathology of the fathers and mothers, and finally to the emphasis on family processes. She points to practitioners being concerned mostly to excuse the fathers by establishing that they are not to blame for raping their daughters. According to Ward, attempts have been made to find characteristics common to all those men who sexually abuse children, in order to show that these men have not been able to control themselves. Other attempts have been made to show that these men are too highly sexed, or that they are passive and in fact are being manipulated by their wives.

This leads into the areas of theoretical assumptions that serve to blame the mother for 'allowing' the sexual abuse of her children. One strand of thought promoted throughout the child abuse discourse is that the mother is somehow sexually inadequate, and that brings on the sexual abuse. The mother is seen as colluding with the act of sexual abuse of her daughters. This parallels the literature on the seductive child. The other strand of thought concerns mothers being blamed for not fulfilling the role of good wife and mother. The absence of the mother is noted, especially when she is part of the work-force (Wattenberg, 1985). The mother is seen to abandon her children. She is blamed for causing the abuse, for not stopping it, and for pretending that she did not know it was happening (Ward, 1984, p. 163).

According to Wattenberg (1985):

> Recent appraisals have pointed out that a substantial portion of literature on father-daughter incest is replete with logical fallacies, built-in biases, and occasional sheer nonsense. That fragmented observations based on skewed clinical samples were accepted as doctrine that shaped practice is a serious charge against scholars in the field who purport to provide research-based knowledge as a base for practice. (p. 205)

The beliefs, attitudes and training of these practitioners impacted on their understanding and reasoning of the causes of child sexual abuse. Many of the early studies were done by conservative male medical practitioners with good credentials across their field, who would cite each other's work frequently. The populations that these practitioners chose from were not very large; it was (and still is) difficult to obtain a random sample of victims of abuse, and so generalizing from findings was difficult. With mothers being seen as responsible for nurturing and protecting children, it was an easy jump to infer their collusion in father-daughter incest (Ward, 1984; Wattenberg, 1985).

So the intervention in the case of a psychiatric model, would usually concern treating the offender. In the case of sexual abuse, the offender would be required to undertake sexual therapy, marital therapy and behaviour modification over a long period (Butt, 1986). The offender, usually male, may be treated with synthetic hormones and given aversion therapy. Attempts would be made to re-integrate the offender back into the family environment. Driver (1989, p. 45) cites examples from this century of women and children victims not being believed when reporting sexual abuse. Some she says, "were simply silenced with chemical or electroconvulsive treatment"; reflecting the power of practitioners to deny the experiences of women. Treatment for women and children victims today has shifted into the

area of family therapy, which leads us into the next model- the Situational model.

Situational model

A number of explanations of child abuse fall under the umbrella of situational approaches. One of these, the family dysfunction approach, developed as an off-shoot of family psychiatry during the late 1940s. Again the importance of the role of the mother as socializing agent is highlighted. Incest is viewed as a symptom of deeper underlying problems within the family. The family is seen to operate as a single unit within itself, and analysis confines itself to the boundaries of this unit. Again the mother is blamed for the sexual abuse of her daughters because she either: (a) withdraws sex from her husband and then ignores the relationship going on between husband and daughter; (b) she sets up the incestuous relationship and derives 'unconscious' pleasure from the interaction; (c) she is a helpless dependent herself; or (d), she is a victim of abuse herself.

Family therapy was established to protect the child, but by making all family members responsible for any dysfunction, it can serve to protect the offending adult. A practitioner currently working in family centred programme in Western Australia commented:

> All family members are seen as contributing to the disturbed family dynamics which in turn are seen as responsible for the abuse. Everybody's behaviour is seen as being significantly influenced and even caused by the behaviour of other members of the family so it is not appropriate or possible to lay primary responsibility on any individual member including the offender. (Kamalesh, 1989, p. 31)

In cases of sexual abuse the issues of power amongst family members are effectively blurred (Driver, 1989). Also, when adults are expected to take prime responsibility for the abuse, the mother is implicated as well as the father. If the father has committed sexual abuse against his daughter, the responsibility that should be taken by him for the action is effectively shifted. And if the therapy is successful, the father once again takes on the role of head of the family, the mother once more takes on her role as wife, and the child becomes the responsibility of the mother (Jacobs, 1990; Walby, 1985). This process can be seen to serve two functions according to Driver (1989). That is, an ideological as well as therapeutic function.

Also under the umbrella of the Situational approach is a very common explanation of child abuse, concerning the cyclical nature of violence within the family. That is, that people who have been abused as children will grow up to be child abusers. This is a very commonly offered

explanation for child abuse, which once established, is relatively meaningless. Gelles & Straus (1979) point to this notion of the cycle of abuse having taken on a very deterministic flavour, so that people think that all abused children will be abusive parents, and those children not abused when young will not abuse when they get older.

NiCarthy, Fuller & Stoops (1987) refer to this approach when discussing the effect of role modelling on violence within the family. "Children who observe problems solved by manipulation, intimidation, verbal abuse, or physical violence do not develop other problem-solving skills" (p. 212). According to Edgar (1988), reasoning and conflict management techniques do not typify the average home. The young people who grow up in these environments often bring this learning into their adult relationships. However, it is important to remember that some men who batter did not grow up in violent families. Also, that women who grew up in violent families are no more represented amongst battered women than those who did not (NiCarthy, Fuller & Stoops, 1987).

Russell (1984), when referring to sexual abuse, points out that many more victims of sexual abuse are young girls, and so the theory of abusers growing up to be abusers should result in many more women sexually abusing children than men. This is definitely not the case; as it is mainly the boy victims that grow up to become child molesters. So the

theory does not explain why it only happens in some instances, or why more women do not become perpetrators.

Other theories explaining child sexual abuse involve the inhibitions of the perpetrators being lessened due to a number of factors. These factors may include: the perpetrator not being a blood relative of the victim; a lack of bonding between the perpetrator and the victim; incest being regarded as more normal within some cultures; the use of alcohol in lessening inhibitions; crowded families with many children; opportunities for the perpetrator to be alone with the victim; and finally, families living in isolation, making it easier for abuse to happen (Russell, 1984).

The interventions stemming from the Situational approach centre mainly around work with families. Within this approach all family members must take some responsibility for the dysfunction within the family, and the ultimate goal is to rehabilitate the family.

Both Psychiatric and Situational approaches focus on individual pathology or family centred pathology. They concentrate on the individual and the circumstances, rather than on the impact of broader society on offenders. The Sociological approach on the other hand, focuses upon societal and structural factors.

Sociological model

Many studies that fall under the Sociological model do not take issues of gender and power into account, and thus it is important to discuss these issues separately. The main criticism of the Sociological model comes from the fact that practitioners using this approach deny the impact of gender relations on situations of abuse.

Broadly speaking, this approach is distinct from the psychiatric approach already outlined in that the psychiatric approach reflects a very common assumption that society should function as an integrated whole. Everybody within a given society is seen to have a given function, and if everyone performs this function smoothly, the system will continue to adapt and change. Anyone not fitting into this state of equilibrium is seen as deviant (Cuff & Payne, 1979, p. 40). Child abuse is defined as lying within particular individuals who are dysfunctional or 'deviant; the underlying theme is that something of an emotional or psychiatric nature is inherently wrong with the abusers. They would need to be treated to 'fix' the problem so that the role of the family as a socializing agent could continue.

A sociological approach on the other hand, views the problem of child abuse as a social one, rather than located within the individual. An implicit assumption of a

Sociological approach is that "individual behaviour reflects the beliefs and values of the wider society, internalized in the course of formal and informal socialization" (Butt, 1986, p. 24).

Gelles & Straus (1979) fit within this approach in considering the effect of class, status and stress on violence against children within the home. They found that social status makes a difference in the probability of violence toward children, with the rate of violence in the homes of blue collar workers being higher than that of white collar workers. When discussing the impact of stress on the severity of violence, they point to the fact that people who are from low socioeconomic backgrounds probably experience more and different kinds of stress than those on higher socioeconomic levels. The study did not take into account the impact of gender; with the sex of the abusing parent being overlooked.

The issue of definition is important to consider once again at this point, because of the impact of class bias in many studies. For example, many investigators or practitioners from a middle class background may study people from working class backgrounds with an inherent bias in their outlook. This will affect how they construct and report on the problem.

O'Donnell & Craney (1982a) point to class related stress, in that studies have revealed many of the stresses associated with poverty are also associated with child abuse. Also, families above the poverty line bear the stress of maintaining their position, while men from affluent families have the resources to be able to escape from the stress.

Gil (1971) discusses how the social structure impacts upon individuals, and how poverty, racism, and inadequate resources are caused by the social structure. He sees the abuse of children as a multidimensional problem incorporating public sanctioned use of violence against children; the different child rearing practices in various class and cultural groups; and the impact of the environment on the individual. He recommends prevention through educating young people about attitudes about child rearing; changing legal sanctions against the use of force against children; elimination of poverty; and the redistribution of wealth.

Interventions following from the Sociological model point to pro-active or preventative approaches. Butt (1986) discusses both short term and long term strategies. In the case of child sexual abuse, the short term strategy is to protect the child by removing the offending adult from the home. Long term strategies may include educating the community on the rights of children, the rights and

responsibilities of parents, and challenging accepted uses of violence in society. A number of strategies may be implemented depending on the focus of a particular programme.

The last model to be presented is the Feminist model, which also emphasizes a pro-active approach.

Feminist model

Feminist analysis begins with the oppression and subordination of women as a group. This oppression takes place within the context of a male-dominated society, or through the patriarchy. According to Emetchi & Summerfield (1986, p. 203):

> Patriarchy is the world view that seeks to create and maintain control over females, that is, it is a system of male supremacy. In contemporary society, men as a class dominate women as a class. This dominance is maintained by men's organization of and control over, the structural systems that constitute the society we exist in (i.e.,) health, legal, welfare, educational, economic, judicial, religious and familial systems.

A feminist analysis locates the problem in terms of the unequal power relationships that exist within our society between men and women. These relationships are played out

on the societal level with men as a group having power over women as a group. This is reflected in relationships between men and women within the family. Within the context of the patriarchal family, men are seen as the head of the household, going out into the public sphere to work, and in control of the resources. Women are economically dependent on men, and are expected to play the role of carer and nurturer of the children within the domestic sphere. The women and children are quite powerless within this structure. The isolation and privacy of the family means that a lot can happen within the walls of the family home that no-one knows about. According to O'Donnell & Craney (1982b) the taboo on incest within the family is so strong "not because incest is 'unnatural' but because, given the structure of the family it is only too natural" (p. 155). Sexual abuse is about power: men over women, and parents over children.

Feminists have found that the experience of the individual woman is often shared by many other women, making what were previously personal issues social and political. This is very much the case with child sexual abuse. Much of the attention brought to the issue of child sexual abuse came from women survivors (MacLeod & Saraga, 1988) challenging the silence surrounding child sexual abuse and the public perceptions that the nuclear family was a safe haven for women and children.

The issue of gender is inextricably linked to the issue of power in feminist analyses. What has been revealed by feminist analyses is that in cases of sexual abuse, the majority of perpetrators are male, whilst their victims are primarily young girls. Feminism has exposed the gender specific nature of child sexual abuse (Dominelli, 1989).

The interplay of the various approaches can be found in the example of a feminist reinterpretation of family therapy, combining a psychological approach with a sociological one. A feminist reinterpretation of family dysfunction theory places the dysfunction in the structural arrangements "that separate the sources of emotional and social power into feminine and masculine realms of control within the nuclear family" (Jacobs, 1990, p. 504). Chodorow (1982) cited in Jacobs (1990), points to the rigid division of labour within the patriarchal family, where nurturing and child care are left to mothers. This has led to the creation of a separate sphere of female responsibility, "on the basis of which mothers are judged to be either good or bad, success or failures, both by society and by the child" (p. 508). The primary issue revolves around the structures in patriarchal society that reinforce the separate roles of husband and wife.

Practitioners at Dympna House, a community-based incest centre, use the 'Power Theory' as a framework to challenge child sexual abuse in both the short term and the long

term. This theory uses two concepts of power, these being: (a) structural power and (b) personal power. Structural power encompasses institutionalized power which is legitimated forms of power over others. In the case of child abuse, males and adults can legitimately misuse their power over others; men have the potential to misuse their power over women, and women and men have the potential to misuse their power over children. Personal power relates to power within the self, or the inner-strength within individuals. The task is to promote the full development of each individual. This includes empowering individuals and families to develop their own personal power; recognizing that this may involve a painful process of discovery. The 'Power Theory' provides "a conceptual framework which serves as a basis for not only casework, but also for socio-political change and prevention as well" (Walby, Clancy, Emetchi & Summerfield, 1989, p. 101). This approach taken by practitioners at Dympna House reinforces the pro-active stance taken by those using a feminist approach.

Interventions used within the Feminist model take place at both the individual and group level, and are aimed at empowering survivors of abuse. According to Dominelli (1989) interventions can take place at four stages, challenging both individual and structural uses of power. The first stage supports individual women in therapy, in forming new networks, and building up the resources for them to start taking control of their lives. The second

stage involves bringing individual women together in groups to share their experiences. These group sessions aim at taking the blame off individual women, and linking their experiences in a broader social context, focussing upon issues of power and gender. The third stage involves getting the women in these groups to acknowledge and work through the divisions between them. Such issues as class, age, ethnicity and sexual orientation could be challenged to see how these factors affect individual experiences of abuse. The fourth step involves challenging the legal system which puts the abused women through more than the abuser.

An overview of the models

An overview of the four models is provided in Table 3.2 (see following page). This table was shown to the youth workers as part of the interviewing process.

These models reflecting 'ideal types' show a variety of theories used to explain abuse and the focus for intervention. The models do not reflect the many approaches that are taken by practitioners that could be situated just under the umbrella of the Psychiatric model alone for example. Each model presented contains within it a number of different approaches, but it is the commonality of each of these approaches that draws each model together.

Table 3.2

Overview of the models explaining the causes of abuse

Psychiatric	Situational
- supporting of existing order, those who do not conform into society should be made to fit;	- basically supporting the social order, but seeing a need to change sections of it;
- people are blamed for their behaviour;	- the family as a unit may be dysfunctional, with all members equally to blame. Abuse is a symptom only of deeper problems;
- women are in charge of bringing up children; if these children grow up to be abusers it is the mother's fault;	- mother is blamed because she either: withdraws sex, is a victim of abuse herself, is dependent on her husband, or she unconsciously sets up the abuse;
- according to Freud, women reporting sexual abuse were fantasizing;	
- young girls are seductive and bring on their abuse;	- also the view that child abusers were abused as children and that is why they abuse;
- a girl may be sexually abused because the mother is sexually inadequate and so the father turns to the daughter;	- alcohol may lessen a perpetrator's inhibitions; isolation may also do this; also chances to be alone with the child; not being blood relatives may also lessen inhibitions;
- the mother fails as a good wife and mother and consequently the daughter is abused;	
- the mother often ignores the abuse or colludes with it;	- the family must undertake therapy together, all taking responsibility for the abuse;
- the perpetrator is psychologically ill and needs treatment, therapy, behaviour modification.	- support services may be offered to the family.

Continued over....

Sociological

- do not agree with structure of society, and see the need for major structural and institutional change;
- child abuse is a social problem, not an individual one;
- violence is culturally sanctioned within our society;
- class, status and racism impact on individuals, sometimes very negatively, resulting in some people abusing their children;
- poverty can affect how violent people are in families toward their children;
- stress can build up from a number of these factors;
- to change child abuse we need to change how society operates fundamentally;
- poverty needs to be eliminated, redistributing wealth;
- educative programmes on child rearing;
- legislative change.

Feminist

- structure of society needs to change; there is an imbalance in gender and power relationships;

..... continued

- women are oppressed, while men are in more powerful positions within the family and society;
- violence against women cannot be separated from child abuse as it affects young women;
- the most prevalent form of violence against women is sexual violence;
- this is perpetrated against women by men in the majority of cases (98%);
- sexual violence can range from the subtle (wolf whistles), to the extreme (rape);
- violence is understood by taking the experiences of individual women and linking this to the experiences of many women in society, from the individual (personal) situation, to the social (political) situation;
- the family is the place of much sexual violence against women;
- beliefs and attitudes, structures and processes in society maintain and support abusive practices towards women (patriarchy);
- change comes from women sharing their experiences at the individual and group level, supporting and linking to challenge oppression, establishing a presence locally, state and federally.

The commonality of the Psychiatric Model relates to the focus on individual characteristics. The commonality of the Situational Model relates to the focus on the nature of the circumstances. The commonality of the Sociological Model is the focus on the nature of society; while the commonality of the Feminist Model relates to gender.

Having said this however, the models can and do interact. The Feminist model can be used as an example. There are a number of different political 'strands' of feminism. These are: liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism, psychoanalytic feminism, existentialist feminism and postmodern feminism (Tong, 1989). All of these strands would fall under the Feminist model, however a liberal feminist would be very likely to situate herself within both the Feminist and Situational models. Socialist feminists or Marxist feminists would most likely situate themselves within both the Structural and Feminist models. Any number of interactions may take place. Where and how youth workers see themselves in relation to the models is yet to be determined.

The effects of abuse

The study so far has looked at definitions of abuse, explanations of causes of abuse, and types of interactions taken by practitioners. It is also important to look at the

reality of the experience of abuse for young women, and how that can manifest to the youth workers.

It is rare to find accounts of the experiences of those young women still living in abusive situations. "The stigma attached to the victims of violence, and the pressures on girls and women not to discuss what occurs within the family, inhibits them from speaking out". (Womens Co-ordination Unit, 1986, p. 83). The majority of studies focussing on young people refer to the impact of sexual abuse, with a few referring to abuse in general.

Studies about sexual abuse usually focus upon young children, and to a much lesser extent, to 'maltreated' or 'abused adolescents' or 'runaway youths' (Cavaiola & Schiff, 1989; Farber & Joseph, 1985; Libbey & Bybee, 1979; Lindberg & Distad, 1985; Mouzakitis, 1984; Powers & Eckenrode, 1988; Singer, Petchers & Hussey, 1989). The term 'adolescents' is used to refer to both young women and young men and to generalize from their experiences, when in reality, most of the studies are referring to the experiences of a majority of young women. What these studies do tell us, is about the on-going effects of abuse on young women.

Other sources reflecting the on-going effect of sexual abuse come from the survivors of the abuse themselves, speaking out about their experiences (Bass & Davis, 1988).

Most of these accounts of sexual abuse are being told after the fact. The women have left the abusive situations, with many recalling experiences after decades. However, one consistent theme throughout these accounts is the on-going effect of the initial experiences of abuse, and the complexity of each experience of abuse.

> The long term effects of child sexual abuse can be so pervasive that it's sometimes hard to pinpoint exactly how the abuse affected you. It permeates everything: your sense of self, your intimate relationships, your sexuality, your parenting, your work life, even your sanity. Everywhere you look you see its effects. (Bass & Davis, 1988, p.33)

The effects and impact of sexual abuse can be seen as a continuum. Individual women could plot their experience of abuse anywhere along the continuum, along with their experience of the effects of the abuse. This process is a dynamic one, changing with time, and different for each woman.

According to Bass & Davis (1988) there are a number of coping behaviours taken on by women that have been sexually abused. These behaviours will have direct relevance to the ways in which young women cope with the trauma of sexual abuse. The coping behaviours taken on by women are as follows: minimizing, or pretending what happened wasn't

really that bad; rationalizing, or trying to explain away the abuse; denying that the abuse happened, and forgetting. Other forms of coping behaviour concern splitting, or feeling one way on the inside, yet acting totally differently on the outside; leaving the body, which many survivors do while being abused; having to have total control over their environment; spacing out or distancing themselves from reality; using humour, alertness or busyness to avoid feeling; escaping through mental illness, self-mutilation, suicide; taking on addictions, having eating difficulties, lying, stealing or gambling; avoiding intimacy and compulsively seeking or avoiding sex (Bass & Davis, 1988).

Mouzakitis (1984) and Stiffman (1989) when discussing the effects of abuse on 'adolescents' and 'runaway youths' respectively, point to a variety of behaviours exhibited by these young people in their studies. These behaviours mirror what has been outlined by Bass & Davis (1988) and are as follows: experiencing severe negative effects as they grow older, anti-social behaviour, getting into criminal offending, inability to establish meaningful relationships, they can be aggressive, hostile and mistrusting, have poor self concept, experience chronic depression, drug use, and be sexually promiscuous. Studies by Farber & Joseph (1985) and Cavaiola & Schiff (1989) point to the severe and devastating effects of abuse on the young people.

Lindberg and Distad (1985, p. 522), in referring to the impact of incest on 'adolescents', (meaning in this case, 24 young women and 3 young men), found that these young people:

> ...responded to their experiences through distinguishable types of 'acting out' behavior, some being primarily overt and others less obvious. Overt behaviors included explosive anger, alcohol and drug abuse, suicide attempts, self-mutilation, running away, seductiveness and/or promiscuity....All the adolescents expressed feelings of depression, anxiety, and a lingering sense of helplessness.

Those young people displaying less obvious behaviours intellectualized their trauma, or acted as perfectionists.

German, Habenicht and Futcher (1990, p. 434), in referring specifically to young women as incest victims, give a personality profile of these young women being either "withdrawn, shy, and expedient. They are also dominant, cool, self-sufficient, with low tension."

Conclusion

The points that I have attempted to illustrate are that the effects of abuse are on-going, and can be devastating

to young women victims. The effects of abuse are also complex and different for every survivor.

Youth workers are no more immune from abuse in their lives than are many young women. This means that youth workers also may carry the effects of abuse within their upbringing to their place of work. Some workers will be conscious of these effects, as are those young women supported through their trauma, and other workers may not be so conscious of the impact of abuse in their lives. This is one factor affecting their work with young women.

A second factor concerns how young women who have been abused and are using these services actually act out the effects of their abuse. As is evident from the studies cited into the effects of abuse, it is not necessarily a straightforward matter to detect the effects of abuse on young women. A young woman displaying a black eye or scars from self-mutilation will no doubt alert a youth worker to a problem in that particular young woman's life. But what if the only signs are that she acts in a very boisterous manner and seems a little 'too friendly'? How does a youth worker respond in that situation; and should they? The effects of abuse will not always be self evident, making it difficult for a youth worker to act to support a young woman they feel may be in trouble. This, and other aspects of youth worker experience and perceptions, will be

explored in the course of the study, which is outlined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

THE STUDY

Introduction

Up to this point in the study I have developed a theoretical context of youth work practice and youth work with young women. Youth work practice is generalist in nature. That is, youth workers deal with all issues of concern to young people's lives. Abuse could be seen as but one of these many issues. Youth work practice has traditionally been aimed at young men. The majority of work with young women that has occurred has been concerned with reinforcing expectations of femininity and passivity. The nature of young women's oppression then, has not been a focus for youth work practice.

I have also outlined the major theoretical approaches to working with child abuse. These approaches reflect the varied understandings and responses of practitioners to the issue of child abuse. Three of the approaches outlined, the Psychiatric, the Situational and the Sociological models, can and do neglect the issue of gender relations, and in doing so, negate the experiences of women as victims of abuse.

The study concerns how youth workers perceive and act upon issues of abuse faced by the young women using their services. The next step of the process then, concerns the melding of the two areas of youth work practice and

approaches to work with child abuse in light of youth worker experiences.

Youth services

The focus of the study are youth workers in non-government agencies funded under the Youth Services Program, which is situated within the Department for Community Services, Western Australia. These workers were chosen because they primarily work with young people who are still living with their families, and who may be in some cases experiencing various forms of abuse at the time of the study. This is distinct from youth workers in accommodation agencies who are working with young people who have left the family environment because of abusive and intolerable situations (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1989). The study therefore, is entering an unexplored area of youth work practice.

The Youth Services Programme funds a number of agencies. Seventeen of these agencies are either drop-in centres, street work programmes, mobile drop-in services, or a combination of these. These agencies were contacted by telephone to inform youth workers of the research, and this was then followed up with a letter detailing the background to the study. As a result of these initial contacts, 15 workers from 12 of these agencies agreed to be involved. One worker who runs two agencies was unable to be involved

because of lack of time; two agencies declined to be involved by virtue of not replying to repeated attempts at contact, and workers from one agency had recently left the agency at the time of the research and had not yet been replaced.

Within the final group of 15 youth workers, 8 worked in drop-in centres, 4 in street work agencies, and 3 in mobile or mixed agencies. Five participants are in full-time positions, while 10 are in part-time positions.

Attempts were made to have equal numbers of women and men in the sample group, and as it turned out, seven women and eight men formed the group. Six female participants and 3 male participants are between the ages of 20-29 years, one female and three males are between the ages of 30-39 years, and one male falls within the 40-49 age bracket.

Eight participants come from anglo Australian backgrounds (four female and five male), five have one or two parents born overseas (three female and two male), and two participants were themselves born overseas. A female participant was born in Argentina and a male participant in England. One male participant is of Aboriginal descent.

With regards to the length of time the participants in this study have been involved in youth work in a voluntary or paid capacity, the majority fall within a five year or less

time-span (12 workers). Two participants have been involved in youth work for 10 years or less, while one participant has been involved for 15 years or less. Four participants have been in their present position for one year or less, eight for two years or less, and three for five years or less.

Out of the group, five are currently studying in tertiary institutions, four have already completed a degree or certificate course. Thirteen of the group have had no training in child abuse issues.

Methodological issues

As this study is based within a feminist framework, I believe it imperative that the methods used in conducting the study should be consistent with feminist theory. According to Stanley & Wise (1983a, p. 51-54), feminist theory consists of three basic themes. The first theme is that women are oppressed as a group in society. It is from this belief that feminism as a social movement has arisen and it springs from the experiences of many women.

Secondly, feminism stresses that the personal is political. This theme evolved from understanding the difficulties women face everyday in dealing with oppression as it exists in every facet of their lives. What has traditionally been constructed as important in life has been constructed by

men, and so women's experiences have not been viewed as valid. The "personal is political" refers to how power is used in everyday contexts; in the relationships that women have with systems and structures like the family, the youth service and the economy.

Thirdly, women can gain a new understanding of their situation through consciousness raising. Consciousness raising concerns women coming together and sharing their experiences, discovering the commonality of their oppression and new ways of understanding their situation. Lee Bartky (1990, p. 16) refers to a feminist consciousness as "both consciousness of weakness and consciousness of strength". That is, how in the consciousness raising process, women come to view themselves as victims, as having experienced injury at the hands of patriarchal social relations. At the same time however, women experience their own sense of power and solidarity in working towards alleviating this oppression. This feminist consciousness is specific to each woman depending on the context and time within which she finds herself. These three themes have had direct implications for how the research for the thesis was conducted.

My initial exploration of the theme of abuse, young women and youth workers led me to spend time with young women in a drop-in centre. I reasoned that as women are oppressed and silenced in society, young women who may have been, or

are being abused, should have the opportunity to speak out about their experiences. These experiences could then be, in whatever form chosen by the young women, shared with youth workers, as a way of informing them and heightening their awareness of the situation of many young women using youth services. I realized very quickly however, that one cannot enter into the most intimate and often most frightening aspects of another person's life without preparing sufficient and on-going means of support for them. Within the context of this study I found it impossible to resolve the complex ethical issues which arose from considering simply talking to young women about their experiences.

This led me away from focusing upon young women as the group to be 'researched', to the youth workers themselves. But the ethical issues surrounding the area of opening up the topic of child abuse remained. I was acutely aware throughout the research process of not forcing any area of the discussion where I sensed that the worker was becoming uncomfortable. As stated previously, the effects of abuse can be on-going, and memories of abuse can also be buried. I was very aware that the research process must be handled very sensitively, as youth workers are no more immune to being abused than are young women. My experience as a youth worker I hoped, would set up some common ground to begin discussion of the topic. I was also acutely aware of

practising what I preached; that is, using feminist principles as the basis of the research process.

I considered the three basic themes of feminism outlined above in constructing the way I approached the study. As women are an oppressed group within society, I attempted to conduct the research in such a way as to not further oppress others. To treat the participants as 'objects' rather than 'subjects' would be oppressive (Duelli Klein, 1983; Mies, 1983; Stanley & Wise, 1983a). I aimed for a relationship between myself and the participants that did not to set up an hierarchical situation where the I was seen to have power over them. Also, by bringing in my particular way of seeing and understanding the world (or my feminist consciousness), meant that I would be challenging everyday and 'accepted' ways of seeing the world as part of the process. Stanley & Wise (1983b) argue that:

> Feminism either directly states or implies that the personal is political; that the personal and the everyday are important and interesting and must be the subject of feminist inquiry; that other people's realities mustn't be downgraded, sneered at or otherwise patronized; that feminists must attempt to reject the scientist/person dichotomy and, in doing so, must endeavour to dismantle the power relationship which exists between researchers and researched. (p. 194-195)

The technique used in the process of doing the study consisted of face-to-face interviews with each individual worker. The interviews were set up in such a way that the relationship between the researcher and the participants was reciprocal (Oakley, 1981). That is, the participants were made aware at the beginning of the process that they were free to ask any questions, and/or to engage myself in any dialogue at any time throughout the process. I used semi-structured interviews, containing a framework of guided discussion points. (See Appendix). All interviews were held in the place of work of the participants. Observations made at these places of work were also used to inform the data from the perspective of an immediate environmental context.

I was aware, and in some ways, quite nervous, about the fact that I would be challenging other people's views on how they conduct their practice. I was also excited about the prospect of conducting the research in such a way that did not alienate, put down and take for granted the experience of the people that I would be interviewing.

In addition to these processes, there was also a need to re-examine the traditional relationship between theory and data. Experience and practice should form the basis of theory, rather than the traditional approach of fitting the data or experience of the participants into the theory

(Stanley & Wise, 1983a). As Lather (1986) argues: "The search is for theory which grows out of context-embedded data, not in a way that automatically rejects a priori theory, but in a way that keeps preconceptions from distorting the logic of evidence" (p. 267). I devised a model containing four existing ways of explaining child abuse as a way of opening up discussion on the topic, rather than closing it.

Feminist approaches to research have developed as part of a critical tradition in social sciences, growing from a reaction against positivism as the dominant approach. The basic elements of positivism assert that (a) scientific knowledge must be definable and measurable; (b) there is a logical unity between natural and social sciences; (c) the scientist is the objective observer of reality and must remain value or neutral free; (d) statements are true and accurate only to the extent that they conform to logic and are based on empirical evidence (Sercombe & White, 1990; Smith & Noble-Spruell, 1986).

Feminist critiques of the positivist tradition highlight the androcentric nature of the traditional social sciences. The majority of research has focused on men and on issues of concern to men, denying the experiences of women in society; therefore rendering women invisible (Smith & Noble-Spruell, 1986). Eichler (1988) discusses the androcentricity of traditional research and points to

examples of studies dealing with one sex but presenting the results as if they were applicable to both, and also studies that ignore sex altogether as an important variable.

Yllö (1988) in discussing the relationship between objectivity, masculinity and science, equates traditional science with masculinity, and the relationship between the researcher and subject as one of distance and separation. This distance set up as part of the research process means that a researcher can stay removed from the social application of that research. Pease (1990, p. 87) comments that this:

> ...attempt to separate facts and values tends to serve dominant interests, because it promotes that view that political decisions can be made on the basis of social scientific knowledge supposedly uninfluenced by values and political ideologies.

According to Du Bois (1983, p. 111), feminist approaches to research do not reflect a distance between the researcher and participant. Rather, feminist approaches reflect the assumption that "the knower and the known are of the same universe, that they are *not* separable". What this means for the researcher using a feminist approach is that they must openly acknowledge their beliefs and experiences in every step of the research process. "It involves us in a

disciplined, scholarly and rigorous explication of the bases of our knowledge by tying in such explication to a detailed analysis of the contexts in which such knowledge is generated" (Stanley & Wise, 1983a, p.197). By setting out the theory underlying my approach throughout the writing of the thesis, and as part of the interviewing process, I have consciously attempted to be aware of my beliefs as they impact upon the research process.

Dilemmas arising for women using a feminist approach to research concern the lack of established methodology and blue-prints to follow. On the one hand this makes for exciting and exploratory research, on the other it leaves the researcher 'out in the dark' as to which direction to go. Lather (1986) however, does offer some guidelines to consider. These are: (a) rather than looking at 'value free' research, the researcher must strive for conscious partiality or critical self awareness. This involves the researcher in a dialogical process with the participants, where any distortions of perception can be corrected, and where the consciousness of both is widened. This also means that the power relationship between the researcher and the participant is challenged so as not to treat the participant as an 'object'. (b) In the process of the research the researcher should be feeding back to the participants what they have said but through the researcher's eyes. This gives value to what the researcher learns from the participant and visa versa. It also sets up

a consciousness raising process. (c) The researcher must look for contradictions and use these as entry points into understanding different ways of looking at the world. (d) A critical theory should be offered as to why the participants should change their approach, but for this to be done in an environment where the participants may choose to reject this view also. In this way the analysis of the researcher is used but not in such a way that it blinds them from seeing the data before them and the people before them. (e) Finally, the researcher must actively participate in actions and movements as a result of their involvement (Lather, 1986). This can be linked into the theme of the personal is political, in that theory grows out of everyday life and the researcher should be involved in this process. "According to this approach, the object of the research is not something static and homogeneous but an historical, dynamic and contradictory entity" (Mies, 1983, p. 125).

Lather (1986) raises a number of issues to consider when attempting a research design involving the exchange and challenging of ideas between researcher and participant. These are: construct validity, face validity, and catalytic validity.

'Construct validity' entails the researcher discussing, within the context of the thesis, the conscious process of theory building. Questions such as: how do my preconceptions affect the theory that I build from the

data?; how have the theories that I started with changed since collecting the data?; how have my perceptions altered since being exposed to the data? In this way the researcher is engaged in a process of "systematized reflexivity" , thereby establishing construct validity (Lather, 1986, p. 271).

Lather (1986) suggests that face validity needs to be reconsidered in relation to dialogical research designs. She argues that the researcher needs to go over the "description, emerging analysis, and conclusions" (p. 271) with the participants to further refine the research in the light of what they say. However, because of false consciousness this process may have limited use. By false consciousness Lather (1986, p. 271) means that "most people to some extent identify with and/or accept ideologies which do not serve their best interests." So if the dialogical research process does not lead to changed consciousness of the participants, the research, according to Lather should not be declared invalid.

The final issue to consider when undertaking dialogical research is that of catalytic validity. This can be defined as "the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses, and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it, a process Freire (1973) terms conscientization." (Lather, 1986, p.272). The extent of

the effect of the research process on catalytic validity will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

Process and design

Lather (1986, p.266) suggests a process to follow when conducting "emancipatory" research which is useful to consider in relation to the study. The process is a dialectical one; that is, involving the exchange of ideas and actions. The four steps of the process are as follows: (a) interviews conducted in an interactive manner; (b) sequential interviews with individuals and small groups to go into issues further; (c) negotiation of meaning that would involve as many participants as possible; (d) questioning, probing and challenging of beliefs of both the participant and the researcher.

The procedure that was followed in this study is similar to that as outlined by Lather (1986); and as this procedure was an interactive one, the research design is difficult to separate from the process of doing the research.

In the initial stages of the process I explored the willingness of the participants to be involved in a number of interviews (I was aiming at that stage for three interviews), and to gain their commitment to being involved in the process. I envisaged that time spent with each individual worker would total six hours over a two month

period. I was also very aware of the time constraints that youth workers are under, and that I may have to modify the research process to accommodate the workers. As it turned out, one worker could not be involved in the process at all because she was too busy running two youth services. The workers actually involved in the process were very accommodating, sometimes going out of their way to find time to see me.

The next stage of the research process consisted of a pilot interview to check whether the interview guide yielded relevant information. Some areas of information were found to be missing in these initial interviews, so the interview guide was modified accordingly. This pilot interview was held with ex drop-in centre workers. The interviews were taped.

The first round of interviews were conducted to gather data in a number of broad areas: (a) information about the participant themselves and their work history; (b) the service or the context within which they work; (c) agency aims and objectives; (d) the participants experience of abused young women in the agency; (e) the participants understanding and conceptualization of abuse; (f) action taken by the participants on behalf of or with the young women; and (g) constraints on their practice. Most interviews took one hour to one and a half hours in a one to one situation with each worker. These interviews were

taped, and transcriptions were sent out to the participants as scon as possible after the initial interview. I also gathered documents outlining the aims and objectives of the agencies and any relevant policy statements.

After the initial round of interviews, I was involved in two steps simultaneously. One step concerned explicating from various studies, a number of different approaches to explaining the causes of child abuse to form the basis of the theoretical foundation of 'existing data'. The second step concerned going through the interviews and looking for contradictions and entry points for further discussion. I also came to my own conclusions about where I believed the participant 'fit' or did not 'fit' into the 'existing data'. With this information I went back for the second interview.

I took my conclusions to the participants and we underwent a "negotiation of meaning" (Lather, 1986, p. 266). This means that I fed back to the participants what they had said as I had understood it to test their reactions to this. We then negotiated the meaning of the content of the interviews, or came to some understanding of both points of view. According to Lather (1986, p. 266): "this entails recycling description, emerging analysis and conclusions" to at least some of the participants. At this stage also, I highlighted any contradictions found in the first interview, and in many cases, challenged beliefs of the

participants according to how I see the world. Looking for contradictions in what participants were saying served as entry points in offering a critical challenge to how they see the world. This process lead to self-reflection on the my part as well as testing the soundness of emerging theories. These interviews were also be taped and transcripts were sent to all participants.

I then attempted to draw out of the data common themes, patterns, links between theory and evidence, explanations and descriptions, contrasts and comparisons, and inconsistencies within the data. At this stage of the process it became clear to me the extent to which I was directing the shaping and final product of the material. The two interviews held with the participants prior to writing up the material took the form of a dialogue, exchanging and challenging ideas of youth work practice with young women. However the way in which the material was finally written up rested solely with me. I became very aware of my attempts to break down the power relationships inherent in the research process, and at the same time recognizing my part in directing the whole process. Given the context of this study (that is the expectations of an academic study conducted within a one year time frame), this situation seemed unavoidable.

At this stage in the process I sent a completed draft of analyzed results to the participants. I then arranged to

see the youth workers in small groups to discusses their responses to my conclusions and their reactions to the interview process itself. I was also interested to see if any of the participants would suggest any ongoing action as a result of the process. The result of these meetings will be discussed as part of the concluding chapter.

Conclusion

The process undertaken in this study attempted to integrate feminist principles into the design and methods used. I was conscious throughout the process of stating my position as a feminist with the youth workers so as to make explicit my values (Stanley & Wise, 1983a). Some of the youth workers early in the process, responded to the fact that I was a feminist quite defensively or negatively. However, I found as the process developed, these workers became open to discussing and challenging my position as a feminist as I did their positions.

The data gathered from the interviews with participants provide a rich source of material from which to draw. The results of these interviews reflect the focus of youth work practice, youth worker understandings of the issue of abuse, the impact of their understandings on young women using their services, and the context and constraints faced by workers in their daily practice. The following chapter provides an overview of these results.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the two sets of interviews conducted with the youth workers in the study. The question of catalytic validity (i.e., any change in consciousness in the workers as part of the research process) will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

The interview schedule used in the study was divided into a number of areas. For the purposes of this discussion, these areas will be incorporated under three main headings: the service context, experiences and perceptions of abuse, and intervention strategies and constraints.

Service context

As discussed earlier in the study, seven women and eight men make up the sample group of youth workers. The types of agencies that the participants work within are either drop-in centres (eight workers), streetwork agencies (four workers), or mobile bus services (three workers).

Staffing

Out of the 12 agencies in the study, 9 have funding for one full-time position only. (It is important to note that even though participants said that they are funded for a full-time position, this could mean anything from 30 hours per

week to 40 hours per week). In describing the 11 participants who come from these agencies, it is interesting to note how some of the full time positions are divided up. For example in one agency, two workers share 32 hours; in another, five workers share 34 hours.

In the remaining six agencies, the participants are the only paid workers; their paid hours ranging from 18 hours to 38 hours per week. A few of these agencies involve a number of volunteers in their operations also. At the time of the study, three agencies had funding for two worker positions (meaning a full-time position plus extra funding for a half-time or another full-time worker).

The numbers of workers within and agency, and the numbers of hours allotted to these workers has impact on the kind of service provided. Some of the workers have contact with 25 different young people per month while others see up to 150 different young people per month. In light of some of the working hours outlined, it is hard to envisage providing a youth service to large numbers of young people.

Motivations

The youth work field is "characterized by low salaries, poor working conditions and uncertain funding arrangements" (Taylor, Steele, Omelczuk & Underwood, 1991, p. 32). Not surprisingly, when questioned about their personal

motivations for doing youth work, no worker commented on anything to do with financial rewards. Instead, the motivations were much more altruistic. Three participants commented that they had 'been there and done that'. All three had lived on the streets and felt that they could offer some of their insight to the young people with whom they come into contact.

Two participants felt that they would like to do something for other people, with one really loving youth work. Another two participants felt motivated to do youth work because they wanted to work and interact with people. Another participant wanted to be a friend, to help the young people with direction and also to educate the community about young people.

Two participants' personal aims were to challenge attitudes and assumptions held by the young people. For one, this had to do with challenging sexism and racism. For the other, it was to challenge racism, and to be there for the young people like someone was there for him when he was growing up. One participant felt motivated by Christianity to be a positive role model to the young people. Another wanted to be there to indirectly influence the young people; to be there while their consciousness was changing and to give them some understanding about what was going on. Two participants didn't comment on this question.

Views of occupation

How workers view themselves in relation to the young people with whom they work also reveals interesting insights into youth work practice. In discussing how workers see themselves, for example as 'experts' or as 'colleagues', I was trying to ascertain how workers view the power relationship between themselves and the young people with whom they work. None of participants saw themselves as being 'experts'.

Four participants wanted to be someone that the young people could talk too. One participant wanted to be there for the young people. Five participants wanted to be seen as a friend, to be there to provide support. One of these participants pointed out the contradiction in being a friend because of her position as a paid worker in charge of a centre. Another of these participants considered himself a friend, but professional in terms of conduct and a code of ethics. One participant described her position in terms of a trust relationship that goes both ways. She also saw herself as a professional in terms of how she goes about her work in providing information and support.

Two participants commented that they learn things from the young people every day and would not see themselves as experts. One saw himself as a facilitator, another could

identify with the things that the young men experience. Another of the participants considered himself to be someone who could provide positive ways of dealing with things; while the last participant saw that his position varies, depending on the circumstances. He keeps relationships flexible, in that he can be an expert in some areas if required.

These results are interesting when viewed in the context of the debate toward professionalization within the youth work field. According to White (1986, p. 13):

> A profession is characterized by some form of pre-service training/education, which involves the transfer of clearly defined skills and reference to a discreet body of knowledge. In such cases the occupational group in question is seen to have a clearly defined function and role within society, with a skill/knowledge base, and ethics and norms, appropriate to its function and role.

Youth work is not as yet regarded as a profession. When compared to professions like psychiatry or medicine where the practitioners enjoy high status and good remuneration for their work, youth workers are in a very different position; having the opposite with low status and poor remuneration for their work. However an interesting observation can be made about the workers in this study in

that they see themselves more as friends than professionals; whereas psychiatrists would no doubt see themselves first as professionals, and possibly as friends. The relationship that youth workers have and are prepared to have with young people, often stressing the similarities between them as people, puts youth workers in a different position in regards supporting young women who have been abused.

Programme objectives

Individual agencies are funded through the Youth Services Programme which is situated within the Department for Community Services. All agencies are expected to develop agency objectives compatible with the overall Programme objectives. The overall aim of the Youth Services Programme is to address the needs of disadvantaged young people in Western Australia. Young people targeted by the programme are those considered at risk of physical or emotional harm, primarily between the ages of 12 and 18.
The objectives of the Programme are to access young people most at risk within local communities and to reduce the risk experienced by these young people (Youth Services Programme, 1991).

Across all agencies that were a part of the study, their aims and objectives were very similar to each other and compatible with what was expected from the funding body

(which is to be expected). There were minor differences across objectives, but these related to the fact that agencies are situated in different areas, accessing different young people. For example, some agencies targeted specific problem areas like a reduction in drug abuse for the target group, or a reduction in offending or truanting. Other agencies aimed at providing information to the young people, linking them into employment education and training, or contacting young people and addressing their needs. Most of the agencies had at least one objective linking the young people to appropriate support services.

Only two of the agencies referred to training and support issues to do with paid and unpaid staff. For example one agency aimed at providing a management structure and ensuring staff and management have the skills to operate the service. The other agency aimed at the development of paid and unpaid staff.

One of the agencies which operates a girl's night, aimed at an awareness of gender stereotyping. This kind of objective did not appear in any other agency. One other agency aimed at working with peer group violence issues, running a young men's group.

Target group

In terms of target group, all participants aim for a target group which include substance abusers, homeless young people or those at risk of being homeless, offenders, school refusers, young people in conflict with authority figures, and young people mostly between the ages of 12-17. Slight variations on the target group come from two agencies. One of these agencies refers specifically to young people presenting with suicide, violence and peer group issues. The other, considers those young people at risk of physical and emotional abuse, gender issues, and those young people unable to access employment, education, training, life skills, and resource information.

The target group specified by all of the agencies is compatible with funding body expectations. Three participants from drop-in centres also mentioned that although they have a specific target group, they must also be open to everyone who walks in the door. One worker commented that she cannot go into their homes looking for those most at risk. She also commented that you could fit nearly anyone into the target group, and that "they may not be at risk this week, but that doesn't mean next week they'll still be okay".

The numbers of young women using the various agencies varied slightly depending mainly on the cultural background

of the young people using that service. For example a streetwork service and a drop-in centre both have contact with a majority of Aboriginal young people. The numbers of young women using these particular services equal or nearly equal the young men; with 45% young women to 55% young men, and 50% young women to 50% young men. Only one other drop-in centre has equal numbers of young women and young men using that service. The female worker in that service has been in her position since the centre opened and commented that "the girls have identified that they have a place to play which is good". When the centre first opened a number of years ago, the number of girls using the service came to around 30%.

The remaining services have markedly lower percentages of girls using those services, ranging from 10%, 20% (two services), 25%, 30% (two services), and 40% (three services). The two agencies that hold regular young women's nights have a constant core group of young women attending on those particular nights.

Usage of youth services by young people

The frequency of usage of youth services by different groups of young people has not been established (White et al. 1990). As part of the interview process I wanted to establish whether workers had observed any patterns of usage specifically by the young women using those services.

Six participants did not notice any patterns in the way that young women used their service. A streetworker noted that she sees the young Aboriginal women as much as the boys, and another streetworker noted that he sees both girls and boys using the shopping centre.

Three participants reported that a core group of young women come every week for the young women's nights. One other participant, a streetworker, noted that he would see young women on their own as a group on some occasions, and that it was different working with them when any young men were around. When the young men were around, the streetworker observed that the girls would become quite passive, and the young men would often try to stop the worker from actually speaking to the girls. Another participant noted that older girls (17 year olds) come to the drop-in centre on their own and stay for long periods. A group of young girls come in as a group and leave early. The young women that would come in as partners to young men she usually did not get to know. Another participant from a drop-in centre observed that older girls would come in and talk to her for a specific reason, whereas the boys would just hang around the centre.

One participant noted that the way young women use the centre varies. Sometimes they would come on their own, sometimes with a partner, and sometimes in a group. He said

that families are usually more conscious of where girls can go than they are with boys.

Another participant reported that young women used to come into the drop-in centre as partners to the boys, whereas now they come in on their own, or as part of a group. And finally, a participant from a mobile bus service observed that in and around the shops he would see groups of young women. However, when the bus had to move to another area of the car-park that was unlit, the girls no longer were seen.

It was found that when a service sets up a space specifically for young women, that space is used regularly by a core group of young women. It is also interesting to note that workers have observed the difficulty in getting to know young women when they are partners to the young men.

Youth issues

Many of the issues brought up by the young women usually had to do with relationship matters, whether that be relationship with boyfriends or girlfriends or sexual relationships. Other issues brought up by the young women included: violence, accommodation, school, pregnancy, parent conflict, state of the world, work, drugs and drinking.

One participant reported suicide, psychiatric issues and depression as issues affecting the young women with whom he has contact. Twelve of the participants came up with similar issues to do with young women.

The three participants who did not come up with issues faced by the young women noted particular observations or reasons. One of these participants said that the young Aboriginal women usually go to his female co-worker. They come to him "if they want to arrange transportation somewhere, bludge a smoke off me, or they're looking for money for a feed or something. Information wise, not much at all; I talk with the boys more". Another participant noted that the girls didn't usually bring up any issues; they would hang out at the centre, sit back and watch. They would however talk with his female co-worker about relationship issues. This participant noted that after a recent camp, he realized that a more intimate relationship is needed for the girls to open up. The final participant did not notice girl's issues because he works with boys in the drop-in centre in the majority of cases. The girls have their own night in the centre within which he works, and he does not attend at those times.

Ten of the participants discussed the types of issues raised by the young men with whom they work. These include: jobs, parties, drugs, homelessness, parent conflict, fights

and feuds, violence, cars, boredom, crime, sport, probation and drinking.

Two other participants noted that they would usually initiate discussion with the young Aboriginal men that they had contact with, rather than the young men themselves bring up issues. The three remaining participants commented on the differences they have observed in girls and boys behaviour, rather than the issues raised when talking with boys.

Three out of the 13 participants commenting on issues raised or differences between girls and boys that they had noticed, said that when speaking to young men in a one to one situation, these young men would usually open up and talk about personal issues. However, as soon as more boys would come along, they would immediately stop. One participant noted that it is easy to talk about all sorts of issues with groups of young women, but not so with groups of young men.

Two out of the 13 participants said that the young men tended to talk about issues such as cars, drugs and sport, whereas young women would talk about much more personal issues in greater depth. Three participants out of the 13 noted that girls tend to sit back and are more passive, whereas the boys are much more active and out there doing things. Another worker described how she noticed that boys

have 'public space', whereas girls have a more 'private space'. She said "to get the girls talking the space needs to be more intimate. Whereas the guys have to be spread out and talking all over the place". Another participant commented that the boys have to keep proving themselves, while the girls sit back and let them.

When the young women open up to the workers it seems that they tend to discuss issues of a personal nature in some depth; and that this often happens in groups of young women. Also, when given a more intimate space this process is further enhanced. In those services that do not have a separate space for young women, it seems that the girls tend to sit back and watch, rather than become involved in any activities; reinforcing the nature of invisibility of young women within youth services (Nava, 1984).

Experiences and perceptions of abuse

In order to better understand how youth workers in the study perceive and act upon issues of abuse faced by the young women using their services, it is important to consider how the youth workers themselves have experienced abuse within their lives. These experiences may impact on how the workers perceive the issue of abuse, the amount of support that they are able to give young women, and how comfortable they may feel in doing so.

Experience of abuse

Five participants considered that they did not experience subtle or extreme forms of abuse perpetrated against them as children or young adults. All five commented on coming from stable family backgrounds and not witnessing or experiencing any forms of abuse. Two of these participants commented that changes in their childhood (going to boarding school, and the death of a father), meant that they were exposed to different ways of seeing the world, thereby opening their minds to other experiences. One of these participants became aware of sexual abuse in a work situation as a telephone counsellor on a help-line.

Amongst three of these participants coming from stable family backgrounds, one was brought up in a strict Christian environment, and another in a very supportive family in another culture and country. This last participant became of aware of abuse when moving to Australia and watching how some Anglo-Australian families interact. She also had two friends disclose to her about being sexually abused, bringing the reality of sexual abuse very close to her experience. The third participant first became aware of abuse in a work situation. He began work with the Department for Community Services; working specifically with abused boys. He noticed how the behaviour of the boys altered as a result of abuse.

Two participants did not mention their own personal family backgrounds as such, but one witnessed much abuse in his immediate neighbourhood. This participant was aware of the physical abuse of children living across the road, and of incest occurring within the family who lived next door. This participant was quite affected by these experiences as he realized how much abuse is seen by people and accepted by them. "I used to watch friends of mine who were scared to go indoors, and my parents knew about it, and everybody else in the area knew about it, and no-one ever said or did anything". The other participant spoke mainly about the change in his life since becoming a Born Again Christian. He commented on his selfishness in the way that he lived his life prior to this experience.

The remaining eight participants experienced at times quite different, and often quite extreme forms of abuse as children and young adults. Many of these experiences would sit at the more extreme end of the abuse continuum.

Three of the participants were sexually abused as children or young adults. Two of these were young women abused by men. Both also experienced other forms of physical and mental violence against them. One was abandoned when four years old, then taken home again when 9 years old. Both parents were alcoholics. She then lived on the street for a number of years, exposed to violence, and using drugs and alcohol. The third participant was sexually and physically

abused as a young boy by an older woman. He now also works with the Department for Community Services, with young people whose behaviors reflect abuse.

Two other participants grew up in families with an alcoholic parent. One had a father who was a violent alcoholic. This participant was put in a home at 11 years of age, where he had to stay until he was 15. There he was physically and mentally abused by his peers. He was also abused at school for coming from a 'home'. He then became involved in drugs and alcohol and violent behaviour, turning his abuse onto himself and others. The other participant commented how her parents used to abuse each other emotionally. Her father was also an alcoholic.

Another participant witnessed the emotional and mental abuse faced by her mother who had a number of breakdowns. This participant related her mother's distress to her father. As a young woman, this participant experienced abuse at the hands of young men she went out with, and was nearly raped when 14 years old. She commented, "what was expected of you was just to lie back and have a good time".

Another participant considered his high school years as the most abusive in his life to date, "crushing enthusiasm, creativity, zest, energy, the whole lot". The final participant who did not consider his life experience as abusive was adopted into an above average income family.

There was some physical abuse by his mother. He was thrown out of home as a young adult and lived on the streets and also spent time in prison.

What is evident from these accounts is that two-thirds of the youth workers experienced or witnessed often quite severe forms of abuse in their own lives. For some of the workers, their background experiences have motivated them into entering youth work; wanting to share with young people the benefit of their experience. In terms of the impact of the backgrounds of the workers on their perceptions of abuse though, it was difficult to draw out any patterns. Similarities were found however, in the ways in which some workers defined abuse.

Definitions of abuse

Four participants when defining abuse, used the concept of having 'power over' as central to their definitions. Three of these participants were referring to power relations between men and women, and that abuse is about men using their power over women. The fourth worker referred to power dynamics involved in abuse situations, with the more powerful using their power over the less powerful. He was referring specifically to the situation of adults abusing children.

Out of these four participants, two went on to define abuse in terms of the most obvious and extreme forms of abuse (as in physical violence), to the more subtler forms (as in ignoring young women in conversations, or parents with holding information from young women). A third worker went on to describe types of abuse, including physical, emotional and neglect. The fourth worker specified lack of support and someone to talk to as the most important feature of a definition of abuse.

Three of the participants defined abuse in terms of a violation of a person's rights, or doing something against their will. One of these participants described abuse in the first person, as something you have no control over, and having no rights in an abusive situation. Another of these participants specified that abuse is not just physical violence; that you can be violent towards another person without touching them.

This links with two participants who defined abuse as intimidation; whether that be in the physical, mental or sexual way. One of these participants spoke about abusing a child's trust, and "putting a fear into a child that shouldn't be there." The other participant also defined abuse in a broader sense, when referring to abuse as a manifestation of who we are as a group of people. He believes that abuse is people acting out their frustrations and emotions on a huge scale.

Two participants defined abuse in terms of a child suffering or being damaged as a result of physical, emotional or mental harm. One of these participants also included spiritual abuse in the definition. The other worker pointed out that what they considered abuse and what the young people considered abuse to be very different things; which brings up an important reality of working with another culture.

All of the above definitions can be linked in terms of being broad and encompassing a variety of situations and experiences. Two other participants who also had broad but different definitions, considered respectively: abuse is anything that makes a person uncomfortable, and abuse is where a young person's emotional and physical needs aren't being met. Finally, two participants defined abuse as physical, emotional, sexual, and neglect.

Causes of abuse

Three participants attributed the causes of abuse to power dynamics. Two of these participants referred to patriarchal power relations as causing abuse. One of them added, that the silence surrounding abuse contributes to its occurrence. The third participant referred to people feeling powerless in their own lives as one of the reasons for abuse. He also referred to the pressures men face in

our society contributing to the problem, with men's conditioning not encouraging them to express their feelings.

Four participants described the causes of abuse to be cyclical. That is, people who have been victims of abuse grow up and become abusers, thus perpetuating the cycle. One participant commented that although she offered this as an explanation, it did not seem adequate to her. Another commented that parents need to sort out their own lives and backgrounds before abuse will stop. She also believes that the economic situation adds pressure on families, contributing to the abuse which occurs. The fourth participant who understood abuse to be cyclical, also considered as a cause of abuse the impact of government structures and processes on the rights of individuals.

Four participants considered conditioning to be the main cause of abuse. That is, that people are brought up in a certain way and often do not know any better. One participant considered that families teach abusive practices, and then institutions reinforce them. Another participant considered environment and culture to be significant in causing abuse. He was referring to his observations of some Aboriginal families bringing up their children in abusive ways. He also considered some people who abuse to be mentally unhealthy, or having had some bad experience in their up-bringing. Another participant

considered abusers to be "inbred". She also considered that the current economic climate puts too much pressure on already stressed families, therefore adding to the causes of abuse. The fourth participant also considered individual traits, conditioning, culture and societal pressure to be causes of abuse.

The remaining four participants had a variety of explanations for causes of abuse. One suggested that the spiritual condition of sin, and the break in relationship with God causes people to do harm to others. This participant also considered societal pressure impacting on people. Another participant suggested that the cause of abuse can be attributed to people collectively acting out their frustrations and emotions which are usually suppressed. He suggested that people are not very aware of their feelings and of how their behaviour affects others. The third participant suggested individual sickness and outside pressure as causing abuse. The fourth participant suggested alcohol, stress, illness, and a wife withdrawing sex from her husband as causes of abuse.

It is interesting to note that across all participants, seven mentioned societal pressure on individuals and families as a factor contributing to the abuse of young people. Another interesting point is the emerging patterns of explanations. That is, three workers considered power dynamics central to an explanation of why abuse occurs,

four workers considered abuse to be cyclical, and four other workers considered abuse to be conditioned.

Young women and abuse

The next step of the interview process concerned coming to some understanding of worker experiences within the work context of abused young women. Some of the participants had seen girls being abused physically, some had suspected abuse but did not know for sure, and others had noticed the subtle abuse of girls in their everyday work situations.

The three participants having contact with a majority of Aboriginal young people, had either seen or were told about the girls being physically abused quite consistently by boyfriends, fathers or uncles. It is fairly common for them to see young women with black eyes and bruising. Four other participants noted either knowing about young people who had been physically abused or suspecting abuse. One of these participants mainly works with boys so could only comment about suspecting the physical abuse of boys that he works with. He also cited cases of boys being abused by not getting any support from their families.

Another of these participants was aware of a recent case of a young woman getting beaten up at home by her father. Another participant noticed boys who had been physically abused being quite withdrawn. This worker commented that he

suspects a lot more physical abuse occurring than gets brought out into the open. This worker also knew of a couple of young women who had been abused. The fourth participant has seen young people who have been hit, and suspects sexual abuse in the case of one young woman. He commented: "we've seen the fear in their eyes when they go home late. They know they'll get a hiding or things like that".

One participant who also works through the Department for Community Services has had experience of young women mutilating themselves as a symptom of sexual, physical and mental abuse. In his streetwork position he has seen signs of abuse such as girls withdrawing into themselves, and scars and cigarette burns on their bodies. He also said that it is possible that these are signs of abuse but that he could be making assumptions.

Three participants gave recent examples of young people having problems at home with their parents. In two cases these were young women, and in the third case, it was a young man.

One participant in particular noted lots of subtle forms of abuse perpetrated against the young women with whom he has contact. This takes the form of girls getting excluded from conversations, boys getting aggressive, boys pushing girls around, and boys sexually harassing the girls. He said that

the girls also get aggressive on occasions. According to this participant, many of the girls he has contact with come from abusive backgrounds.

Two participants who are involved in young women's nights spoke about what happened when the nights first started. In one agency, the boys used to yell and scream and throw things at the window. In the other agency, the boys would try and come in, climb on the roof and throw stones. The participant from the first agency spoke about abuse in the service generally, saying that older kids abuse the young ones, that there is verbal abuse amongst the boys, and that the girl's space is often encroached upon. She also commented that the young people are usually supportive of each other. The second participant noted that none of the girls in the young women's group had disclosed being sexually abused, and that they were younger girls, at 11, 12, and 13 years of age.

One participant suspected cases of abuse only. In terms of abuse in the service where he works he said: "The girls cop their bit of abuse but I've never seen anything that would have constituted violence".

Intervention strategies and constraints

This leads us to worker responses to cases of abuse and young women. Attempts at intervention by workers varied according to circumstances and examples outlined by the workers in the preceding section.

Forms of intervention

Six participants gave differing examples of assisting a particular young woman who was having problems at home. All offered support and information, working through options and acting on her behalf with other agencies if needed. One of these participants also spoke informally with groups of young women in a streetwork situation about their rights, personal space, and dealing with abuse situations involving their sexuality.

Two of the male participants commented on not taking strident steps towards intervention into the lives of abused young women. One of these participants does not feel it appropriate to intervene into the lives of the young Aboriginal women he has contact with. His female co-worker usually takes up that role. The other participant also has a female co-worker and will refer young women abused in some way to her. He would also refer to SARC (Sexual Assault Referral Centre).

Two participants who work within the same agency, one having contact with girls, the other with mainly boys, haven't had to do any follow up with young women to this point. Both commented on how they reinforce to the young people quite consistently that it is okay to talk about issues, no matter how sensitive.

Two participants who have contact with Aboriginal young people and who work in very different areas, emphasized that although the young women get physically beaten quite often, they do not usually want to do anything about it. Both participants challenge the idea that the beatings are okay and try to support the young women as much as possible. One of the participants discusses how to get restraining orders put on the young men and how to go about pressing charges.

One participant who on a few occasions has been aware of young women being physically abused or suspected sexual abuse, talks to the young women about whether they want to take up the abuse issue. If this is not appropriate and he cannot actually talk to the young person, the participant will make contact with outside authorities and advise them of his suspicions.

One participant commented on how he tries to intervene on the street on behalf of young women being harassed by the young men. He noted that it is very difficult not to

alienate the young people, and that a fine line must be walked between challenging behaviour and keeping relationships intact. This participant acts to support the young women while at the same time challenging the young men on an on-going basis.

The last participant does not actively intervene in the lives of young women using the service. He commented that pamphlets are available to the young people using the service, and that he has noticed young women taking advantage of them.

Interventions in a given scenario

It is apparent that the workers in the study use a number of different strategies in supporting young women. The strategies cited above reflect responses to different situations. In contrast to this, I wanted to see how workers would respond given the same scenario. They were each asked the same question: what would they do if a young woman disclosed being sexually abused by her father? (Table 6.1 provides a summary of these responses).

Interestingly enough, thirteen out of the fifteen participants would talk to the young woman in the first instance to see what she wanted to do. The finer details of what follows vary amongst the thirteen, however most would be there in an on-going support role.

Four participants would recommend or suggest SARC to the young woman. For one participant this means going through, step by step with the young woman, what a referral to SARC means. For two other participants, a suggestion that SARC is available would depend on what the young woman actually wanted them to do with that information. For the fourth participant, a recommendation for SARC would come as an option to the young woman. This participant would accompany the young woman to any counselling situation because, as she pointed out, the young women are hesitant to go to non-Aboriginal counsellors.

Four other participants would contact other agencies to get support for themselves in giving support to the young women. One would contact known workers at the local Department for Community Services office, another would contact SARC, another would try and find good local counsellors, and the other would try to find people in the region who could help (but that would be difficult). The participant who would look for local counsellors commented that she would also visit the young woman's family to let them know that she was a friend to the young woman.

Two of these participants would get the young woman out of home immediately if they thought it necessary. One thought that it would be difficult doing this for the first time. The other commented: "I think that if a young girl came to

me at 14 and said she'd been sexually abused by her father, she'd be asking me to do something about it. If she could bring herself to that point where she could actually tell me about it, she wants me to intervene in some way". Another participant also said that if the young woman was at risk he would look at some type of intervention.

One participant would link the young woman very quickly into a local accommodation service with which he has contact, and which deals with sexual assault issues quite regularly. He commented on how difficult it would be for him as a worker to think about the young woman going back home that evening if that is what she wanted. Three other participants (already mentioned above), had similar feelings about this issue. One of them commented: "If she wanted to go home to continue it that would be really tough. I don't know how I'd handle it, how I'd deal emotionally with that, but it's her decision."

Two participants discussed taking different routes to the ones already proposed. One participant would refer a young woman onto his female co-worker and discuss the situation with her. The other participant would talk to the young woman's mother first as he would not want to discredit the father before all the facts became known. If the girl was too scared to go back home he felt that SARC should pick up on the situation.

A few participants also mentioned starting support groups for young women who had been abused. One of these participants would seek outside advice on how to run a support group by talking to other women. Another worker would consider setting up a support group in the service but run by people from SARC. One other worker would refer different young women to an on-going support group in his local area. Two male participants said that they would like to run a group but felt that as males this would be inappropriate. One other participant said that she would leave the young women to the experts.

Interestingly, some workers seemed to feel comfortable with taking on young women who had been abused to the point of starting up support groups. Other workers however, would move onto referring the young woman to an outside agency fairly quickly. Training specifically on child sexual abuse would no doubt have a positive impact on how workers felt about working with a young woman who had been sexually abused, and broaden their options as to how to deal with situations.

Work constraints

What action the workers would like to take and what action is possible within their work contexts was the last issue discussed as part of the interview process.

Twelve out of the 15 participants cited numerous issues that came up as constraints in their work; constraints that impacted negatively on the quality and time they were able to spend with young people.

Five participants found the level of funding to be an issue that limited what they were able to do in their workplace. One of these talked about needing more training, more resources and more staff to be able to tackle the issues they are up against properly. Another worker found the funding levels very problematic in that there were not enough hours for two part-time workers to cover a whole region. She also mentioned the support of her management committee. Another of the participants commented that he found the culture of the young people acting as a constraint. He was referring to the fact that he found it difficult and inappropriate to work with young Aboriginal women as a white male youth worker.

Another of the five participants also cited the dilemma of being the sole worker within a service. This worker commented that she found running a drop-in centre on her own limiting her work with young women to a large degree. Another participant also found being a sole worker constraining in that she would like to have more time to do face to face work but has to do everything else as well. This worker also finds it frustrating not being able to

leave the centre once it is open if she was needed elsewhere.

The fifth participant finding funding levels a constraint, also cited a number of other constraints; one of which affected eight other participants. This concerned the issue of yearly funding. As this participant related, he found it difficult to retain quality staff because of yearly funding. He commented that the agency cannot make an on-going commitment to staff. Another participant also found staff turnover a frustration. This participant also found it difficult to find the time to do all administrative duties required in her position on 20 hours per week. Not knowing whether funding will come through from year to year adds to her frustration.

Other workers also found this problematic. One participant cited the instability and stress that comes from not knowing whether the agency will be re-funded. He also brought up the issue of personal constraints, in that he has a certain amount of energy to give and then he can't give anymore. He said that more resourcing would be useful in employing others to cover the amount of work that needs to be done. He comments: "on a counselling level, if you're looking at doing group work with people I don't think there's anywhere near, there's none, there's no resources available. And if you're going to do groups with young

women or young men, you need to have two or three people facilitating".

Another participant found living from week to week difficult, and spoke about the fact that they are not able to do any long term planning. Three other participants found long term planning to be difficult and one commented: "I believe that until the Government start doing some forward planning of funding and providing services, we're still going to be sitting here next year talking about the same thing; doing exactly the same stuff".

One of the participants who found one year funding problematic, also brought out other issues he saw to be limiting. He was considering doing a programme with young women but said that he found it difficult in terms of lack of time to train and prepare volunteers. Also he noted that the young women themselves did not necessarily respond favourably to new ideas.

Another participant brought up a number of varied constraints, not considered by any of the others. He found that young men act as constraints in terms of him accessing the young women. He also found it problematic that the girls are not on the street as much as the boys. Also, as a male worker he does not always find it easy or comfortable when confronted by some of the relationship issues faced by the young women. Being a male worker would act as a

constraint if he wanted to work with a group of abused young women. This participant also wanted to work with issues of violence but finds one year funding too short a time frame to set anything up. One year funding according to this participant is restrictive in that if they do not achieve their objectives their chances of being re-funded are reduced. The final participant felt comfortable in his position but found the expectations of the funding body and management as difficult.

Three workers felt no constraints in their work. Two of the three found no particular limits on their work because of the way in which their agency is structured. Both have a set number of hours to work in a specific area. For example the female participant comes in specifically to run the young women's night. The third participant felt no constraints on his work. Rather, he felt to be in a fairly autonomous position as streetworker, supported by his management committee.

Conclusion

The results presented give an overview of the working situation of the participants: the types of agencies, hours worked, objectives for working with disadvantaged young people, and the issues raised by young women and young men. The results also indicate the numbers of young women that workers are encountering in their daily practice.

How workers define abuse has also been presented; as have strategies used by workers to aid abused young women. The area of constraints raised as part of the interview process, has brought out a number of issues which serve to highlight the uncertainties in working conditions faced by youth workers as part of their daily practice. Given all of this information then, what does this mean in the context of youth work and abused young women?

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The results reflect that youth workers in this study are coming into contact with young women who have been or are being abused. The ways in which the workers are responding to the issue depends upon their perceptions, experience (both work and personal), their work contexts, the constraints faced by these workers, and their confidence in handling such issues.

The majority of services within the study do not target young women as a group requiring attention. The numbers of young women using these services reflect this situation, with young women being in the minority. The culture of the young people though, does impact on the way certain groups of young people use youth services.

The youth workers in the study have been situated within the four models set out in Chapter Two to give an indication of how they perceive and understand abuse and the causes of abuse. However this does not mean that worker interventions into the lives of abused young women necessarily follow the models. Options available to the workers and constraints faced by them impact strongly on how workers are able to respond to abused young women. These issues will be explored in some depth in this chapter.

Invisibility and young women in youth services

A study by Delahunt (1991) found that the majority of drop-in centre users were male, ranging from 55% - 80% of the clientele. She also found that male activities predominate in the services, and that white young men claim most of the space in drop-in centres. Only one service in the study identified anti-sexist and anti-racist work as a central concern. These results are supported by this present study in that 10 out of the 12 agencies reported a clientele ranging from 55% - 90% young men; also that the majority of service provision is aimed at young men. The present study has found a small number of agencies (3) identifying anti-sexist and anti-racist work as central concerns. With the majority of services focussing upon the needs of young men, this raises an important issue in relation to youth worker perceptions and actions towards abused young women.

How are the needs of young abused women to be met by youth services if the population of young women using these services is in the minority? Further, if youth workers within these services do not see the need to target young women and make space available to them, how can the situation be expected to change? Youth worker perceptions impact on the amount of time and space given to young women using their services, and the kinds of programmes and support given to the young women. Knight & Hatty (1987, p. 453) comment:

> We maintain that theoretical orientation and professional context interact either to perpetuate the denial of the violent abuse of women or, alternatively, to promote the disclosure of this abuse.

Take for example a service where the population is only 10% young women, and which has no private space available for them to meet regularly. The youth worker in this case did not feel that young women are in any way disadvantaged in their use of the service and commented: "It's up to them to help make it become comfortable".

Another issue to consider regarding the use of services is the appropriateness of drop-in centres for young women. As indicated by Delahunt (1991), young women are largely marginalized in drop-in centres, with many workers viewing male dominance as normal. A youth worker from an agency which has a young women's room commented:

> There seems to be an impression from what some of the young guys say that this is a place where kids come who are in trouble... And I think also because there are so many boys here, it really is boys stuff. It's not really designed for girls, except for the young women's group.

This worker brings out the issue that drop-in centres would originally have been available for the use of young people, without taking into account the way that young men appropriate space (Spence, 1990).

The way that young women use the space left available to them highlights their invisibility within youth services. A worker from one agency commented: "Girls don't bring up any issues...Girls just tend to sit back and watch". Young women generally do not pose problems for workers in terms of control, they are less visible, and use the services in fewer numbers (Spence, 1990). Often they are seen as attachments to young men. A worker commented: "The girls were very much a sort of appendage like. They're here, they're pretty, but they're not really supposed to interact; not with anybody else, other than the guy". A number of workers noted difficulty in getting to know the young women who came to their service with young men; while some workers have observed individual young women and small groups of young women using their services more often.

Those youth workers having contact with Aboriginal young people noted that the they see equal numbers of young women and young men on the street and within the drop-in centre. The girls are not seen as attachments to the young men. One worker commented:

> The girls don't exist through the boys. A lot of them are younger still and they swap boyfriends like, they just rotate. And so you get to know the girls; not in terms of boyfriends, but in terms of being girls.

Those workers doing streetwork or working from mobile services usually encountered more young women in shopping centres. Shopping centres provide a well lit, safe environment for young women. Young (1985) in describing why detached work with girls can be difficult points to a number of factors: that girls are less visible on the street with their presence being less intrusive than boys, girls are often restricted in their movements because of domestic responsibility, being on the streets is often not safe for girls as they are vulnerable to harassment or attack. One of the workers in the study describes how the mobile bus was used regularly by individual girls and groups of girls when parked in the shopping centre complex. However when the bus had to move away from the shops and ended up a block away across an unlit car-park, young women no longer used the service. A worker who spends most of his time on the street also noted that the numbers of young women he sees on the street are low, "partially because young women aren't out there as much, and the fact that when they are it's often as attachments to a group of young men." Many of the young women who resort to living on the streets come from backgrounds of abuse and violence in the home (Marsland 1988; White, 1990).

Unless specific resources, commitment, space and time are given to the needs of young women, their needs will not be accounted for within a given agency. The Delahunt study (1991) also reported that a few of the drop-in centres had attempted short term projects for young women, none of them lasting longer than two months. However a positive development in the area is that two agencies in the present sample have set up specific women's-only spaces. Both projects are committed in the long term to the young women's spaces, and work using anti-sexist and anti-racist strategies. For example one male worker continuously challenges the terminology that the young men use to describe the young women: "I'd say something like 'would you like your sister being called those sort of names?', and if you see that there's some response, then maybe you go further and say, 'why do you think women are always called parts of the body?'" On the nights when the young women's group is running, both services reported a consistent group of young women attending. A number of the other agencies are also considering ways of involving young women in their services to a greater extent.

The funding body

How worker attitudes shape their services needs to be explored within the context of the aims and target group set by the funding body, the Youth Services Programme. What

is and isn't possible within the parameters set by the funding body?

The aim of the Youth Services Programme, to address the needs of disadvantaged young people in Western Australia, is very broad. "Disadvantage" is defined as "a temporary or more permanent state and (can) take a number of forms such as homelessness, poverty, unemployment, conflict with authority figures, minority groups, drug abuse etc" (Youth Services Programme, 1991). The Programme targets those young people between 12 and 18 years considered at risk of physical and emotional harm. Young women are singled out as one of the groups most socially and/or economically disadvantaged. The objectives of the Programme are to (a) access young people most at risk; and (b), reduce the risk experienced by these young people (Youth Services Programme, 1991).

The aim, objectives and target group set by the funding body are indeed broad. Practically any young person in contact with any of the youth services in question, would fit under the guidelines at some point in time. This was highlighted by a number of workers from drop-in centres. One commented: "It's intention is disadvantaged young people, but the reality is, like most of the drop-in centres you can't control who comes". Unless services target those young people that they consider most disadvantaged, and set up services specifically for that

target group, all young people are in their catchment area. With one in four young women at risk of sexual abuse (Goldman & Goldman, cited in Child Sexual Abuse Taskforce, 1987, p. 49), it would seem most appropriate for services to target young women at risk. The broad parameters set by the funding programme would in no way hinder this approach. In fact, the different services are encouraged to "seek the most appropriate strategies for responding to the young people in their community" (Youth Services Programme, 1991).

Agencies are therefore encouraged to set up strategies responding to the needs of young people using their services. To use the term "their community" is somewhat problematic however. Mowbray (1985) highlights how intervention into local communities has been used as a remedy to cure many ailments, such as unemployment and juvenile crime for example. Implicit in the notion of community work is the view that these kinds of problems can be solved at the local level. This focus on 'community' means that widespread changes that are needed on a structural level are often ignored; and the interventions in effect support "the maintenance of a fundamentally inequitable and alienating social system" (Mowbray, 1985, p. 58). The approach taken by the majority of workers within this study support the notion of community work as outlined by Mowbray (1985). That is, the youth workers deal with the effects of structural inequalities, rather than

the causes. In terms of addressing the issue of the abuse faced by young women in their daily lives, workers would need to target strategies aimed at a number of broader levels. (These will be outlined in the concluding chapter).

Another problematic area in the use of the term "their community" concerns how the nature of the service often determines the client group. For example, a drop-in service may cater for those young people living near to the centre itself; therefore their community is made up of the young people living closest to the centre. Street workers may have contact with a wider group of young people depending on where the worker goes, and mobile bus services may also see a broad range of young people depending on where they park. 'Community' is used as an all inclusive term, encompassing all young people in the catchment area of the service. Unless young women are specifically targeted as a group requiring attention, they will remain in the minority of youth service users.

The aims set by each agency impact on the kind of services offered, and the definition of the target group affects the kinds of young people using the service. Across all agencies surveyed, definitions of the target group varied only slightly, with the majority taking on the broad definition set by the funding programme. It seems as though with many of the agencies, the target group and agency aims have been set after the fact. That is, a building exists in

a particular locality, certain groups of young people use the service, and given the scope of the aims, objectives and target group of the programme, it is not difficult to superimpose what is necessary on to an agency. This is by no means a definitive statement; however given the circumstances it seems entirely possible. This does not account for the services that started within a particular premise and have moved into street work in an attempt to target those young people most disadvantaged. This strategy has occurred and continues to occur within the programme.

A similar situation exists across the aims and objectives of the agencies. Many of the objectives are about linking young people into appropriate services, referring them on to services; contacting young people and resourcing them; reducing drug abuse and reducing offending for individuals. The majority of the agency aims are reactive. That is, they deal with problems once they arise, rather than setting up programmes with a preventative or educative base. A small number of agencies (2) focus on a more pro-active approach within their objectives by providing for example, legal education, or an awareness of the issues surrounding gender stereotyping, and awareness of civil and industrial rights.

Worker perceptions according to the models

Much of the emphasis on certain ways of working with young people comes from the workers themselves, their beliefs,

attitudes, training, and understanding of the various issues affecting young people. Therefore, individual workers from across a number of agencies were questioned on their perceptions of abuse as it affects the young women using their services.

Youth worker perceptions of abuse can be understood by using the four models set out in Chapter 2; these models being: the Psychiatric model, the Situational model, the Sociological model, and the Feminist model. According to my analysis of the data, five youth workers could be seen to fall within the Psychiatric model, three within the Situational model, three within the Sociological model, and four within the Feminist model. My analysis is based on looking at all the information collected across both interviews, the core explanation of abuse given by each worker, and discussions with each worker as to where they felt they fit within the models.

The core explanation of the Psychiatric model concerns the perpetrator of the abuse being psychologically ill and in need of treatment. This model focuses upon individual rather than societal explanations. The core explanation of the Situational model concerns dysfunctional families, where the abuse is seen as a symptom of deeper problems. Factors such as the impact of the environment, the effect of stress, and the use of alcohol by the perpetrator, are

some of the explanations used to describe the causes of abuse.

Generally, the youth workers who fall within the Psychiatric model spoke in terms of individual illness. One worker commented: "A lot of that's inbred, or you just get somebody with a violent nature. They can't help themselves". The definitions of abuse varied and were quite broad in nature, from: "When a kid is suffering because they're lacking something", to "Where somebody is damaged, and that damage is either physical, mental, emotional, spiritual". What these perceptions mean within the youth work context varied slightly from worker to worker. Most would support a young woman disclosing extreme abuse within the home by listening to the young woman. One worker would intervene by getting her out of the home if necessary. One worker would feel comfortable going into the family to act as a liaison between the young woman and her parents. Another would want to talk to the mother first . He reasoned that he would want to check out the situation first, as he would not want the father to be wrongly accused of molesting his daughter.

Strategies used by these workers in general terms include responding to individual cases where they arise, and for one worker, having pamphlets available for the young women to pick up if they choose. Another strategy used by a worker is to be a positive role model for the young people,

displaying love, mercy and forgiveness; reflecting his deeply held Christian beliefs.

The three youth workers falling within the Situational model tended to focus on conflict within families, conditioning, and outside stress on families as causes of abuse. Their definitions were also broad, ranging from: "Physical, sexual and emotional; those issues and neglect" to "Anything that makes a person react, or makes them uncomfortable or whatever". In a situation of extreme abuse for a young woman, generally the workers would listen to the young woman and not take any action unless agreed upon. Two workers would go through the consequences of intervention for the young woman; one would inform an outside agency and look at intervention if necessary; the other would be prepared to meet with the family or alert the authorities to the problem.

Strategies used by these workers generally include: helping young people when they ask for it, and setting rules at the drop-in centre to keep the space safe. In terms of combating abuse, the workers generally felt parents needed support to sort out their lives, and that resources needed to be put into the area of identifying and working with families who need it. Educating parents was also seen as a positive strategy.

The core explanation for the Sociological model concerns child abuse being a social problem, rather than an individual one. The impact of class, poverty, and racism for example can cause stress which individuals act out in the form of abuse. The core explanation for the Feminist model concerns the interplay between power and gender; with men as a group having power over women as a group, ideologically, structurally, physically and socially.

The three youth workers falling within the Sociological model gave various interpretations to the causes of abuse, but the connecting strand concerned the influence of society on individuals and the family. The definitions of abuse ranged from: "Anything that a child or person is forced to do against their will" to "It's when someone physically, mentally, emotionally, verbally, whatever, intimidates someone else". In the situation of a young woman disclosing extreme abuse at home, two of the workers would refer to their female co-workers, and possibly the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). The other worker brings up the subject of abuse with the group of young women with whom she works; alerting the young women to the appropriateness of broaching such a subject. This worker would also talk to the young woman, listen to her, and consider the SARC as an option.

In terms of how these workers would combat abuse, they suggested educating the public, changing long term policy

directions, and using the education system. One worker suggested that structural change must happen with personal change; that "there has to be a process between politics, structures and also the way people think and the way people feel". Strategies used by two of the workers include running an on-going young women's group, and a group for young men with violence issues. Both strategies are pro-active in their approach.

The four workers falling within the Feminist model referred to abuse and the causes of abuse as involving power and gender relations. Definitions ranged from: "The power relationship that is happening; so if anybody is more powerful and they're putting that upon someone else, well that to me is abuse. There's just a whole range that goes from the most obvious to the most subtle" to "The emotional stuff; the lack of support, the lack of someone to talk about stuff too". In the situation of a young woman disclosing extreme abuse at home, the workers suggested various strategies. One worker suggested linking the young woman into a local accommodation service run by women experienced in dealing with such issues. He would also suggest that the young woman link up with a local group run by women for young women dealing with violence issues. Another worker would intervene in the girl's home environment, taking her out if possible. This worker would also draw support from contacts in the local Department for Community Services office. The two remaining workers

would clarify the situation with the young woman, look at options and suggest the SARC. One of these workers who has contact with mainly Aboriginal young women would accompany the young woman to SARC.

Strategies that these workers use within their services tend to be pro-active. That is, they challenge and confront the behaviour of the boys toward the young women where ever possible, rather than waiting until particular problems arise. Two of the agencies run on-going young women's groups as part of their programmes. Much emphasis is placed on small level change. One worker commented:

> If we're going to fight things like rape and try to do something about that, then we've got to zap it right back to the real basic levels of wolf whistles on the street; just shutting other people out of conversation. Things that are really minor, but that are directly connected.

This worker also places emphasis on confronting within himself the ways in which he as a male uses violence. He has been involved for some time with a men's group exploring the issue. Other strategies used by the workers include: challenging systems and legislation that perpetuate discrimination against women and talking about the issue of violence as it impacts on young women.

Little (1984) refers to the difficulties that arise when youth workers following a Feminist approach challenge sexism and prejudice within their services. She says that promoting change requires not only skill, experience and confidence, but also compromise. Workers may find themselves alienated and isolated from the young people they work with, if they take every opportunity to challenge the behaviour of those young people. A female worker related how she did not feel capable of challenging the young Aboriginal men using the drop-in centre who regularly physically abuse their partners. "It's just a bit of a touchy subject, and not something I feel capable of doing". She was also concerned that challenging the boys would alienate the girls. "You have to prevent that from happening as well, because if that happens...it would ruin your whole position within the service".

Another aspect of challenging behaviour concerns how workers themselves sometimes feel challenged by what they encounter. It is essential for every worker to work on their own issues to do with violence in being able to support young women in any capacity (Delahunt, 1990; "Rape: learning to support young women," 1981).

Categorizing the youth workers within the four models gives an indication of worker perceptions and actions. All of the youth workers displayed an awareness of the social problem of child abuse. Some had experience with young people who

had been abused (mostly physically); those working with Aboriginal young people indicated coming across young women who had been physically abused quite regularly. Some workers had suspicions about certain young people, expressing concern that these young people were possibly facing physical and/or sexual abuse within their homes. The majority of the workers have never experienced the situation where a young woman disclosed being sexual abused within the home.

This scenario raises a few interesting points to consider. These are: firstly, the options available to workers when faced by situations of assisting young women who have been abused; secondly, the constraints workers face in practice; and thirdly, how the workers feel about a young woman disclosing to them.

Options

Across all youth workers in the study, a number of options were highlighted in terms of how they would approach a young woman disclosing sexual abuse within her home. This form of abuse I would consider to sit at the extreme end of the continuum. Most of the workers have never experienced this sort of situation in their current place of work, so gave examples of how they considered they would approach the situation, rather than action they have taken. Table

6.1 indicates a summary of responses made by the workers (see following page).

Interesting conclusions can be drawn from the table about how youth workers would respond to the case of an abused young woman. Generally, most of the workers would listen to the young woman, provide options that she could take, and support her in any decisions she made. These actions actually reflect one of the roles that youth workers play in their daily work. Given a number of different scenarios, such as how would they cope with a young person in a difficult legal situation, or a young person unsure about whether to leave school or home, many of the workers would no doubt give a similar response.

But the nature of that support, and the way that support manifests can differ according to the consciousness of each worker. An interesting point brought out in Table 6.2 is how some of the workers would consider setting up support groups for young women in their agencies who have been abused. The emphasis is placed upon working with groups, rather than individuals. It is also interesting to note that three workers from within the Feminist model would take this route. These three workers also take a pro-active stance in their agencies, constantly challenging subtle forms of abuse directed at the young women.

Table 6.1

Intervention according to model

Model	Intervention
Psychiatric	
Worker 1	Listen, support, information. Refer to experts if more than one young woman
Worker 2	Talk to her, see what she wanted
Worker 3	Listen, support, options, call into home, find counsellors, get advice
Worker 4	Talk to her mother, refer, support
Worker 5	Listen, support, options, contact SARC, intervene if necessary
Situational	
Worker 1	Listen, options, suggest SARC, suggest alerting authorities, meet with family, support
Worker 2	Support, information, options, set up support group for young women with outside agency running it
Worker 3	Intervene if necessary, inform appropriate body, support, options, go through repercussions of intervention
Sociological	
Worker 1	Refer to female co-worker
Worker 2	Listen, support, consider SARC
Worker 3	Listen, support, refer for counselling, refer to female co-worker
Feminist	
Worker 1	Link into accommodation service, refer to local young women's group looking at violence issues
Worker 2	Listen, support, clarify, suggest SARC, set up a support group for young women, get advice and support from outside agencies and other women
Worker 3	Listen, support, options, recommend SARC, accompany her to SARC
Worker 4	Intervene if necessary, get support, talk to local DCS officer, support, set up support group of young women

Also evident from the Table 6.2 is how three workers from the Psychiatric and Situational models view their role as not only offering support to the young woman, but doing this within the context of working within the family. However one worker commented:

> There's only two of us here, so we find that just working in family relationships can absolutely consume all our time for just a small core of users and we neglect the others.

Their beliefs about the role of youth workers obviously differ from many of the other workers in the study.

As stated previously, the majority of workers suggested that they would listen to the young woman and support her. Most would follow the direction set by the young woman herself. However, a few workers from across the models suggested that they would intervene into the family to get the young woman out either immediately, or if necessary. This response reflects taking on a larger involvement with the young woman almost immediately. All three workers however, would take this step in conjunction with an outside agency.

It is also obvious from Table 6.2 that there is a narrow range of options available to the youth workers; or, that they are aware of a narrow range of options. The Sexual

Assault Referral Centre is the agency mentioned by name by a number of the youth workers as a referral point. One worker mentioned making contact with the local Department for Community Services office where he has contact with supportive workers. Other workers mentioned informing "an outside agency", or "alerting the authorities". But when it comes down to it, the options for referral are rather limited. And it is interesting to note, that a few of the workers were prepared to take on running support groups for young women as part of their role; whereas many of the workers would prefer to refer the young women on.

Location of agencies has impact in terms of access to support services for young women who have been sexually abused. Workers from outer metropolitan areas discussed the problems of accessing services like the SARC because of difficulties with the times and availability of public transport. If these youth workers cannot find what they consider to be good local counsellors, then the options available to both workers and young women are severely limited. One worker commented that rather than his agency receiving more funding, he would rather see a sexual assault centre in the region where he works.

In terms of those youth workers in contact with Aboriginal young people, we find that in two cases the workers would talk to the young woman, with one worker recommending the SARC and accompanying her to the SARC; while the third

worker would refer the young woman to his female co-worker. One worker outlined a problem she has with referring any young women to available services:

> I always say that I'd go along with the young person if they wanted simply because of the fact that so many counsellors are non-Aboriginal...And that's one of the hard things is getting Aboriginal Health Workers.

The youth workers in contact with Aboriginal young women generally found that the young women didn't want to take up the issue of being assaulted. "It's more like they're just talking about it because it's not an issue that you'd do anything about". The workers have observed a high level of acceptance of violent behaviour towards young women within the group within which they have contact. A worker commented: "Their fathers beat their mothers and they just see it, and they think that it's all okay and no-one even questions it". These kinds of experiences have been documented in a number of studies. (See Atkinson, 1990; Bligh, 1983; Bolger, 1991). One worker stressed the difficulty in doing anything pro-active towards impacting on the amount of violence she sees perpetrated against the young women she has contact with and commented: "I suppose it's being such a small fish in a big sea"; drawing attention to the constraints faced by youth workers within their work context.

Constraints

A study by Cassidy (1990) found that most youth work agencies experience inadequate levels of funding, leading to instability in youth work service provision. Lack of resources means that the youth work field cannot establish regular employment patterns, a career path for workers, or adequate training provision. In a study of youth work graduates by Taylor et al. (1991), the majority of youth workers considered the salary levels too low, the career structure limited, low job security, and a lack of an award, union, and superannuation schemes.

Similarly in this study, the majority of youth workers cited problem areas such as lack of funding and the impact of one year funding on service provision. A number of related areas were also mentioned such as high staff turnover, the stress of having only one worker within an agency, and the amount of administrative work required.

Interestingly enough, no worker in the study indicated that financial rewards were the motivating force behind their involvement in youth work. The responses given by the workers as to why they were doing youth work had to do with wanting to be there for the young people, wanting to interact with people, sharing their experience of life with the young people, or to challenge attitudes and assumptions held by the young people.

The main issue identified by over half of the workers concerned the impact of yearly funding. According to some of the workers, yearly funding sets up a situation of instability for them and their agency. They do not know until very late in the year whether they will be re-funded, placing enormous stress on workers. One commented:

> It takes a lot of energy away from the job... I must admit over the last six weeks of last year I was just frazzled...I guess the yearly funding thing in terms of this place really stuffed us around because I've not known what's happening from day to day.

A situation is created where workers and young people have no guarantee of continuity. If an agency is considering work with young women who have been abused, continuity of staff would be a crucial issue; as would on-going programme development.

The issue of low levels of funding is also related to annual funding. A worker in a co-ordinator position discussed the difficulties he has with the funding arrangement in that he cannot offer an on-going commitment to staff. This is turn impacts on the relationships built up with the young people within the service, as mentioned above.

> It's difficult to find the right people and maintain their interest. Obviously there's an emotional drain, high burnout. To be certainly resourced is very important in these sort of programmes because it takes a while to establish relationships; and you really need some long term commitments from people to really be effective. I suggest that the Government or whoever is funding the project is wasting their money in having a high turnover of staff.

A number of workers also found that they are unable to plan long term under current funding arrangements. Generally, these workers found that they may pick up on an issue that needs attention, like for example, trying to set up a group for young women. However the workers find it difficult to maintain momentum and interest in projects that come up later in the year that have no guarantee of continuing.

One worker identified one year funding as problematic because the one year time frame is too short to be able to make any head way on difficult issues such as gender and violence. He commented :

> And it's really, really difficult to get this sort of stuff that we're talking about into a context that you can say, on paper, to whatever your funding body is, I have achieved outcomes for these young people. And to me an outcome is, 'I'll think about it'

This worker points to the difficulty firstly, in taking on a broad based societal issue, and secondly, trying to satisfy accountability requirements set by the funding body. Similarly, in the study by Taylor et al. (1991) a number of workers found funding guidelines to be restrictive.

Low levels of funding also impact on how workers are able to support the young people using their services. Many workers find it difficult to simply operate their services. "The level of funding has meant that the centre can't really function properly. I don't know whether that is supposed to happen or what, but it obviously happens with drop-in centres". Levels of funding impact on the numbers of staff employed within any one agency, the administrative load that these workers must carry out, and the training made available to the workers and volunteers.

An issue affecting a number of workers within this study had to do with being the sole worker within an agency. "I'm finding now that because there's more things like issues coming up that we're addressing, less of my time is spent with young people just talking to them. I'm having to make a real effort to get out of my desk". In the drop-in centre context this often means that if there is an emergency outside of the centre, the worker cannot leave the centre to attend to it. They could also find it difficult to

attend to a crisis within the centre on their own. Being the sole worker in a drop-in centre sets up dangerous work practices for those involved. Also, depending on the numbers of young people using the centre at any given time, the worker may find that they are unable to have meaningful contact with many of their target group. This is especially the case with the focus on young men in drop-in centre service provision. Being the sole worker also often means that there is no time left available to train volunteers (if the agency uses volunteers).

Those workers sharing full-time positions also experienced problems because of the funding issue. "I think the funding issue stinks. In an area this size to only have the two of us on 16 hours each. (And I put in more hours than they know about)...I think that it's disgusting". One agency has become very creative with the way one full-time position (in this case 34 hours) has been divided up. Five workers share the hours, allowing them to individually focus on certain areas of service provision. For example two female workers on three hours each per week, run the young women's nights. Two of the workers interviewed from this agency did not feel any major constraints on their work because of the way their time was divided up within the agency; indicating how internal work organization can affect practice.

It is interesting to note the areas that were not picked up as constraints by the workers. One such area is the role

played by management committees in the running of agencies. In the study by Taylor et al. (1991) a number of workers commented on the need for adequate resourcing and training of management committees. These workers found themselves stressed by the dual role of trying to satisfy accountability requirements by funding bodies, while also attempting to support their management committees. Interestingly, in the present study, only one worker felt pressured by expectations of his management committee. In fact the few comments made about management committees were positive.

Another area that was not brought out as a constraint on being able to work effectively with young abused women, was that of lack of training. Only one worker in this study commented on the issue. She said: "You can always have more training, you can understand the issues better". With only two workers in the study having had any training on the issue of child abuse, this is a significant omission on the part of the workers. However, as youth work is seen and paid as an 'unskilled occupation', training may not rate as a significant issue for workers for some time to come.

A small number of workers brought out different perspectives on the constraints they face in supporting young women who have been abused using their services. One worker highlighted the amount of support he is able to give young people in the context of a 16 hour week.

> I've got a certain amount of energy that I can use on other people, and well, I've got a certain amount of energy, and quite a bit of that has to be spent on myself. So yeah I think resourcing is an issue, but not in terms of providing more money for me to do things, but getting more people involved. Because I think I'm not really capable with dealing, on a counselling level, with more than five kids a week.

The issue then becomes once again, a resourcing one. Another aspect of constraints felt by workers was noted by a few male workers. They all felt it inappropriate at times to provide the main source of support to young abused women, and would prefer to refer them on to either their female co-workers, or an agency staffed by women.

The last area of constraints encountered by the workers had to do with the culture and attitudes of the young people themselves. Those workers in contact with Aboriginal young people commented on the difficulty in following up any of the cases of young girls being physically abused. "What I see is abuse and what the kids see as abuse are different things in some instances". This comment also picks up on the appropriateness or otherwise of non-Aboriginal worker intervention into the lives of Aboriginal young people; an issue that is keenly felt by this particular worker.

Attitudes of the young people can also act as constraints to working with young women. As discussed previously, young men may not respond positively to an attempt by workers to involve more young women in their services. A worker from a service that runs a regular young women's group commented:

> The young guys, actually when we first set up the young women's group as a weekly thing, they'd come and harass week in, week out. They'd come around, yell and scream and throw things at the window and all that stuff.

As pointed out earlier in the study by the Fulham Girls Project (1984), any workers considering devoting more time and space to the young women using their services, need to plan for the resistance which will undoubtedly come from the young men using those services.

One worker in the study also discovered that young women may initially be reluctant to being involved with women only groups, and that he as a worker would be limited in setting up such groups without training for volunteers and the young people themselves. The Fulham Girls Project (1984, p. 5) highlights the time and patience needed to set up young women's activities: "Overcoming all the difficulties, and building up relationships within the group is a gradual, step by step process, and the results

of the work emerge only slowly". They stress that work with girls can be just as exhausting as work with boys.

Worker feelings about abuse and work with young women

The general impression given by the workers in the study is a preparedness to support young women disclosing abuse. This preparedness ranges from having pamphlets available for young women to pick up, to referring a young woman on to another agency, to becoming involved with a young woman's family, to removing a young woman from her environment in conjunction with outside agencies, to setting up support groups for young women within an agency. As is evident from these strategies, the workers are prepared to become involved in work with young abused women at differing levels of intensity. Two factors impact upon this situation. One is how the workers see themselves; and the other is worker feelings about abuse and about work with young women.

Rather than seeing themselves as holding positions of power over the young people and being somewhat distanced from the young people, the workers in this study saw themselves much more as friends, and available as someone to talk too. Given a feminist approach, this situation could be used to enhance the relationship between women workers and young women in particular; drawing upon commonality in experience faced by all women (Nava, 1984). A male worker

in the study who identified with many of the experiences related to him by the young men he works with, talked about how much he learns from the young people every time he goes out on the street. This worker, who falls within the Feminist model, stressed the commonality of experience faced by himself as a man, and the young men he works with:

> One of the most important issues is to get out of your own comfort zone and really put yourself in a position like 'I'm not comfortable here, I have to stretch a bit to be here'; which means that you're on your toes and that comes across in what you do as well. It's kind of like: 'okay it's not just us as expert, us as groupworkers, or us as interviewers or researchers or whatever, it's us as people with a similar sort of space to yours.

Other workers in this study however, considered that they could lend support to an individual young woman who had been abused, but if there was a situation of a number of abused young women, that would "belong in the hands of experts". Some workers considered themselves friends to the young people with no expertise in the area of abuse - even though a number of them experienced abuse in their upbringing.

The long term effects of sexual abuse permeate every aspect of a person's life (Bass & Davis, 1988). Two of the workers

in this study who were sexually abused as young people, talked about coming to terms with this and the impact the abuse has had on their working lives. A female worker commented:

> I've been really honest with the kids. One night I sat them down and said 'look I'm just going to tell you straight, this is what happened, this is my problem'. And from that point on it's just been different because I was honest and they can now understand why I had that conflicting personality.

Over half of the workers in the study have themselves experienced or witnessed abuse in their upbringing. This does mean however, that they feel more confident in supporting young women who have experienced abuse; it varied depending on the individual.

A number of workers cited personal dilemmas they felt would impact on the amount of support they could offer young abused women. These dilemmas concerned: not having an adequate understanding of the issues surrounding abuse, not having the experience to deal with abuse issues, and not feeling confident to be able to support young women. They would all attempt however, at whatever level, to support the young woman.

Conclusion

Comments made by two different workers reflect the opposing ends of a spectrum of views held by workers within the study about the issue of work with young women and abuse. One worker commented:

> I mean you've got to weigh it up. What are your issues, and I mean it's something that doesn't come up too often, so it will have to be a low 5%. And you sort of say well, I haven't got training for that sort of thing.

While the other worker said:

> If I thought a whole group of young women had issues around abuse that would be the perfect opportunity to link them together, to say well look, this is not your fault...I would find the time because if I could work on that sort of level with a group of young people, it happens so rarely you can do that, I would find the time

Much of a worker's response to work with young abused women depends on their consciousness and commitment to working with young women. As is evident from the first comment, the issue of abuse is not a priority within that particular service; but one must ask how the abuse of young women will

ever become a priority if the service does not begin to cater to the needs of young women in the same way it does for young men. The second comment reflects a strong motivation on the part of the worker, to working with groups of young women and working through their issues of abuse. The workers in the study would sit between these two ends of a spectrum; the majority placing more emphasis on working with young men.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

This study has examined youth worker perceptions and responses to issues of abuse faced by the young women using their services. The approach I have adopted throughout is set within a feminist framework, drawing upon feminist theories of abuse and work with young women. Feminist methodology led me to use an interactive process when collecting the data.

The youth workers who took part in this study showed a positive response to working with young women who have been, or are being abused. The two major factors impacting on their responses to abused young women were the importance workers place on targeting young women, and the many constraints encountered by the workers in their daily practice.

These points were highlighted by the 12 workers who were able to attend the final group meetings. This third major step of the research process involved talking to small groups of workers (in three regionally based groups) about their responses to the issues raised in Chapter 6, and to the research process itself. During the discussions, a number of other issues were raised.

Most of the workers involved in these groups reiterated the negative impact that yearly funding had on their work with

abused young women. The workers stressed that the process of making a young woman feeling comfortable and safe enough to disclose being abused could take longer than one year. They also stated that continuity of youth work staff was crucial for this process to occur.

What also became evident from these discussions is the unique position that youth workers hold in being able to support young women who have been abused in the long term. However, problems arise for workers in trying to 'measure' this support in order to justify continued funding. Many of the workers commented that so much of the work that they do is not measurable. Much of the content of youth work practice is about building and maintaining relationships with young people.

Take the example of a worker who knows that a young woman with whom they work has been abused. The worker may provide information and emotional support to the young woman. The worker may also attempt to inform the young woman about her rights given an abusive situation. The worker may also provide a referral to another agency. Such referrals, however, may not always be appropriate given the sensitivity surrounding abuse issues. One worker commented:

> A lot of young women I work with...I just don't think they'd want to be involved with being referred anywhere else. It's almost huge enough to even express

> the stuff that's happening in their lives to one adult person, let alone more.

The young woman may or may not choose to act upon her situation at that time. This does not mean that on-going support given by the worker is no longer needed. Rather, the young woman may act upon her situation when she is ready, which could be at a later stage in her life, and could depend upon the content and quality of her interaction with the youth worker.

How then, can the work done with this young woman over a long period of time be measured? The funding body requires that agencies provide statistical information about the work that they carry out. "As far as DCS goes, their whole bit is about how many young people you saw and outcomes and what you actually did for specific young people and how it worked and how successful it was". Given the example outlined above, the 'success' of the intervention is not easily quantified in these terms. Until the 'relationship building' content of youth work practice is recognized, many of the possibilities of work with young abused women will remain hidden.

Another issue raised within one of the groups of workers, concerned the need to make contact with other workers in the human services field and to start to establish ways of integrating service provision to some extent. In the case

of an abused young woman, the workers commented that it would be useful to get to know workers from SARC for example. These workers stressed that they could not refer a young woman to people that they did not know. They also discussed acting as supports for each other in their work with abused young women.

The workers also requested that copies of the study be sent to the funding programme and other relevant government departments. They requested copies of the study for themselves as well.

The issues raised within these groups illustrates the on-going and interactive nature of the research process used in the study. In the groups, workers not only responded to the information provided in Chapter 6, they also engaged in sharing information about their experiences of work with abused young women. One worker talked about her own experience of abuse for the first time in front of a group of people.

All of the workers who attended the group interview commented on the usefulness of the research process. Workers commented that they gave out information and then got something back from it. One worker commented that she will use the information received to help evaluate service provision. Another worker commented that he not only

learned from the process, but it also gave him an opportunity to reflect upon the work he is doing.

> I found it really useful for a couple of reasons. One was that it was quite educational as well as just putting out information about what we do and how we do it. It also means that we have to think about what we're doing....With this method there's responses and interactions and you hear about what other people are up to as well....The other thing is that this chapter - it's good information and it makes sense and you can sit down and read it quite happily....The end result is something that's a whole heap more useful than your really dry stuff.

Another worker appreciated being asked for his opinion.

The research process was indeed a dialogical one, with the exchanging and challenging of ideas being central to the process. Much of the significance of the study rests in the way in which the research was conducted. By gathering information in such an interactive way, a whole area of youth work practice with young women was opened up for discussion and debate. For many of the workers it was the first time that they had the opportunity to discuss and learn more about issues concerning child abuse.

The study is also significant simply because the issues surrounding the abuse of young women in our society were raised. A female worker who was sexually abused as a young woman commented on the difficulty in even broaching the subject of abuse.

> It's hard to tap into because you're so ashamed of yourself. Because the first thing you do is blame yourself; the second thing you do is come down on yourself; the third thing you do is kill yourself because you can't cope with it. You also don't want anybody to know because you're too scared that they're going to walk away or start calling you names.

The opening up of the topic of child abuse amongst workers is a positive step on the road toward many of those workers feeling more confident in bringing up the topic with young women.

Upon reflection it seems that much of what I learned as part of undertaking this study was shared with the workers in a number of ways. Beliefs about practice with abused young women were discussed and challenged. I also found myself passing on relevant articles that I discovered as part of the research process to a number of workers. A few of the workers also asked for my advice in dealing with difficult and sensitive situations concerning young women with whom they were currently working. In these cases I

found myself drawing upon my personal experience of abuse, as well as my experience as a youth worker in the field.

As the interview process was occurring I also noted my observations of the process, and the ways in which workers seemed to be responding to the process. I was constantly encouraged by the openness of the workers; at times feeling quite honoured by the courage shown by some workers when they were sharing with me their own experiences of abuse.

I also noted with on-going interest the impact of the process in terms of 'catalytic validity'. I could not say with any certainty that many of the workers experienced a 'change in consciousness' as a result of the research process. However I feel confident that many of the workers learnt something about abuse and young women from being involved in the process. I would suggest the term 'expanded consciousness' as best describing the impact of the process on the workers who took part.

For example, during the second interview I presented to the workers the concept of an abuse continuum as part of the Feminist model. I was attempting to draw attention to a broader definition of abuse that incorporated subtle forms of abuse being perpetrated against young women as well as the more extreme forms. Four workers then recalled incidences that they had recently observed of girls being frozen out of sport by young men, new girls being harassed

physically and verbally by a group of young men, and boys jumping in and taking over conversations. These workers did not 'take on' feminist ideals because of the research process; however, they did begin to consider ways of targeting young women more in their everyday practice.

Any strategies looking at combating the abuse of young women need to be pitched at a number of levels. These would include work within individual centres; work with other agencies and groups already involved in challenging violence against women and in supporting the survivors; and work in areas of influencing policies affecting young women. Related areas requiring input also include training; the position of women workers within the field; working practices; resourcing issues; and the emotional energy of the women workers involved in trying to achieve a change in the overall oppression of women.

In terms of work within individual centres, the continued use of sexist language and threats against young women and women workers needs to be challenged, by both women and men working within the centres.

According to the London Rape Crisis Centre, attitudes of the adults outside of the family such as youth workers, can be crucial in determining how a young woman copes with being assaulted or raped. Workers need to be prepared to listen and support abused young women over long periods of

time, not just initially. This means that workers need to examine their own feelings about the issue to gauge whether they feel able to take on a supporting role. Most youth workers are not trained to deal with cases of abuse, and may feel unable to provide the support a young woman needs. It would be useful then for workers with young women to get together to support one another in their own exploration of their feelings about abuse and violence, both in the workplace and outside of it. This process could put the workers in a good position to be able to support girls in supporting each other, and take away some of the fears involved in bringing up the subject ("Rape: learning to support young women," 1981).

One of the most powerful weapons of the abuse, violence and rape of women, is the silence surrounding it. Unless youth workers are prepared to discuss the issues of violence openly within youth services, we are doing young women a gross injustice. According to Nicholls (1981, p. 53), "we must be committed to discovering ways of raising the topic and dealing with sexual abuse. There <u>are</u> ways. We cannot go on saying it is too difficult an issue".

Moving the strategies onto a broader level would require working collectively with women's groups and appropriate men's groups (i.e., Men Against Sexual Assault) that challenge violence against women and having input into policy decisions regarding sexual abuse and domestic

violence as these impact on young women. Other strategies would involve lobbying for counselling services specifically for young women and for refuges for young women who are survivors of violence. These strategies are needed to impress on government the reality that living at home for many young women in our community is to live in abuse.

The responsiveness of the youth workers involved in this study - in grappling with the issues and in examining the ways in which they work with young women - provide some hope that 'raising the topic' can indeed lead to concrete action at the level of immediate work practices and in direct face-to-face interaction with the victims of abuse.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Introduction

- purpose of research
- process
- confidentiality

Participant details

- M\F
- age
- cultural background
- number of workers in agency
- length of time in youth work
- training relating to child abuse
- training background

Aims

- of agency
- personal aims
- target group
- cultural background of target group
- position of worker in relation to target group ie expert, professional, colleague

Service context

- numbers of young women using service
- age of young women
- breakdown between young women and young men
- patterns of usage by young women ie frequency of visits, length of stay, singly or as group
- issues brought up by young women
- issues brought up by young men
- any differences? reasons for differences?

Perceptions of abuse

- what is abuse?

Personal experiences of abuse

- personal background
- experience of abuse in this service and others

Causes of abuse

- why does abuse occur?
- underlying values and assumptions, ie individual at fault, family, society
- how would you change this situation?

Intervention strategies

- signs of abuse
- any action taken?
- problems with intervention
- sexual abuse example, "a young woman discloses being sexually abused by her father, what would you do?

Constraints on practice

- any constraints, ie funding, resourcing, staffing, management, administrative, support issues?