Developing practice or management struggle? Barriers to effective youth work practice with young women living with violence

Judith Kulisa

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DEVELOPING PRACTICE OR MANAGEMENT STRUGGLE?

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE YOUTH WORK PRACTICE WITH YOUNG WOMEN LIVING WITH VIOLENCE

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This thesis is presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.
ABSTRACT

The research process described in this thesis brought to consciousness, for myself, the researcher, and for the youth work practitioners involved, the limitations placed upon their ability to practice effective youth work by the divergent understanding of ‘youth work’ held by those responsible for either managing or funding the services in which they worked.

The study set out to discover why youth work practitioners were not identifying or responding to the needs of young women living with violence at home. The study sought to identify the problem and then to formulate practical strategies to enhance youth worker knowledge and skills in working with this group of young people. What was discovered, however, is that the thirteen youth work practitioners involved in the study lacked confidence in their understanding and ability to respond to the needs of these young women; whereas, through focus group discussion and the development of concept maps they demonstrated that they do have a good understanding of the issues surrounding family violence, which young people might be affected and what sorts of supports might be useful for them.

Significantly, focus group discussions highlighted tensions between what these youth workers believed they should be doing or felt that they were capable of undertaking as youth work professionals and the expectation of their management. Also highlighted is the limiting nature, experienced by these workers, of the way in which services are organised as a result of funding arrangements dictated predominantly by government funding sources.

Two separate groups of youth work practitioners were involved in the study: six of whom were employed in drop-in youth centres managed either through local government or through a community based multidisciplinary agency; and seven detached youth workers operating in an inner city environment. Non-contact managers of three of the drop-in centre services employing youth workers involved in the study were also interviewed.
DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

(i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education.

(ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or

(iii) contain any defamatory material.

I also grant permission for the Library at Edith Cowan University to make duplicate copies of my thesis as required.

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Date: .....................................................
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I would like to acknowledge my daughters, Victoria and Natasha, for their often unspoken support and Natasha’s refusal to proof read anything for me! Not forgetting, of course, my grandson, Keenan, who occasionally allowed me to use my own computer to complete the task of writing; and helped me to maintain focus and a sense of humour. Finally, my brother, Bob, and sister-in-law, Jean, who acknowledged my achievements and did agree to proof-read!
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

Violence at home, more commonly known as ‘domestic violence’, has only recently been identified as a problem in Australia. Child abuse was recognised as an issue in the 1960s (Yeatman, 1980) and some dimensions of domestic (or family) violence as a crime in Australia during the 1980s (Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003a). Prior to this violence in the home had not necessarily been acknowledged as a criminal act and violent men were often protected in law (see for example Mouzos & Makkai, 2005, p. 40). Mouzos and Makkai also note that “violence between intimate partners” continues to be “socially sanctioned” (p. 40). Due to the mores surrounding violence within the family, it is difficult to be certain of the frequency of family violence and child abuse or maltreatment in Australia, but it is believed to occur quite extensively throughout the community (see for example Blanchard, 1999; Blanchard, Molloy, & Brown, 1992; Draper et al., 1991; Gilding, 1997; Murray, 2005; People, 2005; Seth-Purdie, 1996). “2.1 percent” of Western Australian women involved in a recent study reported having experienced domestic violence during the previous twelve months (Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia, & Donovan Research: Marketing and Communications Research Consultants, 2001, p. 11). In the Australian community generally, research has estimated that as many as “1 in 3 youth [have witnessed]... physical violence in their own homes. About 16% reported current violence (including yelling) in their homes” (McIntosh, 2003). These figures are apparently indicative of levels throughout Australia and young women, particularly those who have experienced violence at home, are the most vulnerable to ongoing violence in intimate relationships (Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia, & Donovan Research: Marketing and Communications Research Consultants, 2001). In the UK:

Conservative estimates suggest that 1 in 4 women have experienced domestic violence (DV) at some point in their lives, up to 15-20% in the past year. Violence within a relationship is more likely to begin or escalate during pregnancy and after separation. In up to 90% of cases of domestic violence against women the abuse is witnessed by children. Indeed in a quarter of cases children are themselves subjected to violence. It is estimated that only
2% of incidents are reported to the police, and on average a woman will experience 35 episodes of domestic violence before disclosure. (Kearney, 2003, p. n.p.n.)

Young women who live with violence may believe that they are responsible for their situation and carry shame and guilt (Blanchard, 1999). They may not feel comfortable talking to anyone outside their immediate family about their situation (Kulisa, 2000), thus challenging their ability to disclose. Studies undertaken in Western Australia during the 1990s (Allbrook, 1992; Blanchard, Molloy, & Brown, 1992; Omeleczuk, 1992; Walshe, 1995) identified the difficulties young women had in disclosing their situation to youth workers or other professionals who might be in a position to assist them. Previous research (Kulisa, 2000) identified that many young women living with violence are unaware of supports that might be available to them. As Blanchard (1999) points out, children exposed to violence in the home “grow up under a genuine handicap.... They frequently have no one to turn to for comfort and support, as both parents are involved in bitter domestic hostilities which take up all their energies. Because of the element of secrecy in domestic violence the children are also estranged from outside sources of comfort. These children are very much alone” (p. 5).

It is well documented that without intervention in their lives, as adults they are likely to replicate the violence either as victim or perpetrator (see for example Blanchard, 1999; Bowlby, 1988; Caughey, 1991; Draper et al., 1991; Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003a; McIntosh, 2003; Mugford, 1989; Seth-Purdie, 1996) and they may experience recurrent “post traumatic stress syndrome in later life” (Blanchard, 1999, p. 9).

In Australia, youth workers come from a range of ‘disciplines’ and youth work, as a practice, has been described as ‘undisciplined’ (Bessant, Sercombe, & Watts, 1998, p. 230; Sercombe, 1997, p. n.p.n.). What youth workers do is ill-defined, thus enabling a range of practices to be claimed as youth work (Poynting & White, 2004). Specific training for youth work has only become readily available across Australia during the last thirty years; for example in 1987 in Western Australia, Edith Cowan University (then the Western Australian College of Advanced Education) introduced a degree level youth work studies program. This program remains the only degree level youth work course available in Western Australia. Courses in youth work are available at degree level in a number of Australian universities (Bowie, 2004; Corney, 2004), predominantly in Victoria and New South Wales; and throughout Australia courses are available through TAFE (Bowie, 2004; Corney, 2004). Formal youth work training was initially offered by the YMCA in Sydney “(from 1947 to 1963)” (Bowie, 2004, p. 36).
Nevertheless, many workers employed in the field continue to have no formal youth work training (Bessant, 2004a; Sercombe, 2004); they may have education in social work or psychology or recreation. Those with training may have received education in areas that do not provide a critical insight into society; they may not have been introduced to skill development that included social analysis or understanding of the various ideological perspectives that inform Australian society and therefore accept society as it is as socially just.

The youth work field in Perth, as in other parts of Australia, is quite diverse with the focus on the provision of services to young people considered ‘at risk’. Most of the services available are operated through not for profit organisations and managed by voluntary management committees. Increasingly local government are becoming involved in the provision of services to young people and there are now a number of local government authorities operating a range of youth services in Perth and the surrounding region. The two principle multi-disciplinary religious organisations which operate programs and services for young people in Perth (‘Anglicare’ and ‘Perth City Mission’) both also operate services nationally across Australia. Services offered are both formal and informal and may offer programs designed to encourage young people into education, training or employment; they may offer supported or crisis accommodation; counselling services focussing on alcohol and other drug use; support within schools; or alternative education. Or they may be less formal and provide recreation or drop-in centre activities which could include music or adventure recreation or just hanging out with friends. Those who manage or operate within these services may or may not be skilled in the practices of youth work.

**Research Problem**

Young women, who have experienced or are experiencing violence in their family of origin, are likely to be unaware of the presence of youth workers, and other professionals in the community who are in a position to provide support to them. These young women may feel that it is unsafe to disclose their situation. In an environment where there is no requirement for the mandatory reporting of child abuse¹, West Australian young women involved in a previous study (Kulisa, 2000) claimed that attempts to get the violence to stop resulted in the violence, or behaviour of the perpetrator, being minimised or of other family members (notably the mother) being

¹ Western Australia remains, at the time of writing, the only State in Australia without mandatory reporting.
blamed for the violence. These young women claimed that mandatory reporting would have made their situation more difficult; they were concerned that if they disclosed what was happening in their life they would be forced to take action they were not ready to take (for example, legal action against the perpetrator or leaving their family). A consequence of no legal requirement to report child abuse (including physical and emotional violence) is that those individuals with whom the young women involved in the previous research did attempt to discuss their situation were ill-informed and ignorant of the immediate needs of these young women.

Young women living with violence remain invisible (Omelczuk, 1992) and youth workers are unaware or unable to help. The research problem then, asks ‘why does this occur?’ Why is it that youth workers fail to provide the support that these young women require? The research question is two-fold:

- **a)** In what ways can youth workers provide greater assistance to young women who are experiencing, or who have experienced, violence in their family of origin?
- **b)** What strategies, programs or modes of practice can be adopted by youth workers that will enable them to make contact with and support these young women?

What is concluded in this thesis is that the youth workers involved in this study, as a result of their work environment, have limited control over the outcomes for young women using their service who also live with violence. The ideological position of government bodies that direct funding for youth services and those who develop the strategic direction of individual youth services needs to be extended to acknowledge the perspective of professional youth workers and to identify the structural limitations that currently exist. The thesis concludes that changes to the strategic direction of services rather than the professional practice of individual youth workers would provide the greatest benefit to young people living with violence.

Youth work, as it has been defined in this thesis (see page 10 and Chapter 5), necessitates a social justice approach to work with young people. Others have defined youth work differently (see, for example, the discussion of youth work practice offered by Banks, 1999; Jeffs & Smith, 1987; and White, 1990). Youth work may be seen as providing social control of young people. The motivation for youth work from a social
control perspective is “to socialise young people to fit into society and [uncritically] accept its norms” (Jeffs & Banks, 1999, p. 94); social justice is not considered relevant to this practice which in itself is discriminatory and serves to exclude “those not considered problematic” (p. 93). Youth work, according to the definition adopted here, enables young people “to learn and develop the capacities to reflect, to reason and to act as social beings in the social world” (Young, 1999, p. 1). Effectively services for young people may be operated from an understanding of social justice, but funded according to an assumption of governance or social control. The agencies involved in this study were predominantly either managed or funded according to a functionalist ideology which by its nature excludes social justice and aims to maintain the status quo. The tensions between what management or funding bodies sought to achieve through service provision and what youth work practitioners sought to achieve made it difficult for more than minimal support to be made available to these young women. The thesis concludes that the youth workers involved in this study were already doing all they could to provide necessary support to the young women, living with violence, who used their service, but were hampered in their attempts to do so by services which were organised in accordance with a different set of principles and aims. The thesis further concludes that the structure of youth service provision needs to change for young women to be better supported through the violence and for social change to work towards eliminating the violence in the first place.

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 asserts that youth work has developed over time. In Australia, youth workers are attempting to claim professional status in an environment in which youth work is not clearly defined. Other professionals with whom youth workers are involved in the course of their work have little understanding of what youth workers do and are reported to dismiss the opinions of youth workers in the assessment of the situation for young people (Sercombe, 2004, p. 21) (see also Chapters 4 and 5). The review of literature explores youth work from a critical perspective as well as from functionalist and feminist perspectives. A significant number of individuals employed as ‘youth workers’ have limited training and the literature reviewed differentiates between the ‘worker with youth’ and the ‘youth work professional’ (Bessant, Sercombe, & Watts, 1998). Omelczuk (1992) and Walshe (1995) maintain that services which do not provide a feminist, or at least critical, approach to their work may not provide an environment in which young women feel that their needs can be safely met. The nature of family violence is explored and the
potential effects for young people living with violence are also discussed (see for example Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia, & Donovan Research: Marketing and Communications Research Consultants, 2001; Foster, 2005; Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003a; Gonzalez-Mena, 1994; Jenkins & Bell, 1997; McIntosh, 2003; Osofsky, 1997; B. D. Perry, 1997; Shore, 1997; Zeanah & Scheeringa, 1997).

Answering the research questions has contributed to the body of knowledge surrounding youth work practice particularly as it relates to meeting the needs of young women living with violence. The final chapter of this thesis clarifies some of the tensions between youth workers and the services in which they operate and identifies the nature of the limitations under which they work. It also asserts that, according to the literature (see for example Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia, & Donovan Research: Marketing and Communications Research Consultants, 2001) where young people are ‘at risk’ they are also more likely to be ‘at risk’ of living with violence. For the purpose of my research it is assumed, therefore, that young women who attend drop-in centres or access detached youth workers are more likely to also be living with violence. Exploration of the practice of the youth workers involved in this study and the environments in which they are employed has identified the principle source of the sense of impotence expressed by practitioners attempting to support young people living with violence (see Chapters 4 and 5).

**Justification for the research**

According to Sercombe (2004, p. 20), Australian youth work practice has only developed beyond the ‘child savers’ movement in the last two or three decades. The development of youth work in Australia replicated that of British youth work in that services for young people were introduced predominantly by voluntary (often Christian) organisations during the latter half of the nineteenth century in response to middle class concerns for the welfare of working class young people, and young men in particular, who were not employed at school or in the factories (Maunders, 1984; Smith, 1988; White, 1990). The concern at this time was that young people with nothing to do were ‘at risk’ of criminal or anti-social activities; the motivation for practice was the development of “people who exhibited the qualities of obedience, discipline and punctuality; people who participated in public service and had a clear religious commitment” (Young, 1999, p. 12). Youth work practice today offers a variety of services to young people who, predominantly, are considered to be ‘at risk’. For the
most part services funded through government are provided to ensure that young people are able to change their behaviour or their situation to better fit acceptable social norms. White (1990, p. 174) points out that, in contrast to the definition of youth work which includes social justice, “[f]rom a structural perspective, the role of youth work is to control and direct the behaviour of young people in society. Its main function is to contain ‘youth problems’, rather than to challenge the basis from which these problems stem”. From a critical perspective, on the other hand, youth workers do have the ability to advocate on behalf of young people; they are able to address structural inconsistencies and encourage appropriate social change through the empowerment of the young people they work with. Australian youth workers have available to them a range of opportunities for professional training, including that which encourages social justice and a critical appraisal of the cultural and political environment of Australia (Corney, 2004). Also increasingly, government agencies are relying on youth workers to provide services to young people in the community.

This “shift of government functions to non government bodies and agencies” (White, 1990, p. 171) together with tighter control of service activities through the introduction of stricter service guidelines and funding agreements (1990) has lead to a sense of helplessness among youth workers attempting to deal with a variety of complex issues. Youth workers are constrained in their practice by lack of resources, time and knowledge and may feel that what they are able to offer young women living with violence is inadequate (Allbrook, 1992; Blanchard, 1999; Omelczuk, 1992; Walshe, 1995). Omelczuk (1992) and Walshe (1995) identified among youth workers a lack of awareness of the power imbalances which impinge on the ability of young women to assert their rights both in the broader community and within the youth service. Omelczuk (1992) maintains that only those youth workers who adopt a feminist approach to their work are likely to provide gender specific services which attempt to address these imbalances of power. Although changes have occurred in the youth work field since Omelczuk’s Western Australian study, the fact remains that unless workers have an awareness of gender issues and power imbalances, the youth service may not provide young women with an environment in which they feel safe.

This study set out to explore the practice of youth workers operating in an informal environment with young women living with violence. Allbrook (1992) argues that it is essential to ask young people what their needs are in relation to services which aim to address those needs. This was undertaken in previous research (Kulisa, 2000).
In order, then, to explore youth worker practice in a particular environment, I would argue that it is essential to discuss this practice with these same practitioners, specifically, in this instance, using an action research approach and building on the information gathered previously.

Essentially participatory action research is research which involves all relevant parties in actively examining together current action (which they experience as problematic) in order to change and improve it. They do this by critically reflecting on the historical, political, cultural, economic, geographic and other contexts which make sense of it....

The hard sweat and toil comprises the long hours of talking and thinking and sharing the results of our ‘fieldwork’ with one another. The moment of inspired thinking is when collective values are expressed in a new way of connecting ideas or a new way of ‘naming’ the world, that advances the collective situation of participants. (Wadsworth, 1998, p. n.p.n.)

A group of youth workers employed in a number of drop-in centres across the greater Perth metropolitan region were invited to be involved in the study. A further group of detached youth workers were later invited to be involved as part of the triangulation process of the study; and additionally the non-contact managers of three of the drop-in centre youth services were invited to provide a management perspective to the discussion that had taken place with drop-in centre youth work participants.

Being cognisant at the outset of this study of the issues that young women living with violence might be facing and correspondingly clear of what their needs within the youth service might be, it made sense to then discuss with youth workers what their understanding is of the situation for young women living with violence and what they believed they might be able to do to better support them. With the information already gleaned from representative young women (Kulisa, 2000) and the additional information provided by these youth workers it was anticipated that specific modes of practice or programs that would encourage more effective practice for young women living with violence might be identified. To meet the needs of these young women, I considered it necessary to identify what youth workers currently do, and to encourage reflection on their own practice in order to ascertain what changes might be made to better serve this specific group of young people. Recent brain research literature claims that without intervention young people who grow up in violent environments are likely to remain in violent environments, thus replicating for their own children the environment they experienced as a child (Garbarino, 1992; Gonzalez-Mena, 1994;
Jenkins & Bell, 1997; Osofsky, 1997; B. D. Perry, 1997; Shore, 1997; Zeanah & Scheeringa, 1997). This is reflected in cycles of violence and suggests that it is critical that youth work practice effectively meets the needs of these young women.

**Methodology**

The conceptual framework that informs this study incorporates social constructionism and socialist feminism. A critical research paradigm has been adopted and data collection organised according to participatory action research methodology which necessitates both researcher and researched working closely together to explore issues raised by the research problem. The study focused on the practice of two separate groups of youth workers employed in either a drop-in centre or detached youth work environment and working within the greater metropolitan region of Perth, Western Australia. Data collection was carried out over a two and a half year period (April 2001 to December 2003) and comprised focus groups, individual interviews, concept maps and reflective journals. It also included interviews with non-contact managers of three of the drop-in centres at which six of the participants were employed. Data was analysed using a combination of methodologies: concept maps were analysed according to an adaptation of the process of analysis offered for concept maps by Novak and Gowin (1984) and ‘Colaizzi’s steps’ as described by Colaizzi (1978) and Crotty (1996). Individual interviews and focus group interviews were analysed using the methodology described by Colaizzi (1978) and Crotty (1996). The data offered through the medium of reflective journals was not however included in the analysis as insufficient journals were made available and the information that was available through this source provided limited additional value for the purpose of the study.

Through the process of reflection which took place during the focus group interviews it became clear that the workers involved in this study tried to provide effective support to young women they thought may be living with violence and that their approaches were limited by the environment in which they were employed. Further exploration with non-contact managers confirmed that what youth workers believed they were employed to do was likely to be at odds with what the management thought they should be doing at the youth centre. Tensions that existed between the expectations of the youth service non-contact management or of funding bodies and the youth work practitioner made it difficult for youth workers to provide the support they believed they should be able to. The issue that emerged was that support for young women was limited by the perspective of those responsible for the strategic direction of
youth services (in general through funding or of a specific youth service) rather than the skills and understanding of youth workers.

**Outline of this Thesis**

Presentation of this thesis has been developed according to an adaptation of the model outlined by Perry (1998) and further developed by Love (2002). The thesis has five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the thesis by providing a background to the study; it identifies the research problem and justification for the research; describes the methodology chosen for the research; provides an overview of the structure of the thesis; identifies relevant definitions used within the thesis; and identifies delimitations of the research and key assumptions which inform the research processes. Chapter 2 highlights research issues relevant to the study through a review of literature which explores operational and ideological perspectives of youth work practice; a feminist critique of the gendered nature of youth work; and family violence from a feminist perspective, a functionalist perspective, and the perspective of young people. In Chapter 3 the research methodology and process is explained and linked to the conceptual framework, which is also described, and to the research problem. Participants are introduced and an explanation provided which clarifies the organisation of the groups of participants involved in this study. In Chapter 4 a comprehensive analysis of the raw data is undertaken; at this stage the data, in line with Colaizzi’s methodology (1978), remains descriptive and is organised according to the mode of data collection and group of participants. Chapter 5 provides discussion of the findings and the implications for practice that are identified through this research.

**Definitions**

The following terms have been selected for definition as they provide information and clarification about the environment in which the youth work practitioners involved in this study might be operating. These terms in particular have been chosen to inform the reader of the various roles of participants in the workplace and the type of practice that youth work participants might engage in. Further these terms provide the reader with some of the characteristics of the young people with whom the youth work participants are likely to be involved.

At Risk: the concept of ‘at risk’ is ill defined and assumes a range of meanings. For the purpose of this thesis ‘at risk’ will be assumed to mean young people who are, or are in danger (or at risk) of failing academically, living in a
violent environment, not having effective social supports in place, and/or being homeless. It will also include those who are otherwise disadvantaged because of any of these conditions being present in their lives. Further discussion of ‘at risk’ is offered in Chapter 5 where a governance perspective is added to the more commonly understood definition offered above.

Detached youth work: a service which provides casual and informal services to young people on the streets or other non-youth work venues where young people habitually congregate with their peers. The detached youth work service included in this study works primarily with young people who are street present and homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Drop-in Centre: a service which provides casual and informal services to young people and primarily focuses on recreation and leisure activities; but which also provides a facility to which young people can ‘drop-in’ during opening times as and when they please.

Family of origin: the family in which a young person is brought up. This may include parents, step-, foster- or adoptive parents; siblings; aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents.

Non youth work other professional: an individual, professionally trained in a discipline other than youth work to provide a specific service in the community; for example, a teacher, community health nurse or mental health professional.

Violence: acts perceived by the recipient as negative and detrimental to their well being. Physical, emotional, social, spiritual or economic forms of deprivation, neglect or abuse; acts that damage the self-esteem and self-worth of the recipient and that are carried out without thought to the negative outcome for the recipient. In this thesis the terms ‘domestic violence’ or ‘family violence’ have been used, not necessarily interchangeably but in context with the literature. The term ‘living with violence’ is also used to convey that the young women central to this study are living in an environment which is shrouded in violence. ‘Family violence’ suggests that all family
members are affected by the violence. Violence within the family often includes child abuse, neglect or assault.

Youth work: a range of practices in which young people are accepted as the primary constituent and in which the broader context of social influences are taken into consideration and which have social justice for young people as their primary aim.

The purpose and the principle aim of youth work is further discussed and defined in Chapter 5.

Youth worker: a person formally trained or otherwise, who provides a mentoring, support, recreational, advocacy and referral role for the benefit of young people and who works according to the principles defined above. A youth worker generally will be employed (paid or volunteer) by a funded community or religious organisation established to provide services to young people.

**Delimitations of scope and key assumptions**

The qualitative nature of participatory action research means that it cannot, by itself, be used to generalise across the broader community identified by the research. For this study the research community is ‘youth work practitioners who operate within informal environments’ within the greater metropolitan region of Perth, Western Australia. The findings of this research cannot be generalised across the community of youth work practitioners in informal environments throughout Australia. The research does provide, however, a useful insight into some of the tensions that exist for many youth work practitioners employed in drop-in centres or detached youth services throughout Australia and these observations may be relevant to other youth services in Australia or internationally.

This particular community of youth work practitioners was chosen for this study for two reasons. Firstly, the nature of the informal youth work setting, although providing many benefits, can make it more difficult to address sensitive issues, such as family violence, with young people. Youth work in informal settings is predicated on the young person having voluntary involvement in the service offered; sometimes it can be difficult to develop an appropriate rapport with young people whose behaviour the youth worker is also attempting to control; sometimes it can be difficult to develop an
appropriate rapport with the young person who is withdrawn and does not interact readily with other service users or who may be threatened by the behaviour of other users. Workers in this environment then may have greater difficulty in encouraging young people to disclose their experience of violence than a practitioner to whom a young person has gone specifically for that purpose. Secondly, accessibility to youth work practitioners was an important consideration. Living and working in Perth and involvement in the youth work field over a considerable number of years has meant that I have developed a knowledge of the local youth work field as it operates within this region. For these reasons the specific community of youth work practitioners were selected for this study.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has provided the background information which underpins the remainder of this thesis. It has identified the research problem, provided justification for the research, described the methodology chosen and provided an overview of the structure of the thesis. It has also defined key terms relevant to the study and identified delimitations to the study as well as key assumptions which have informed the research process. The various aspects of the study are now explored in more detail in the following chapters.
CHAPTER 2
RESEARCH ISSUES

Introduction

This chapter will explore some of the issues relevant to the research question. It will review literature that discusses youth work practice from a variety of operational and ideological perspectives. This review will provide an overview, from a feminist perspective, of the identification of violence within the family as a social problem and the effects on children who witness or experience violence at home. The implications for young women and critical youth work practice are discussed as is the gendered nature of youth service provision and the professional nature of the role of the youth worker. The review also discusses the role of functionalism, as dominant ideology, in the formation of services; what young people understand to be unacceptable as far as the concept of ‘violence’ is concerned and how the needs of young people are identified and met through youth work practice.

Discussion of the review of literature is structured to provide the reader with an understanding of issues relevant to the research problem: youth work practice in an informal setting with young women living with violence. The structure adopted is as follows: this introduction establishing the structure and content of the chapter; a feminist analysis of services for young people – ‘gendered space’; discussion of the implications of functionalist ideology for provision of services for young women living with violence; discussion of behaviour young people identify as ‘violent’; the establishment of the first women’s refuge in Australia as a result of the activism of left wing feminists during the early 1970s; a feminist analysis of domestic (and family) violence; a feminist analysis of ‘family’ and the implications of childhood exposure to violence; an exploration of youth work practice from a critical perspective, the issue of professionalisation, and the current situation in the youth work field; discussion of what young people identify as their ‘needs’ in relation to youth work practice and violence. The review is then brought together through brief discussion in a ‘conclusion’.
Gendered Space: a feminist analysis of youth work practice and its implications for young women living with violence.

If, as Foreman (1987), claims, youth work began in response to a perceived need to contain and control working class young men in early industrial societies – in order to better fit them to a middle-class, Christian way of life – then it is not surprising that youth workers often feel at a loss to deal with the myriad of social issues faced by young people today. Not only are services still predominantly serving young men (Omelczuk, 1992; Walshe, 1995) but they continue to provide social control through recreation and male role modelling designed to encourage conformity in young people’s behaviour. According to the 1991 Edith Cowan University Youth Work Studies Accreditation document, Youth Work training is based on a demand

...by government, by employing agencies and by workers themselves....to increase the...effectiveness of intervention of youth workers in a period in which greater and greater demands are being placed upon workers to deal with a multitude of social problems affecting young people. (Youth Work Studies, 1991, p. 5).

Youth work agencies are in the main considered accessible to both young men and young women, but they are in fact gendered (Carpenter & Young, 1986; Omelczuk, 1992; Steward, 2001). Often, young women find it difficult to have their needs met in a service responding to the needs of the more vocal, outspoken and ‘acting out’ male attendees. Young women who have been abused are particularly vulnerable in this situation and isolated by it because of the gendered nature of their abuse (Bloom, 1995; Caughey, 1991; Omelczuk, 1992). Services for young people are also, directly or indirectly, predominantly funded by government (state, federal or local) instrumentalities to undertake specific tasks identified by the funding body as a priority. Frequently this priority will include the social control of a specific group of young people (see discussion on 'Crime Control and the New Right' in van Krieken et al., 2000, pp. 440-441). Services are provided to offer personal development programs (for example, employment training and anger management) as well as recreation and support to young people (Carpenter & Young, 1986). Often, the group of young people for whom these services are provided will be male, or they will be long-term unemployed, recidivists, at risk of failing academically (all situations experienced predominantly by young men) or at risk of homelessness (Gill, 2001; Moon, Meyer, & Grau, 1999; Omelczuk, 1992). According to a relatively recent report on the health of Australia’s young people (Moon, Meyer, & Grau, 1999), young men (15-24) are more likely to be
unemployed (p. 181), and less likely to participate in post compulsory education (p. 168) than are young women of the same age. Young men, therefore, are more likely to be “street present” and accessing services provided to young people at risk. Young women at risk, on the other hand, are more likely to be invisible and isolated from services (Carpenter & Young, 1986; McRobbie, 1991; Omelczuk, 1992; Steward, 2001); although young women have greater representation in the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) figures than do young men. “For clients below age 25 years, there are 1.2 times as many females as males” (Moon, Meyer, & Grau, 1999, p. 201). Whatever the description of the program or service offered, unless the target group are identified by gender, then service users will, almost without exception, prove to be predominantly male (Carpenter & Young, 1986; Gill, 2001; Omelczuk, 1992; Steward, 2001).

Omelczuk’s 1992 Western Australian study – ‘Youth Worker perceptions of Abused Young Women’ – explored issues such as worker understanding of power within society, the family and youth services. Although this study was undertaken more than a decade ago, the situation for some young women has changed little. Few of the agencies involved in her study provided services specifically for young women; and few of the workers interviewed had much understanding of the dynamics between young men and women in their service. These workers appeared to be unaware of the role they played, through their practice, in the hegemonic support of the status quo. One worker is reported as expecting young women to challenge young men for equal space and power within the agency without making available to them the necessary support to make this happen (p. 142). A few of the workers Omelczuk spoke with endorsed feminist ideology; and it was only these workers, she claims, who reflected in their practice an understanding of the difficulties faced by young women in general, and abused young women in particular, in dealing with what is effectively an imbalance of power. More recently, a set of practice standards has been developed as part of the national (Australian) ‘Working with Children Project’ to address issues of service provision to children and young people ‘living with domestic violence’ (Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003a). Identified in consultation with those already providing these specific services, “[t]he standards provide a framework that provides guidance and direction to service providers who wish to continuously improve the provision of services to children and young people living with domestic violence” (p. 8). Among
those standards is the claim that “Services [are expected to] work within a framework of domestic violence that acknowledges power and gender issues” (p. 19).

The necessity of the acknowledgement of ‘power and gender issues’ in service provision is highlighted by Moore, Moretti, & Holland (1998). If we accept their assertion that abused young people’s behaviour is likely to reflect the aggression they have experienced in close relationships, then it is easier to understand the sense of intimidation that may be experienced by an abused young woman. As individuals, we expect that others will behave in ways that we are used to; and abused young people

…attempt to engage others in ways that are consistent with their working models of self and others and consistent with their past experiences of care. Their past experiences often contain recurring themes of inconsistent or ambivalent care, neglect, abuse or abandonment. They often have learned that aggression and violence are integral elements of close relationships. In many cases they have developed aggressive patterns to force reluctant caregivers into responding (Crittenden, 1992). These youth typically provoke aggressive and rejecting responses to their attachment overtures. This dynamic of mutual aggression and violence is the “glue” of their relationships in general (Dutton, Saunders, Starzomski, & Bartholomew, 1994; Bartholomew, 1990). From their perspective, youth care programs with a control-orientation offer little in the way of new experiences and serve to confirm their beliefs about self as “bad”, unworthy, and unlovable and others as rejecting and coercive. (Moore et al., 1998, p. 9).

For these young people then, coping may mean “trying to provoke or control others” (Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia, & Donovan Research: Marketing and Communications Research Consultants, 2001, p. 16).

Bloom (1995) and Caughey (1991) tell us that children who have been abused may grow up with a sense of isolation and lack of trust of others – particularly adults. They also claim that recovery is predicated upon experiencing acceptance and nurturing in an environment that does not reflect the power imbalances prevalent in our society. Therefore, in an environment where workers have little understanding of the power imbalances which they hegemonically support, and the youth service is full of aggressive young men as described by Moore et al. (1998) above, how can a young woman, experiencing abuse, identify herself as anything other than deserving of abuse? The vulnerability of these young women is increased, and they are unlikely to feel comfortable raising issues of concern particularly if consideration is also given to the possibility of young men with a “pervading sense of ‘entitlement’”, as is suggested by the Crime Research Centre et al (2001, p. 21), also being present. Omulzcuk (1992)
identified that, how a youth worker is likely to respond to young women who have been abused, is dependent upon personal understanding and experiences, worker skill, workplace constraints (which must include funding structure and agency philosophy), personal philosophy and the confidence of the worker. She claims that lack of experience or training may put youth workers in danger of unquestioningly accepting what is considered normal and thereby reinforcing structural inequalities that support the abuse of women and children.

Often, as suggested by Omelzcuk (1992), young women who have experienced violence will continue to play the child to another’s adult. The abused young woman needs to maintain control of her environment in ways that she did as a child and “may attempt to provoke abuse to avoid resigning herself to the feelings of helplessness” (Caughey, 1991, p. 25). By maintaining the hegemonic attitude to youth service provision adopted by some workers, the youth workers themselves will provide the adult to that young person’s child missing the opportunity to challenge the view the abused young woman holds of herself or to challenge the social structures that make that view possible.

It is essential that recognition is given by workers, not only to power imbalances within the agency, but also to similar imbalances of power affecting young women at a family and an institutional level (Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia, & Donovan Research: Marketing and Communications Research Consultants, 2001; Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003a; Omelczuk, 1992). Culturally, “our problem solving paradigm is still individual and competitive….we inevitably look for who is right and who is wrong” (Bloom, 1995, p. 412), whereas Gevers and Goddard-Jones identify the need for a child or young person centred approach. They claim that:

To have a child centred focus means that staff have an appreciation of and respect for the needs of children/young people and understand that their needs are not always consistent with the needs of their family or the needs of the organisation (or other organisations involved in the welfare of the child). The staff are able to put the well being of the child/young person first, and where necessary, advocate on their behalf. (Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003a, p. 21).

Acknowledgement that the primary constituency of the service provider is the child or young person is, according to Gevers and Goddard-Jones (2003a, p. 22), inherent to
practice that supports a child centred focus, an argument that reflects Sercombe’s (1997) ‘professional youth work practice’ discussed later in this chapter.

During the early 1990s, youth services, at least in Western Australia, were likely, according to Omelczuk (1992), to operate within an environment that supports the status quo. Existing power structures were not challenged and the vulnerability of abused young women was likely to be exacerbated because workers often had little understanding of the gendered nature of the services they provided or the specific needs of these young women. In fact, more recently, workers with limited training may adopt perceptions of violence in the family which are similar to those of the general community (Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003a; Omelczuk, 1992). The general community are most likely to understand family violence in terms of dominant ideology which, during the 20th Century at least, has been influenced by functionalism (van Krieken et al., 2000). This influence and the resultant consequences for youth work practice are discussed in the following section of the literature review.

**Functionalist ideology, family violence and youth service provision**

Much of the literature on domestic violence is written using a feminist critique. This section of the literature review attempts to provide a functionalist perspective of violence within the family and the influence that this perspective has for service provision for young people living with violence.

According to functionalist theory, society is organic in nature; social institutions, such as the family, exist in order to ensure the smooth running of society as a whole. Van Krieken et al (2000), discuss a functionalist analysis of the family according to Talcott Parsons who claimed that “the American family retained two ‘basic and irreducible functions’ which are common to the family in all societies. These are the ‘primary socialization of children’ and the ‘stabilization of the adult personalities of the population of the society’” (2000, p. 328). These functions work to ensure consensus: that is each member of any given society agrees on the values within that society. According to Sargent (1988, p. 49), functionalism assumes that Australian “culture is based on consensus”. Family dysfunction, violence, criminal activity and other forms of ‘deviance’ are believed to serve the function of challenging the social structures and thereby influencing social change or reinforcing social cohesion (Giddens, 1990; Sargent, 1988; van Krieken et al., 2000).
Deviance is explained as the result of inadequate integration or cultural disaffiliation – lack of attachment to the culture. These theories endorse existing social arrangements of Western democracies and operate with an absolute definition of crime and deviance. The most they seek is the reform of society rather than any wholesale change in social arrangements. They also agree that ‘social control mechanisms’ (the police, the courts etc.) are necessary to keep deviance in check and so protect social order. (van Krieken et al., 2000, p. 433).

As writers such as Bessant (2004; 1998), Maunderes (1984), White (1990), Wong (2004) and Sercombe (2000) have identified, services for young people are most likely to be organised to meet the needs of ‘at risk’ young people. Parsons defines “youth culture as more or less irresponsible and immature…. ‘marginal’, ‘at-risk’ or ‘deviant’ youths are those who are not ‘socialised’ enough…and they are deemed to be at risk of not making the transition to adulthood successfully” (Wong, 2004, p. 11); young people are therefore defined as deviant. If maintenance of social order is reliant on agreed “norms and values of behaviour” (Hurley & Treacy, 1993, p. 8), it is necessary to ensure that young people are appropriately socialised to ensure the reproduction of these norms and values. In their discussion of models of youth work practice, Hurley and Treacy (1993) suggest that the purpose of education, according to a functionalist perspective, is the transmission of “a selected set of traditions and values to the young generation and socialising pupils so that they can fit into their future roles in society” (p. 9). They claim that youth work provides ‘informal’ and ‘non-formal’ education for young people; through interaction with youth work practitioners, young people are exposed to opportunities for ‘learning’. The values which inform that learning opportunity are informed by the ideological position of the service and particularly the youth work practitioner and “…the underlying message for young people will be determined by the values and beliefs of the adults” (p. 3) in that service. Hurley and Treacy’s ‘character building’ and ‘personal development’ models of practice, Cooper and White’s (1994) ‘treatment’ and ‘reform’ models, Wong’s (2004) ‘traditional’ youth work practice, and Smith and Shaw’s (2001) description of social work practice with young people all provide insight into the type of service most often provided for these young people.

Jeffs and Smith (2004), tell us that “a view of ‘youth as a problem’ continues to drive policy discussion and… is linked to notions of social exclusion. Certain groups of young people are seen in deficit, as a problem – and the ‘answer’ to this behaviour is to impose more control on the one hand (Jeffs and Smith 1995), and, on the other, to direct
‘remedial’ resources and interventions at those deemed to be in need” (p.2). Policy aimed at young people, then, is directed towards ensuring that young people are contained and controlled and educated to ‘fit’ society. Government funded services for young people include employment training, alternative education, drug rehabilitation, crisis accommodation and recreation and aim to change the behaviour and attitudes of young people to reduce the risk of ‘dysfunction’ or ‘anti-social behaviour’. The 2001 evaluation of the Job Placement, Employment and Training (JPET) Programme claims that the primary objective of the programme is to “…also ensure they [young people] secure career paths and sustainable futures” (Butlin, Malcolm, Lloyd, & Walpole, 2001, p. 5). This programme works with young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to ensure they receive the necessary support to avoid ongoing homelessness and unemployment. The program’s aims include establishing ‘a stable lifestyle’; attaining ‘life skills’; and preparation and maintenance of ‘entry-level training or work’ (2001). Using Wong’s (2004) terminology, this type of service for young people is funded according to a “traditional” approach to practice. Accordingly, he claims:

Youth as a life stage does not have much meaning except as a time for learning and reproducing existing social values and social norms as if they were something taken-for-granted... [thus] neglect[ing] the sociocultural and political factors that underlie young people’s affect, attitude, reasoning and behaviour. (2004, p. 11).

Similarly, the approach adopted by state and federal governments towards the use of alcohol and other drugs by young people claims to work with the community but ignores “the relationship between drug related activity and the local community context” (White, 1999, p. 35). The focus remains on “law enforcement” (Phillips, 2000, p. 43) rather than the partnership with the community that is claimed. White (1999), points out the contradictions apparent in the rhetoric of community based harm minimisation approaches which are accompanied by a ‘zero tolerance’ approach of law enforcement authorities. The functionalist position reflected in much of the policy directing programs working with young people and the ‘abuse of drugs’, neglects “the wider social dynamics and problems pertaining to specific local neighbourhood areas” (p. 35).

According to the functionalist perspective explored above, family violence, as deviant behaviour, serves to either influence social change or to reinforce social
cohesion (Giddens, 1990; Sargent, 1988; van Krieken et al., 2000). Young people are deemed to be ‘at risk’ as a result of family dysfunction or improper socialisation within the family unit and services developed with young people in mind are likely to be provided for ‘at risk’ young people and to have a social control function. Acknowledging that functionalism informs much of the assumptions within Australian society, the following explores various positions on family violence. Firstly the understanding of young people in relation to violence more generally is explored.

‘Violence’ is physical, ‘abuse’ is wrong!

Children and young people are some of the least powerful, and most vulnerable members of society, and are therefore particularly at risk in situations of domestic violence. (Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003a, p. 19).

Young people interviewed during the Australian Institute of Criminology’s research ‘Young people’s attitudes to and experiences of domestic violence’ (Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia, & Donovan Research: Marketing and Communications Research Consultants, 2001), although often victims of some form of abuse – sometimes within the family, sometimes by partners, sometimes outside of these relationships – found difficulty in identifying an experience as ‘violent’. They often did not see themselves as ‘victims’ or they were limited in their identification of violence (p.41). The term ‘violence’ seemed to be reserved for acts of physical violence. However, “they may perceive neglect and verbal abuse by parents and others as wrong…” (p. 41). The findings of this research provides an insight into the lack of consistency across the community generally about what is violence and what is not; what is acceptable behaviour and what is abusive. For example among the mainstream group of young people interviewed there appears to be an understanding that the “use of ‘fair’ physical violence by adults to children for the purpose of discipline within the family unit” is okay, whereas “domestic violence… [is] a far less acceptable form of violence” (p.29). What is identified as ‘violent’ appears to depend upon whether or not the behaviour is approved of. According to the Crime Research Centre, “‘[v]iolence’ is a term used by those who disapprove of the behaviour, rather than by perpetrators, who generally seek to rationalise and justify their behaviour in part by avoiding pejorative labels” (p.8-9). These researchers go on to define domestic violence as “the unacceptable use of physical (including sexual) force to control or coerce” (p. 9) providing a limited view of the nature of domestic violence. More commonly, domestic violence has been defined as:
...an abuse of power perpetrated mainly (but not only) by men against women in a relationship or after separation. It occurs when one partner attempts by physical or psychological means to dominate and control the other. Domestic violence takes a number of forms. The most commonly acknowledged forms are: physical and sexual violence; threats and intimidation; emotional and social abuse; and economic deprivation. Many forms of domestic violence are against the law. (Partnerships Against Domestic Violence, 2000, p. 4)

The Crime Research Centre does acknowledge, that power and control “represent the key motivating forces behind the use of domestic violence, and link physical and sexual violence with other forms of familial violence, including psychological, emotional and financial” (2001, p. 9). Some men are able to exert power and control in this way because women are, relative to men, more likely to experience social and economic disadvantage as a result of economic dependence and child rearing responsibilities (Murray, 2005, p. 29)

**Family Violence – a feminist perspective**

Despite feminist activism, which has been central to the development of services and policies to address family violence, violence in the family was not formally identified as a social issue (in Australia) until 1969 when South Australia became the first Australian state or territory to introduce mandatory reporting of child abuse (Yeatman, 1980); and the some of the more physical aspects of “domestic violence was not recognized as a crime in Australia until 1987” (Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003a, p. 19). In fact, much of what constitutes domestic violence remains outside the criminal code and acts such as assault and murder which are considered crimes were not always responded to in law. Rape in marriage only became an offence in Australia during the last two decades of last century (Murray, 2000). The fact that violence in the family had not been responded to at a policy level until relatively recently has been discussed by a number of writers, many of whom identify the main contributing factor for this delay to be the acceptance of violence as a social norm (see for example Draper et al., 1991; Gittens, 1993; Lee, 1985; Rowan, 1985; Yeatman, 1980). These writers also identify the social position of women as contributing to the delayed recognition of family violence. Lee (1985) likens the position of women to that of slaves. She claims that women have experienced ‘segregation’ not dissimilar to that of ‘Black Americans’ and draws comparisons between the oppression of women and the oppression of people of colour suggesting that “segregation… initially reflect[s] prejudice, and then, once institutionalised, …tend[s] to perpetuate, and no doubt even aggravate, it” (p. 69).
According to Gittens (1993), although changes in laws associated with the rights of the individual have increased individual protection, “[c]lose examination…reveals that they have basically not been to protect the woman, but to protect her as the property of her father/husband” (p. 52). Others (Abbott & Wallace, 1990; Millet, 1970; Mugford, 1989; Walby, 1990 for example) discuss the patriarchal nature of modern social structures – which they claim are violent – particularly the family. They blame these structures for the social acceptance of violence generally and its prevalence within the family. According to the Crime Research Centre, et al. (2001, p. 13), violence is more likely to occur in an environment where it is common-place and culturally acceptable. Whilst “aggressive forms of masculinity such as those condoned in sport and media representation” (Murray, 2005, p. 31) remain unchallenged, violence will continue to be perceived, at least by some, as culturally acceptable. In discussing familicide – which is a relatively rare occurrence in Australia, with seven cases recorded in WA in the ten year period 1989-99 – Johnson (2002) suggests that a possible motivation is the perception of a man’s…wife and children to be possessions that belong to him and, when faced with actual or impending loss, he adopts the attitude of “If I can’t have them no-one will”. Add to that the characteristically symbiotic nature of abusive relationships where loss of a love object threatens the survival of “self”, and a much more complex picture emerges… (Johnson, 2002, p. 3).

Family violence is today more likely to be identified as an issue of control and an ‘abuse of power’ (see for example the definition offered by Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003, p. 9). Seth-Purdie (1996, p. 171) suggests that “violence between family members results from an interplay of personal, family and socio-cultural factors” and that there are a number of “measurable risk factors associated with particular forms of family violence; as the number of risk factors present in a family increases, so does the likelihood of violence” (p. 172). However, Seth-Purdie claims that men and women express violence differently and for different purposes (p. 161). There is a perception that men must be competitive and aggressive; they use violence as domination, whereas violence is used by women to express “pent up anger” (Seth-Purdie, 1996, p. 163). These differences are based on what Gittens (1993, p. 72) refers to as “Patriarchal ideology…embedded in our socio-economic and political institutions, indeed, in the very language we use, and as such encourages, cajoles and pressurises people to follow certain paths”. We live in a society that teaches children the legitimacy of violence and
coercion at both structural and interpersonal levels; violence through an abuse of power is reinforced and accepted as the norm.

The family and childhood exposure to violence

Another Australian social ‘norm’, the ‘nuclear family’, was in fact introduced as a concept by Talcott Parsons during the first half of the last century (Abbott & Wallace, 1990; Draper et al., 1991; Gittens, 1993). Traditionally, the family has developed as the site of both ‘social control’ and ‘social support’ (Mugford, 1989). The concept of patriarchal authority within the family enables some men to demonstrate an aggressive, non-caring masculinity (Draper et al., 1991; Hopkins & McGregor, 1991; Seth-Purdie, 1996) providing the opportunity for coercion, as well as overt and covert violence, where the services of women, that is their domestic labour and sexual favours (Gittens, 1993), are concerned. Violence within the family continues to be under reported and, where it is reported, often the implications are minimised or undocumented (Johnson, 2002; Seth-Purdie, 1996). As Johnson tells us, for the most part, family violence is “given insufficient weight and not seen in its full context….It is only recently that the long term effects on children who witnessed violence have been acknowledged” (Johnson, 2002, p. 5). According to Seth-Purdie (1996), “(c)hildhood exposure to family violence, as a victim of abuse or a witness of violence between parents, has emerged as one of the most important predictors of adult involvement in family violence, as a victim or perpetrator” (p. 138).

Childhood exposure to violence on an ongoing basis is most often traumatic and has been identified as a potential precursor to a pattern of brain development which hinders the individual’s ability to deal effectively with stress (Osofsky, 1997; B. D. Perry, 1997; Shore, 1997, and others). Based on a ‘use it or lose it’ hypothesis, Shore (1997) points out that “(a)dverse experiences throughout childhood can also impair cognitive abilities resulting in processing and problem-solving styles that predispose an individual to respond with aggression or violence to stressful or frustrating situations” (p. 40). Peer group interaction and attitudes are also important factors (Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia, & Donovan Research: Marketing and Communications Research Consultants, 2001; Partnerships Against Domestic Violence, 2000). Where the peer group legitimise violent behaviour it is far more likely to develop and become entrenched (Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia, & Donovan Research: Marketing and Communications Research Consultants, 2001, p. 14). So, although the family of origin is where “attitudes, beliefs and values”
are originally formed, they are further developed and become the ‘justification’ for the use of violence as a result of interaction with like minded peers (2001, p. 17).

Writers such as Bowlby (1988), Caughey (1991), Garbarino (1992), Perry (1997), Shore (1997) and Zeanah and Scheeringa (1997) identify the need for the development of at least one secure attachment as the child grows in order to mediate the severity of profound neurobiological changes, thus enabling the child to survive recurring violence. Without the development of what Bowlby calls ‘a secure attachment’, Jenkins and Bell (1997) maintain that young people exposed regularly to violence may become pessimistic, angry or demonstrate a sense of hopelessness. These same young people are likely to demonstrate revictimisation behaviours; they may be self-harming or involved in harm-seeking behaviour. They may be involved in alcohol or other drug use; have eating disorders or be suicidal. They may also do poorly at school (Jenkins & Bell, 1997). It is these behaviours that are then interpreted and responded to by those who work with young people. How they are responded to will provide the milieu in which the service will be experienced by young people.

**The issues**

The social position of women together with the cultural acceptance of violence as ‘normal’ has resulted in the acceptance of violence in the family until the recent past (Abbott & Wallace, 1990; Draper et al., 1991; Gittens, 1993; Lee, 1985; Millet, 1970; Mugford, 1989; Rowan, 1985; Walby, 1990; Yeatman, 1980). The effects on children who witness or experience violence in their family of origin is well documented (Blanchard, 1999; Johnson, 2002; Seth-Purdie, 1996) and includes issues such as anti-social behaviour, risk taking, alcohol and other drug use, suicide and involvement in violence either as a perpetrator or as a victim (Jenkins & Bell, 1997). A number of writers (Osofsky, 1997; Perry, 1997; Shore, 1997) discuss the effects of exposure to ongoing violence on brain development in the child; whilst others (Bowlby, 1988; Caughey, 1991; Garbarino, 1992; Perry, 1997; Shore, 1997; Zeanah & Scheeringa, 1997) discuss the need for secure attachment or support as the child grows. In light of this information, the environment offered in the youth service becomes significant when considering the needs of young women who have experienced violence at home. And, as has been seen from the literature reviewed at the beginning of this chapter, youth service provision is often ‘gendered’ in nature and does not necessarily meet the needs of these young women. The nature of youth work practice is looked at in more detail in the discussion that follows.
Youth Work Practice

According to Sercombe (Sercombe, 2004, p. 20), “Youth work is at the same time very old practice and a very new one….youth work in Australia has really only moved beyond a volunteer movement with principle interest in young people’s moral (and sometimes physical) hygiene in the last 25 years”. Australian Youth Work has a history which is based on the ‘child savers’ movement and had its beginnings in Britain in the 19th and early 20th centuries. A number of authors have provided the background to this practice and highlighted the social control nature that it has often taken (see for example Bessant, Sercombe, & Watts, 1998; Irving, Maunders, & Sherington, 1995; Jeffs & Smith, 1987; Maunders, 1984; Sercombe, 2000; White, 1990). This history is acknowledged and this section of the literature review will identify the disciplines involved in youth work practice today and provide an overview of the ideological perspectives informing these disciplines. The principal approach adopted by government to funding community services during the last quarter century will also be discussed; and an insight will be provided as to what these two separate aspects of youth work mean for the practitioner, their approach to their work with young people and the resultant implications for services.

As White (1990, p. 174) tells us, “(t)here is no single ‘practice of youth work’. Instead, there is a variety of approaches, many different kinds of motivation for entering the field, and substantially different contexts for the achievement of particular objectives”. Different approaches to practice are informed by different ideological perspectives inherent within the discipline informing the individual approach as well as the expectations of the practitioner. Cooper and White (1994) maintain that the “REASONS why a person engages in youth work, and the political or ideological understanding they have of the social order impinging on themselves and the young people with whom they work, have a major impact on the direction and quality of their youth work practice and the methods they adopt in daily routines” (p. 30). Service provision includes the critical approach offered by youth work studies, community development and some social work practitioners, as well as the more conservative approach of psychology and recreation.

As suggested above, a more critical approach to youth work practice has emerged alongside the changes suggested by Sercombe (2000). Wong (2004) refers to this newly emerging approach as ‘structural youth work’ and Smith and Shaw (2001) suggest that it has been influenced by the introduction of formal training for
practitioners. They also suggest that the advent of formal ‘youth work’ training in university and TAFE has increased worker concern with the idea of professionalism, worker skill levels and critical practice. Informed by a history of ‘anti-intellectualism’ (Bessant, 2004a, p. 19), youth work practice in the early 1990s was often quite conservative and offered by many either without any formal training or training in disciplines that did not provide the political and sociological critique offered by some of the university programs now available. It is this ‘anti-intellectualism’, according to Bessant, that has worked against the legitimacy of youth work as a profession.

How workers approach their practice and the motivation for that practice is discussed by Cooper and White (1994), who offer a range of perspectives which they correlate to specific types of youth work. For example they discuss four discrete ‘Models’ of practice: ‘Reform’, ‘Treatment’, ‘Advocacy’ (radical and non-radical) and ‘Empowerment’ (radical and non-radical). These models, they claim, are informed by corresponding ideologies and suggest ways of working which “are meant to be indicative of major differences and similarities of the approaches used at the grassroots levels” (p, 31). Wong (2004) takes this one step further claiming that youth work is undertaken according to “either a personal or a structural orientation” (p. 11). He goes on to “compare and contrast the two typical models of youth work [traditional or structural] as a means of examining the philosophy and practices of youth work” (p. 11).

Using what Cooper and White (1994) refer to as a ‘Reform’ approach, those involved in ‘behaviour management’ are most likely to come from a discipline involving a social psychological perspective. Wong (2004) suggests that this is a traditional approach to practice; one which aims to encourage, or coerce, young people into accepting social structures as they exist. This approach with both “normal” and “deviant” young people, he claims serves to reproduce “the next generation by forcing or encouraging young people to enter into the adult world and accepts its values and roles” (p. 15). Examples of this approach are offered by proponents of sport and recreation, among others and fit with what Sercombe (1997) describes as ‘work with young people’ (see discussion later in this section).

Bessant (2004a, p. 18) acknowledges that although sport and recreation “provide wonderful and effective opportunities to work with young people, they are not…the full story”. Morris, Sallybanks, Willis and Makkai (2003, p. 1), on the other hand, tell us that there is a:
This particular approach encourages young people to develop a “sense of belonging” (Cameron & MacDougall, 2000, p. 2) therefore, according to these writers, making full participation in society more feasible. Cameron and MacDougall suggest that such problems as “suicide, truancy, and illicit drug use” (p. 2) are ameliorated by increasing the opportunities for at risk young people to be involved in organised sport and recreation activities. Recreation and organised sport are used as tools for the reduction of criminal and anti-social behaviour by young people. From a crime reduction perspective, therefore, programs and policies should be designed:

- to reduce the supply of motivated offenders;
- to make crime more difficult to commit; and
- to create structures that increase the supervision of possible offenders.

(Cameron & MacDougall, 2000, p.2)

A combination of what Morris et al. (2003) refer to as “diversionary activities”, sustaining programs and the availability of ongoing support are, according to Cameron and MacDougall (2000, p.2), essential components in the success of these types of projects. “Moral and behavioural deficiency is identified as the cause of social exclusion and the formation of the youth underclass. Along this line of reasoning, moral and behavioural strengthening exercises and schemes can help to manage social exclusion experienced by youth” (Wong, 2004, p. 12). As far as these programs are concerned, ‘success’ is measured in terms of reduction in criminal activity by individual young people or in specific geographic areas as well as a reduction in ‘anti-social behaviour’. These approaches provide opportunities for young people to change attitudes and behaviours to ‘fit’ more closely to those deemed socially acceptable. Activities designed to “‘entertain” youth as an alternative to other, more antisocial behaviour” (Morris et al., 2003, p. 3) are, therefore, the primary objective for recreation and crime reduction programs.

Assisting young people to ‘fit’ more comfortably into society as it exists, along with reducing anti-social behaviour appear to be a primary concern for youth work
practitioners from a Social Work perspective (as espoused by Smith & Shaw, 2001). The aim of social work with young people, then, is to provide individual support to enable them to deal with, and adjust to, the pressures created at social and structural levels (Smith & Shaw, 2001; Wong, 2004). Young people, Smith and Shaw (2001) claim, have become disempowered by “negative societal stereotypes”; the child saver movement has been replaced with ‘social and psychological’ theoretical perspectives (p. 83-84). Through these ‘social and psychological’ theoretical perspectives, new categories have emerged into which young people have been placed and through which they have been ‘labelled’. Labelling has further alienated and marginalised young people (Wong, 2004, p. 13). And, according to Smith and Shaw (2001), media attention and adverse consequences of changes within society over the last 40 years have resulted in young people now being more likely to have “persistent and serious problems and disorders that require support” (2001, p. 85). This perspective maintains that young people are now more likely to suffer from a variety of problems or problematic behaviour than previously and young people are perceived as ‘victims’ in need of an advocate and counsellor (Smith & Shaw, 2001; Wong, 2004). The nature of the ‘problems’ experienced by young people today are, however, explained as “broadly sociological and sociopolitical” (Bagnall, 1999b, cited in Smith & Shaw, 2001, p. 86).

It seems that a non critical social work approach to work with young people is more likely to adopt the personal perspective identified by Wong (2004). This position accepts young people as either being ‘a problem’ or having problems and, although the remedy may lie within the young person, according to Smith & Shaw (2001), the ‘youth problem’ is structural in nature and related to social change during the recent past. Young people, as a consequence need to be assisted to find ways to better fit into these newly formed social structures. If we consider the models offered by Cooper and White (1994), it would appear that this type of practice with young people might closely resemble either ‘Treatment’ or ‘Reform’; the primary aim of these models is to help young people to ‘fit’ into society as it exists. Although the ‘Reform’ model identifies that there are some elements of our social structures that might benefit from minor changes it is not the role of those working with young people to do so. In both these approaches, any ‘problems’ are directly attributed to young people themselves either because “[y]oung people (youth) are considered to constitute a social problem and [are] a threat to social stability” (p. 31) or because they are “disadvantaged by their social environment or their upbringing….and] [b]ecause of this they may act in ways which
are harmful to themselves and/or to others…” (p. 32). The role of the youth worker from this perspective is to provide young people with the opportunity to address “personal or familial inadequacies and… [improve] social functioning at personal, interpersonal or familial levels” (Wong, 2004, p. 10).

This form of practice, according to Sercombe (1997) would fit more closely to work with young people than what he has identified as professional youth work practice. Sercombe maintains that:

Workers continue to report a range of practices which claim to be youth work, but do not measure up to practicing youth workers’ expectations of credible practice. These include things such as street evangelism, pure recreation programmes or “keeping them off the streets”, the involvement of youth workers in curfews and other street-clearing exercises, the employment of “youth workers” in detention centres, and their involvement in processes which may be against the interest of the young person concerned, such as breaching provisions in Mutual Obligation and Work for the Dole programmes. It is hard to see how the young person is your primary client when you have just cut them off their income for missing an appointment. (Sercombe, 2000, p. 2).

Using Sercombe’s argument, it would appear that the type of practice with young people described above is not designed for the primary benefit of young people, although young people obviously benefit from being included into society. Rather than young people themselves, the primary constituent would appear to be law enforcement organisations and the community as a whole. According to this non-critical perspective, young people are constituted as a problem.

**Youth Work, a critical perspective**

Where workers have taken a critical approach to their practice, White suggests that the motivation for their actions may still be open to interpretation.

For example, after describing the gains made by youth workers in Britain in securing benefits for young people such as youth facilities, excursions and camps, Nava (1984:7) comments that this kind of ‘softer practice’ nevertheless “remains predicated upon a welfarist cultural-deficit model which conceptualises certain sectors of youth as in need of supervision, protection and ‘life-skills’; which in short, tends to hang on to the notion of certain sectors of youth as a problem”. (1990, p. 175).

Identification of young people as a problem is a result of, among other things, government policy such as “the Factory Acts, policies of juvenile correction, and the
establishment of mass compulsory schooling in the 1870s” (Bessant et al., 1998, p. 71).

According to Bessant et al. development of the category of youth is also as a result of a broader notion of hegemony based on Foucault’s discussion of power which is “hard to see since they are ‘among the best hidden things in the social body’” (p. 72).

Hegemony in this sense informs the ways in which the community generally perceives young people and it is such hegemonic processes as the development of policies to contain or protect young people which lead others to see young people as either ‘problems’ – ‘a threat to society’ and in need of control – or as ‘victims’ who need to be protected. It is these processes also that ensure that the status quo remains, for the most part, unchallenged (Wong, 2004).

Sercombe provides a starting point for clarification of youth work practice from a critical Youth Work perspective. He maintains that:

While there is now a broad range of professions concerned with young people, it is important to try to clarify the practice of youth work specifically, not only for the benefit of youth workers themselves but also to help other professionals understand what youth work is, who youth workers are, how they can be used and when it is appropriate to refer a young person to a youth worker. (Sercombe, 1997, p. 17).

According to Sercombe, the practice of ‘youth work’ is defined by the nature of the relationship between a youth worker and a young person. He argues that for the practice to be defined as ‘youth work’, the youth worker has at the forefront of their practice that, among other competing constituents, the young person remains the primary constituent. He maintains that, although it is essential to develop a contract with all the competing constituents relevant to the particular relationship, the nature of that relationship is also crucial. The professional youth worker, according to Sercombe, works towards meeting the needs of the young person – who remains their primary client – within a framework that has limits, or boundaries. It is the responsibility of the youth worker to ensure that, from the beginning, the expectations of each component member is clear and that what each is able or prepared to give is also clear and stated up front. The relationship is not established to provide for mutual benefit, rather, the relationship is there to meet the needs of the young person without crossing the boundaries which are set up to ‘protect’ both the young person and the worker.

Bessant (2004a) supports this position whilst asserting that to have the young person as the ‘primary constituent’ is not enough, “youth workers and interested parties
[need] to develop a more clearly defined collective professional identity” (p. 19). They need to develop a professional identity which is informed by standards of education and training for practitioners that provide skill development and a critical approach enabling “graduates to see the ethical dimensions of the situations they enter into, to reflect on the issues, and to make informed and ethical judgments about their actions” (p. 19). Youth workers need to be able to identify the difference between Cohen’s (1972) “‘moral panics” and when there are serious issues needing careful and effective responses by policy-makers and youth workers” (Bessant, 2004b, p. 20). Youth work practitioners also need to be able to site their practice within a broader framework of social justice to ensure that the rights of young people are not undermined.

**Professional identity and service provision**

Youth work practice is framed within the context of what the various government agencies see to comprise the most significant social (or political) issues in relation to young people. A move, since the early 1980s, towards what Bessant et al. (1998) describe as ‘economic rationalism’ based upon ‘neo-classical economics’ has meant that, what ever the service being provided, expenditure must be reduced whilst increasing accountability and competition (Bessant, 2004a; Bessant et al., 1998). Agencies providing services to young people are most frequently operating as not for profit organisations and reliant on either government funding, corporate sponsorship or ‘charity’ for their survival. And whether these are available is dependent on how young people and the issues that affect them are constituted by government and the community. As Bessant et al. (1998) suggest, “[i]t is vital to know the dominant discourses in which current youth policy is being framed, and to be able to translate the interests of young people into those discourses so that the resources of government can be used to serve their interests” (p. 315). According to Wong (2004), the discourses used to identify funding priorities for youth services are available to youth workers as political tools.

Discourse by itself is a social construct, which is a way of selective seeing, hearing and thinking. Dominant discourse functions to marginalise the voice and status of those who are at the periphery. If the meaning of youth is not fixed, but socially and politically produced in discourse, then language and discourse should become important sites of political activity. (Wong, 2004, p. 14).

Political activity is difficult in an environment where the body that provides the funding source, and identifies outcomes and service criteria is most likely to be the
target of that political action. The restrictions introduced by ‘economic liberalism’ (Bessant, 2004a) has meant that often those services which are difficult to ‘measure’, particularly “preventative programs where measurable outputs are hard to find” (Bessant et al., 1998, p. 310), are often not valued by funding bodies and those in management roles. The ‘difficult to measure’ work undertaken by youth workers is often more significant for the young person than outputs more readily identified by government and funding bodies. Therefore,

[i]f ‘less tangible’ work is to remain part of the service to young people, it gets typically squashed between other activities like submission writing, tendering, administration, and the actual delivery of services. Furthermore the task of measuring output is time consuming, adding to the demands on youth workers….

Thus the net impact of the new managerialism includes insecurity for workers, increasing work loads, mounting pressure on services and increasing concern that some young people do not get the quality of service they need. (Bessant et al., 1998, p. 310).

Despite these restrictions increasingly impinging on the ability of workers to provide effective services, working conditions for youth work practitioners have improved (Smith & Shaw, 2001). But, as Sercombe (2000) points out, youth work practitioners continue to be marginalised professionally even with improved training and conditions. Youth Work as a profession remains marginalised, he claims, disadvantaging youth workers in their practice and limiting their effectiveness for young people. Youth work practitioners

…continue to be marginalised in professional teams, in professional consultations, or case management panels because their professional standing is not recognised by other professionals. Their knowledge and expertise is frequently dismissed, limiting their capacity to advocate effectively for their clients. There are some agencies that hire psychology or social work graduates for what are ostensibly youth work positions because their professional accreditation gives some guarantee of standards of practice, or at least some recourse if standards are breached. Institutional employers such as schools, conscious of public accountability, remain cautious about engaging youth workers in the absence of professional recognition. The problem solving and advocacy skills of youth workers are therefore denied to young people in the very context where they would appear to be most needed. (Sercombe, 2000, p. 2).

Bessant (2004a, p. 19) maintains that lack of “professional credibility, and public trust” are closely related to the “issue of research in youth work or youth studies and
recognition of this area as a discrete body of knowledge. Currently there are too few postgraduates coming through in this area. There is also a dearth of research”. Further, Bessant claims that youth work practitioners need to give serious consideration to the establishment of a national ‘professional association’.

Looking at the position from a different perspective, Smith and Shaw (2001) writing in the UK context, are concerned that social work graduates are themselves being marginalised as a result of improvements in the training of youth workers. They blame what they consider to be the subsequent improvement in working conditions for a decrease in youth work positions available to social work trained individuals, claiming that during

…the 1990s the youth work profession developed…better pay, models of practice, education, and career structures (Broadbent 1998). The impact of this on social workers is that there are now tertiary-qualified youth workers competing for positions that were once the sole province of social workers. With the increasing segmentation of services into specialist sectors, specific training in youth issues could be regarded as an advantage. The non-government sector, under severe funding restraints, will become less inclined to employ social workers when there are less expensive and well-trained youth workers to fill the positions. (Smith & Shaw, 2001, pp. 91-92).

Greater access to tertiary youth work training in Australia, primarily through TAFE, and the introduction during the 1990s of an employment award (the Social And Community Services Award (SACS)) saw the introduction of better pay and conditions for Australian youth workers. Without accreditation requirements, youth work positions are often still filled by individuals either with accredited qualifications such as social work or by those with no training at all.

Contemporary Youth Work Practice

According to the literature reviewed above, what is known as ‘youth work’ practice is quite diverse and the reason why services for young people are offered or ‘practitioners’ get involved in the first place is driven by an individual or hegemonic ideology. The original form that youth work practice took, informed by the child-saver movement, was more closely related to social control than what is considered by Sercombe (1997) to be ‘professional youth work practice’. Youth work practitioners and government policy that informs the funding and organisation of services to young people often have very different purposes in mind. A managerial approach to funding, combined with what is considered to be a requirement to ‘fit’ young people into social
structures as they currently exist makes it difficult for a ‘youth work professional’ to maintain a critical perspective and keep the needs of young people as their primary focus. The training of those who work with young people is an important factor in determining whether they will become a ‘worker with youth’ or a ‘youth work practitioner’ (Sercombe 2000); and Bessant (2004a; , 2004b) considers that professional accreditation of youth work will serve to raise the credibility of youth work practitioners.

Through the literature reviewed above, what is considered to be ‘youth work practice’ has been explored and the various ideological approaches to work with young people has been examined. This section of the review has differentiated between work with young people and a critical approach to youth work practice. In doing so it has highlighted the need for a critical understanding of the social structures which affect the individual. The next section provides a brief review of services as they currently exist to support young people living with violence. It offers suggestions for incorporation of services into existing generic youth services.

**Young people and ‘DV’ services**

According to a database put together in the process of consultations with agencies ‘working with children and young people living with domestic violence’ (Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003b) there are at least 148 agencies working with these children and young people across Australia. Most of these agencies provide their services in formal settings; that is they are either domestic (and family) violence specific counselling services, or refuges for women with families, or crisis accommodation services for young people providing formal group or individual counselling activities. Only one of the services listed claimed that clients could ‘walk in’ off the street. Most services included in the database are accessed through referral – although self-referral was accepted by many of the services; and one of the services (Peel Youth, WA) provides a Drop-In Centre for at risk young people. According to Gevers and Goddard-Jones, service providers do recognise that:

…some of the most effective group work programs for young people are those that incorporate physical activities through outdoor adventure programs, residential workshops, or drama projects. The engagement of young people through activities of interest to them is seen as a critical factor in the success of a program. (2003a, p. 56).
The report acknowledged that young people are less likely to access services that are specifically labelled (for example ‘DV’) and that more generic youth services are well placed to “maintain an awareness of domestic violence issues and integrate this into their support work with young people” (Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003a, p. 57). As discussed previously, Omelzczuk (1992) and Carpenter and Young (1986) maintain that there is a need to have gender specific services or programs for young people; or at least those that incorporate an understanding of gender and power issues. This claim is supported by the work done at the Central Eastern Domestic Violence Service in South Australia where “separate programs for girls and boys were developed to address the perception of gender roles and stereotyping and in response to evidence that girls and boys living with domestic violence respond in different ways” (Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003a, p. 103). For example, girls are more likely to identify with their mother and internalise their experience creating a sense of ‘isolation’ and ‘vulnerability’ (Caughey, 1991); whereas boys are more at risk of interpreting “violence as a legitimate means of solving problems” (Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003a, p. 104). The practice adopted by this South Australian service in this instance was designed to address this issue.

The practice standards identified by Gevers & Goddard-Jones (2003a) could easily be adopted by less formal service providers and encourage services for young people living with violence to have a clear understanding of the needs of their client group in order to provide a relevant service to them. If the service is to be effective in addressing issues such as domestic and family violence then Gevers & Goddard-Jones (2003a) (as well as others such as Allbrook, 1992 and Omelzczuk, 1992) maintain that services need to be clear about such issues as:

- acknowledgement of power and gender issues;
- a child centred focus;
- recognition that domestic violence is a form of child abuse;
- the empowerment of clients; and
- work within a broad definition of family.

(Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003a, p. 18)

Recreation and physical activities become the tools of the service to meet the needs of the young people attending rather than the purpose of the agency.
Summary

Children are always vulnerable and relatively defenceless against an adult who may wish to harm them. (Johnson, 2002, p. 12)

According to the literature reviewed for this study, there is a culture of violence inherent within Australian society which is only slowly being recognised. As recently as 1987 domestic violence was identified as a crime (Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003a) and it was only 20 years earlier that child abuse was recognised at all (Caughey, 1991). Violence within families remains relatively commonplace but still often unreported or unseen. The acceptance of patriarchal power and control as the family ‘norm’, along with other sites which encourage the cultural normality of violence (for example sport, recreation and male peer groups) has ensured the hegemonic acceptance of practices which are violent and controlling. Children and young people are among the most vulnerable and the most powerless (Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003a; Johnson, 2002). They often are unaware that the behaviour they are experiencing is unacceptable and in some instances illegal (Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia, & Donovan Research: Marketing and Communications Research Consultants, 2001). Young people who have experienced violence on an ongoing basis as children are most likely to develop behavioural and cognitive problems as a result of either maladaptive coping strategies or of abnormal brain development (Osofsky, 1997; Perry, 1997; Shore, 1997, and others). Where the young person’s peer group also accept violence as normal, attitudes, beliefs and behaviour which support violence are most likely to become entrenched (Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia, & Donovan Research: Marketing and Communications Research Consultants, 2001).

Historically, youth services were designed to provide ‘moral’ support to young men (Foreman, 1987) and service provision to young people has remained ‘gendered’ with generic programs providing services predominantly to young men (Carpenter & Young, 1986; Omelzcuk, 1992). Young women are more likely to respond to violence with feelings of shame and guilt, believing themselves to be responsible for the violence they experience and young men more inclined to behaviour which is aggressive or ‘acting out’ (Caughey, 1991). They are also more likely to accept violence and control as legitimate in intimate relationships and to have a perception of ‘entitlement’ that overrides the needs of others (Carpenter & Young, 1986; Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia, & Donovan Research: Marketing and Communications Research Consultants, 2001). Youth work seeks to have the young person as their
primary client (Bessant, 2004a; Bessant, Sercombe, & Watts, 1998; Sercombe, 1997) whereas youth services are often funded (or managed) with the assumption that social control and economic rationalism should take priority over the needs of young people (Bessant, 2004a; Bessant et al., 1998; Maunders, 1984; Smith & Shaw, 2001; Wong, 2004). Where services are specifically offered to young people to deal with issues such as domestic violence they are most likely to be ‘formal’ services requiring ‘referrals’, work to an ‘appointment’ system and provide ‘counselling’ (Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003a). For many young people these services are not appropriate. However, Gevers and Goddard-Jones (2003a) have developed ‘service standards’ which are transferable and could be adopted by less formal services to meet the needs of young people in an environment which is more fitting. Adoption of these standards would ensure that those who work with young people (as well as those who fund and manage the services) have a mutual understanding of the purpose of the services, acknowledge the power imbalances inherent within our society (Allbrook, 1992; Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003a; Omelczuk, 1992), and provide a ‘client focussed’ approach to their work – maintaining young people as the primary client (Bessant, 2004a; Bessant, Sercombe, & Watts, 1998; Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003a; Sercombe, 1997).

In Conclusion .......

A review of the literature relevant to this study has identified a number of different approaches to youth work practice as well as varied understanding of domestic or family violence as it effects young women. The review has also raised concerns about the ability of youth workers to provide useful services for young women living with violence in light of the professional environment in which they may be practicing and the hegemonic processes which are likely to be impinging on that environment. The following chapter will discuss the methodology chosen for this study and will provide a comprehensive description of the steps taken to answer the research question highlighted in this chapter:

a) In what ways can youth workers provide greater assistance to young women who are experiencing, or have experienced, violence in their family of origin?

b) What strategies, programs or modes of practice can be adopted by youth workers that will enable them to make contact with and support these young women?
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In the previous chapter, literature highlighting the different disciplines and ideological perspectives informing the practice of youth work was reviewed. The review of literature also included texts from both feminist and functionalist perspectives that might inform youth work practitioner and management understanding of the identified research problem: that young women living with violence often do not have their needs met within an informal youth work environment. In this chapter the research process and methodological assumptions underpinning the choice of research design are discussed. The choice of research design is also linked to the identified research problem. The chapter comprises five sections: the introduction which provides details of the organisation of the chapter; the conceptual framework which informs the research process; research procedures, describing and justifying the research design; ethical considerations; and a conclusion. This section has explained the purpose and organisation of this chapter and the following section, the Conceptual Framework, explains the relationship between my ideological perspective of the research problem and the approach chosen to investigate it.

Conceptual Framework

Services for young people do not stand in isolation outside the social, cultural and political construct of the society in which they operate. In Western Australia, as in many other parts of the world, they operate within a male world view, or ‘malestream’, that informs their funding, formulation and organisation. Services are designed and operated to ameliorate the most socially challenging behaviour of young men. As one of the ‘helping professions’, youth work in Australia has been constructed as ‘women’s work’ with many more women involved at a grass roots level than men. In stark contrast to these operating arrangements, the most vocal and obvious group of young people within many services are young men. In this environment young women become difficult to serve and often do not have their needs met by the structure of the service or the workers within the service. The needs of young women are often ignored or the services designed to meet those needs are constructed within a patriarchal
framework. Based on this understanding, the Conceptual Framework adopted for this study takes a critical stance and is informed by Social Constructionism and Socialist Feminism. The following explores these concepts and explains their relationship to the study.

**Social Constructionism**

Each of us interprets the world according to our experience of it but not in a disconnected fashion. We are informed by the collective lived experience of our forebears which has served to form the ‘culture’ within which we exist (Crotty, 1996, 1998). According to Crotty (1998, p. 55), the culture of our society effects the meaning that we give to things; “…meaningful realities, are socially constructed”. We are each born into a world in which ‘meaning’ has already been defined, redefined, and reconstituted. Crotty explains, “The mélange of cultures and sub-cultures into which we are born provides us with meanings. These meanings we are taught and we learn in a complex and subtle process of enculturation. They establish a tight grip upon us and, by and large, shape our thinking and behaviour throughout our lives” (p. 79). This is not a simple, one way interaction, however. We adopt understanding and meaning of and for things from our culture, whilst we also influence that culture and its interpretation by our individual understanding and meaning and our personal way of being. Place and time are also important. As Houston (2001, p. 846) explains, “constructionists argue that our understanding of the social world is historically and culturally specific….our way of understanding the world is more or less contingent upon time and setting…events are dependent on the context in which they occur for their meaning”.

In this scheme of things, then, the ways of ‘being ordinary’ available to us in our society, are just as much socio-historical constructions as our ways of being a scientist, or a lover. In other words, not only do we constitute (make) and reconstitute (remake) our own social worlds, but we are also ourselves made and remade by them in the process. (Shotter, 1993, p. 13).

Shotter offers us a further dimension in “a way of seeing how, as a result of biases in the self-other dimension of relation, we unknowingly construct biases in our person-world relations” (1993, p. 13). Who we are, how we behave and what we believe are the result of an unconscious processing of our cultural environment.

Youth work practice is itself defined within the cultural constructs discussed above; and so too is the behaviour of young people. Young women, in particular define themselves and are defined within the culture of their environment. From this
environment – the culture of their family – they learn to identify themselves, to believe certain things and to behave in certain ways. The next two sections of this chapter explore this in more detail.

... and youth work practice

The youth work practitioner as an individual and as a service provider (and, in my view, these should not be separated) is formed by a variety of discrete ‘cultural’ influences. Cultural and ideological influences which inform the beliefs, values and behaviour of the individual will also inform the behaviour and practice of that individual in their youth work practice. Cultural influences for the youth work practitioner come from the dominant culture of the society in which they live and work; the more immediate culture of their own family and social associations; the culture of the agency by whom they are employed; and the culture of the young people for whom and with whom they work; together with the cultures of the young people’s families. They are also influenced in their practice by the expectations and understandings which those around them have developed as a result of their own enculturation. These influences are explained by Payne (1999, cited in Houston, 2001, p. 848) “in terms of three interlocking and multi-directional cycles: the client-worker-agency cycle (dealing with face to face encounters between the client and the…worker); the political-social-ideological cycle (containing broader societal debates about the nature of social problems); and the agency-profession cycle (where …[youth] work epistemology is developed)”. The ‘social problems’ or issues presenting to the youth worker, Houston claims, from a constructionist perspective, now “permeate the applied frontiers….In the field of child abuse, for example, which traditionally has drawn on objectivist assumptions, there is an awareness that, ‘as a phenomenon, child maltreatment is more like pornography than whooping cough. It is a socially constructed phenomenon which reflects values and opinions of a particular culture at a particular time’” (Department of Health, 1995, p. 15 cited in Houston, 2001, p. 848).

In discussing social work practice, Parton (2003) explores the nature of the ‘helping process’ and the link made by the worker between theory and experience in identifying relevant practice. He claims: “…expertise, as demonstrated by experienced professionals, is characterized by an ability to work in complex situations of competing interests, and prioritize factors in ways which allow clear action” (p. 4). The similarity between social work and youth work in this context is the complexity of situations in which workers often find themselves and the changeable and uncertain nature of what is
presented to them (Parton, 2003, p. 4; Sercombe, 2000). It is up to the practitioner, then, to construct meaning and to develop theory and practice relative to the ‘culture’ and needs of the ‘service user’. Using a ‘post-modern’ critique, Houston (2001) maintains that “constructionism seeks…to problematize taken-for-granted, ‘a priori’ assumptions” (p. 848) suggesting that it is not enough to standardise practice through “practical solutions to identifiable problems” (p. 848). Parton and Marshall claim that the role of the practitioner is now shaped by “relativities, uncertainties and contingencies” (Parton and Marshall, 1998, p. 243, cited in Houston, 2001, p. 848). The role of the youth worker then is to interpret the behaviour, needs and presenting issues of young people within the confines of their own culture and of the various cultures impinging upon them. According to Sercombe (1997, p. 18) “…youth work is, in the best sense, “undisciplined”. It has been this innovative, spontaneous aspect of the trade that has made it effective in work with difficult situations at the local level”.

... and young women

In Crotty’s (1998, p. 42) discussion of Social Constructionism he describes “the Construction of Meaningful Reality”. Although the world, he explains, existed “prior to our experience of it” (p. 43), it is our experience of it that provides meaning to it. In his analogy of a ‘tree’ having “different connotations in a logging town, an artists’ settlement and a treeless slum” (p. 43), Crotty provides insight into the meaning that young women will place upon their experience in their family of origin. Young women for whom family violence is commonplace will interpret the actions of the perpetrator differently to those for whom family violence is unknown. Their understanding of ‘family’ will be different to many of their peers. Their understanding of ‘safety’ will also be different to many of their peers. As a result, they will be less inclined to discuss what happens in their family. They may be ‘told’ that it is unsafe to discuss what happens in the family or they may have experienced lack of understanding, or disbelief, when they tried to tell someone previously (Allbrook, 1992; Kulisa, 2000). The meaning that they give to their own existence, and therefore their rights as individuals, is impinged upon by what Crotty refers to as ‘intentionality’ which he describes as ‘reaching out into’ or “referentiality, relatedness, directness, ‘aboutness’” (1998, p. 44). “(l)ntentionality posits a quite intimate and very active relationship between the conscious subject and the object of the subject’s consciousness. Consciousness is directed towards the object; the object is shaped by consciousness” (p. 44). Formation of the conscious individual (in this case young women experiencing violence in the
home) is undertaken through a process of internalisation. According to Crotty (1998, p. 154), Freire described this as internalising “the image of the oppressor and adopt(ing) the oppressor’s guidelines”.

In discussing the creation of the person through the use of language, Shotter (1993) claims, “that only those able to ‘sense’ how they are situated are socially competent to speak and act in relation to their position; and…that while a way of talking can be said to give form to feeling, it lacks authority unless it is ‘rooted’ or ‘grounded’ in one’s sense of one’s position” (p. 161). Shotter (p. 162) also claims, that through the use of language “people mutually judge and correct each other as to the ‘fittingness’ of their actions to what they take their reality to be”. Through the language of others, therefore, people learn who they are and where they fit within the culture they inhabit. Who young women see themselves to be is defined by those closest to them. But only the young women themselves are competent to tell others who they are or what their experience is. Where an abused young woman has, through these processes, identified herself as deserving of the violence she experiences it is unlikely that she will feel comfortable in telling others about her situation, even though she may want the violence to stop. It is also likely that she will lack awareness of the reality of her situation. The critical perspective of writers (or should that be ‘activists’) such as Freire offer a framework from which these issues can be addressed. The influence of Critical Theory on this study is discussed in the following section.

**Critical Theory**

Freire (1972) describes the ‘oppressed’ as living within a ‘culture of silence’ – as ‘mute’ (Crotty, 1998, p. 154). “Not only do they not have a voice, but, worse still, they are unaware that they do not have a voice – in other words, that they cannot exercise their right to participate consciously in the socio-historical transformation of their society” (p. 154). The young women who form the focus of youth work practice in relation to this study are in many ways ‘mute’. They lack awareness of their situation and adopt an understanding of self as unworthy or undeserving. Crotty’s explanation of Freire’s position is that “the very situation of exploitation and oppression begets lack of awareness, apathy, fatalism, absence of self-respect – even fear of freedom” (p. 155). The practice of workers is impinged upon, too, by social structures that inform their ideological and cultural perspectives and that of the agency in which they work (Houston, 2001). The research process, then, has necessitated what Crotty refers to as “interrogating commonly held values and assumptions, challenging conventional social
structures” (Crotty, 1998, p. 157) to encourage workers to reflect upon and reinterpret their everyday experience of young people in order to adapt their practice and then to further reflect and reinterpret and adapt in an ongoing fashion. As Crotty (p. 157) says, “With every action taken, the context changes and we must critique our assumptions again”.

The tacit implication of Freire’s ‘critical’ approach (1972) is that through developing an understanding of the ‘reality’ of their oppression, people become free to change their lives. Bhaskar’s concept of ‘critical realism’ builds upon this understanding and is said by Houston (2001, p. 851) to be “open to the possibility of distorted perception”, suggesting that people’s understanding of their situation may in fact not reflect the reality of it. In exploring ‘critical realism’, Houston explains the role of ‘unseen’ structural forces on the ability of the individual to understand the nature of their oppression or take control of their life. He maintains that:

…workers will also need to be sensitive to their own ‘transitive’ views of the social world. In other words, they must be aware that their own claims are always open to refutation because they too may be distorted by these processes of the unchallenged practice wisdom of the discipline. This leads us into a view of professional reflexivity which encourages…workers to examine the range of complex structures operating within their own personal and professional spheres of daily life. (Houston, 2001, p. 855).

Houston talks of ‘consciousness raising’ in the same way that Freire discusses ‘conscientisation’. He promotes ‘Self-directed group-work’ “because it is attentive to user empowerment whilst at the same time focusing on the deep seated causes of oppression” (2001, p. 856) and calls for a critical and reflexive approach to practice.

The concept of ‘critical realism’ as discussed by Houston (2001) appears to make useful links between social constructionism, a critical approach to research, and socialist feminism. Social constructionism and critical theory have already been discussed. The following will provide an insight into the influence of socialist feminism on this study.

**Socialist Feminism**

Socialist feminism, according to Tong (1989, p. 173), is “the confluence of Marxist, radical and, more arguably, psychoanalytic streams of feminist thought”. It builds, Crotty (1998) claims, upon the strengths within each of these feminist perspectives and often adopts what is known as ‘dual-systems’ theory (Walby, 1990, p.
2) which maintains that women’s oppression results from patriarchy combined with capitalism and that all forms of oppression stem from these same sources (Eisenstein, 1984, pp. 355-357). As a result of the processes, which are inherent within our social and political structures (Vincent, 1993, p. 137), the family – which, according to a number of writers, is an important socialising agent for young people (Bullbeck, 1993; Eisenstein, 1984; and Giddens, 1990 to name a few) – is itself impinged upon (Giddens, 1990, p. 729; Sargent, 1988, p. 114). And, when looking at family violence, it is important to have a clear understanding of how our society has defined ‘family’ and in what way individuals within ‘the family’ (particularly young women) may make sense of it. The following explores this using a socialist feminist perspective.

Over time, the form family has taken has adapted according to the historical context in which it has existed. Contrary to popular belief, ‘the family’ has not historically consisted of ‘a man’, ‘his wife’ and ‘his children’. Economic and social changes have provided the catalyst for the development of a variety of family forms (Giddens, 1990; van Krieken et al., 2000) and it is only in the recent past that the so called ‘traditional’ nuclear family has come into being. More recently still a variety of alternate family forms have gained legitimacy. These include single parent families and same sex, two parent families. With the advent of the nuclear family, itself precipitated by the industrial revolution of the 19th century, a ‘woman’s place’ became entrenched in the home (Jagger & Rothenburg, 1984, pp. 293-294). Patriarchy, which informed this relatively new concept of a ‘woman’s place’, is not new. According to Giddens (1990, p. 389), the family – like other political and social arrangements – has continued as patriarchal since the 16th century. Historically, women have been subservient to men, economically dependent on men, and less powerful than men and it is this, according to Jagger and Rothenburg (1984, pp. 293-300), that provides the basis for women’s oppression. Men, too, often experience powerlessness in most other aspects of their lives outside the family and it is argued that a sense of loss of power may predispose some men to violence in the arena in which they do feel power – the family (Draper et al., 1991; French, 1985). Draper et al. (1991, p. 52) claim that, “In painful irony, perpetrators [of family violence] mimic a masculine stereotype of control and authority, precisely in circumstances where they don’t experience their masculinity as power”. Historically, this behaviour was acceptable, with the British common law ‘Rule of Thumb’ providing men with the legal right to beat their wife and children provided the ‘rod was no thicker than his thumb’ (Roy, 1977, p. 112). It is only in the
last forty to fifty years that violence in the home has been recognised and acknowledged as a social issue (Caughey, 1991; Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003a). But still today, abused young women will often feel ‘shame’ and lack of ‘safety’; youth workers will often feel ‘discomfort’ and ‘impotence’ around these young women or will have limited understanding of issues they face (Allbrook, 1992; Blanchard, Molloy, & Brown, 1992; Omelczuk, 1992).

**Conclusion**

This exploration of the practice of youth workers with young women who have experienced violence in their family of origin is informed according to the theoretical concepts outlined above. Implicit in this understanding is a social constructionist awareness that emphasises the role of culture and enculturation on the individual and their experience of the world. Also implicit in this understanding is a socialist feminist awareness of ‘dual-systems’ theory which claims that both patriarchy and capitalism are embedded within our social and political structures and negatively impinge on our understanding and experience of ‘family’ and of ‘power’. ‘Culture’, from a western perspective, has been developed accordingly, resulting in the oppression of women which is frequently demonstrated through various forms of overt and covert violence in the family. A major assumption, therefore, in the approach to this study is that, not only are the identities and world views adopted by young women informed by these processes, but so too is the understanding of the world adopted by the youth workers involved in the study, those who employ them and those who fund the services in which they work.

Having clarified the ideological assumptions informing the conceptual framework for this study, the following section will provide detailed description of the research design and its operationalisation. It will also provide justification for the choice of methodology.

**Research Procedures**

**Materials and Methods**

Reflecting the conceptual framework which informs this study, a critical research paradigm has been adopted for the collection and analysis of data. Following the critical tradition, a qualitative approach, based on Participatory Action Research, has been used and researcher and participants have worked together to explore the issues
raised for practitioners by the identified problem. The research question (developed from the research problem) that this study set out to answer is twofold and based on the premise that informal youth work settings are an appropriate vehicle through which to address the problem. The research problem has been identified as: meeting the needs of young women living with violence through informal youth work practice.

**Design**

Because of its emphasis on the empowerment of the research community through which change takes place, the primary method chosen for data collection in this study is Participatory Action Research. This method was chosen because through the process of Participatory Action Research change may take place either at an organisational level, policy level or, ultimately, as social change. As part of the critical research paradigm, Participatory Action Research is founded in feminist ideology which espouses relationships of shared power and is demonstrated through “integration of action, sharing, and experiential knowledge” (Rheinharz, 1992, p. 182). Those involved in the study, both researched and researcher, come together as equals with different knowledge which, once shared, can be integrated into new knowledge and practice. Theory alone does not result in action for social change. It is the integration of knowledge (or theory) and practice that make action possible. Action, which combines understanding through knowledge and action, is known as praxis. Or, as Selener puts it:

> …feeling and acting are also ways of knowing; and 2) the dialectical relationship between theory and practice, or praxis, is essential to the practice of participatory research. (1997, p. 32).

Participatory Action Research is useful in any situation where change is the ultimate outcome. It provides participants with the opportunity to identify the components of a particular problem. Generally this problem is one that has been identified by the research community as an issue that should be addressed (in this instance the question of service provision for young women living with violence). The process enables individuals to share their current knowledge and to develop greater understanding through reflection of their own experiences and the shared knowledge of others. From this understanding, critical evaluation of current processes may then take place and action be identified to create change. The research community, youth workers employed in an ‘informal’ environment in Perth, Western Australia, have identified as a problem that appropriate support is not necessarily forthcoming for
young women experiencing violence in the home. This issue has also been identified as a problem of service provision for young women living with family violence both in Perth and in other regions of Australia by youth work practitioners and researchers (Allbrook, 1992; Gevers & Goddard-Jones, 2003a; Kulisa, 1992, 2000; Omelczuk, 1992). Young women affected by violence in their family of origin have identified this as a problem (see Kulisa, 2000) and the stories of the young women who took part in my previous study were told to participants to provide some initial insight into the issue from the perspective of young women living with violence at home (see Appendix 12). The stories included the young women’s experience within their family and their experience with attempts to disclose and in seeking support. Based on the premise that through integration of knowledge and development of action new praxis can be forged, the women’s stories were shared with research participants to provide a starting point for their discussion and to provide the opportunity for them each to explore their own understanding before exploring the understanding of others in the group. Facilitation of this learning process with research participants is central to the research design. As group facilitator and researcher I include myself in this learning process. As participants made discoveries about their own practice and their work environment so did I. Whereas the focus of workers remained on their practice and the young people with whom they work, I began to see other factors which affected their ability to provide effective services particularly to young women living with violence. Fig. 1 depicts the overlap of exploration and discovery between researched and researcher experienced in this study and common to Participatory Action Research.

![Figure 2: Action Research Cycle (taken from Wadsworth, 1998)](image)

The research design incorporated focus group interviews with drop-in centre youth workers. These participants were asked to draw concept maps to demonstrate their understanding at various points during the data collection period and to keep
reflective journals which recorded their thoughts on various aspects of their practice. Triangulation of the study involved the introduction of two additional groups of participants: non-contact management individuals in three of the services and a group of detached youth workers. Follow up interviews were held with drop-in centre youth workers and with the management of three of the services the youth workers are employed by to explore further their perception of the purpose of youth work (see discussion later in this chapter). Drop-in centre youth worker participants were asked to develop conceptual maps three times throughout the study in order to clarify, or “reveal the thoughts and beliefs of the author” (Kinchin, 1998, p. 2). The first concept map clarified, pictorially, their understanding of the issue at that moment in time – prior to the first focus group discussion. Workers were asked to complete a second concept map after our first focus group meeting in which they were presented with the stories of the young women participants in the previous study (Kulisa, 2000). They were asked to complete this second map because of the importance of identifying any changes in understanding which may have occurred following the clarification and discussion that took place during the first focus group. After the final focus group discussion, workers were asked to complete a third and final concept map providing additional data for tracking changes in their perception and understanding (see Kinchin, 1998; Novak & Gowin, 1984). They were also asked to keep a reflective journal to record their practice throughout the research process (Barrie, 1994; Cook, 2004; Tripp, 1993). With the exception of the detached youth work group, participants in this study proved difficult to ‘discipline’ as far as keeping concept maps and journals is concerned. The principle group of participants did not provide the reflective journals requested; those that were received did not provide data of significance to the study. Reflective journals were not, therefore, included in the data analysed for this study. Concept maps, on the other hand, were collected from a sufficiently significant proportion of the youth workers involved in the study and did provide information that was relevant to the study.

As facilitator of the research processes adopted for this study, it was important for me to ensure that those involved as youth work practitioners had at the forefront of their mind throughout the process, the question:

“What does this mean for my practice?”

Practitioner participants were asked to engage in an ongoing process of action and reflection, followed by further action (see Fig. 2 above). By meeting with their peers they were able to discuss everyday issues of practice and issues they faced either with
young people or with expectations from their colleagues or of their management. They were also able to discuss and explore issues related to workplace environment that they may otherwise not have considered relevant to the problem in question. They claimed that the process of discussing these and other work-related issues in a non-competitive and non-threatening environment (Lewis, 2000) assisted their professional development.

Findings from this part of the investigation highlighted the need to further develop the research process by ‘triangulation’ in the form of inclusion of interviews with individuals responsible for the management of the services in which these workers were employed and another group of practitioners working with a similar target group to that of the original practitioners involved in the study. According to a number of writers (see, for example Babbie, 2001; Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Sarantakos, 1994), triangulation, by the introduction of different sources of data, provides the opportunity to enhance a study’s findings. Interviews with management formed an essential component of the data collection through clarification of the purpose for which the service was operated; whereas introduction of an additional group of workers, although still comprising an important component of the study, was used primarily to ‘triangulate’ the data already collected from drop-in centre workers. The aim was to discover whether the issues raised by the first group of practitioners were specific to these individuals or whether similar concerns might be raised by other workers employed in a different environment working with a similar target group and still using an informal approach to practice. According to Marshall and Rossman (1989), triangulation adds an element of ‘generalisability’ to qualitative research. They claim that, “Triangulation is the act of bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point….Data from different sources can be used to corroborate, elaborate, or illuminate the research question” (p. 146). In this instance the additional data from detached youth workers served to ‘corroborate’ some of what was said by the drop-in centre workers and to ‘illuminate’ specific issues raised within exploration of the research question. Interviews with management were used to ‘illuminate’ agency specific issues raised during the drop-in centre focus group discussions.

Participants

Participants for this study were self-selecting and purposive and were made up of three separate groups of individuals:

- Drop-in centre workers
Detached youth workers

Non-contact managers responsible for the management of services.

Thirteen youth work practitioners and three service Directors, were involved in this study and were selected according to the following:

**Drop-in centre Workers**

Youth Work practitioners known to me either through my involvement as a practitioner in the Perth youth worker community or through my role as Practicum Coordinator for the Youth Work Studies program at Edith Cowan University were approached and invited to participate in this study. They were chosen based on two identifying criteria:

- employment in a ‘drop-in’ environment; and
- expression of interest in and concern about the service needs of young women living with violence.

They were all university trained and their training ranged from undergraduate degrees in Recreation and Leisure Science, Women’s Studies, Psychology and Youth Work Studies. Seven youth work practitioners made up this group. Five were employed in local government youth centres and two at the same community based youth service. The drop-in centres were based across the Perth metropolitan region: in the far south, north, south-east and east. This group of practitioners made up the primary set of participants and were involved in the first set of focus group discussions.

**Detached Youth Workers**

Based on the findings from the first set of focus group interviews a further group of youth work practitioners were invited to become part of the study. Participants in the second group were identified after discussion with the coordinator of a detached youth service, who indicated that family violence had been raised as an issue of concern by the team of youth workers under her supervision. This service provided detached youth work to street present and homeless young people in Perth. The group comprised six workers in all, some of whom were university educated and some of whom were TAFE educated. The range of disciplines varied across Youth Work and Welfare Work (at TAFE), to undergraduate university degrees in Psychology, Youth Work Studies and Social Work. (The qualifications of participants are discussed further in Chapter 5).
Managers

The three non-contact service managers interviewed, were identified as the person responsible for decisions regarding the provision of services to young people in an agency employing at least one of the participants of the drop-in centre workers’ focus group. The focus group participants were asked ‘who is responsible for making decisions about how the service operates?’ at a management level (‘who is responsible for strategic decisions rather than operational decisions?’). Once identified, this individual was approached for their views on the ‘purpose of youth work’. Two came from local government and one from a community based agency. Again there are a range of disciplines informing their management and understanding of youth work: one has a Town Planning background; another indicated that she had worked as a ‘youth worker’ and is Social Work trained and the other had a business background. All three non-contact managers expressed interest in the study and a willingness to be involved. They also appeared pleased that they had been approached for their perception regarding the services under their jurisdiction.

Methods

As previously discussed, a Participatory Action Research approach was chosen for this study. The most commonly used technique in Participatory Action Research is focus group interviews. However, it was decided to augment focus groups with a number of other research procedures in order to glean as much relevant information from participants as possible. These included individual interviews, reflective journal entries and conceptual mapping. The following provides an overview of the procedures used.

Focus groups

Focus groups are basically, group interviews with a particular focus. Kreuger (1988, p. 18, cited in Lewis, 2000, p. 2), claims that a focus group is a “carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions in a defined area of interest…” According to Wadsworth (1989):

(o)ne of the most useful aspects of group interviewing – besides allowing you to get more reliable and more meaningful understandings by being able to check those meanings on the spot – is that it is a very open method. By the end of the meeting, the whole group has been able to take part in a collective information-gathering technique because it’s not just you who has found out what they had had to say – they all have! (p. 32-33).
Focus groups, therefore, provided a forum for discussion in relation to the various aspects and stages of the research process. Involvement as a focus group participant encouraged youth work practitioners to openly discuss with their peers issues relating to the research problem that they may not have previously thought about or reflected upon. Generally, participants reported that the group interview process was empowering for them and provided them with a level of professional development through insight into their practice and enthusiasm they had not previously identified. Participant ‘E’ did identify that initially she felt intimidated and uncomfortable about discussing her practice with people she did not know well, but reported that she quickly felt supported and not judged by others. Her comments highlighted the importance of trust in focus group interviews; and the need for the researcher as facilitator to have well developed interpersonal skills and knowledge of group dynamics and processes (Gibbs, 1997). The principal limitation with focus groups, unlike individual interviews, is that it is harder to predict the direction that discussion might take (Gibbs, 1997). Data collection, as occurred in this study, might produce unanticipated results. The findings from focus group interviews with drop-in centre workers and detached youth workers are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

**Individual interviews**

At the end of the period of data collection individual interviews were conducted with four of the drop-in centre youth worker participants and the non-contact managers responsible for the strategic decisions of three of the agencies employing drop-in centre youth workers involved in this study. The purpose of this interview was to clarify what each of these individuals believed to be the purpose of youth work. The nature of this type of interview is described by Sarantakos (1994) as the participant offering:

> …a complete reconstruction (and evaluation) of a certain topic (1) as it occurred in the past; (2) in the context of conditions and factors as they unfolded at that time; (3) without preparation, that is as the respondent recalls them; and (4) as experienced by the respondent. (p. 184).

Semi-structured interviews provided the opportunity for participants to provide individual responses to the same set of questions whilst “explanation and understanding of the responses to the structured questions” is facilitated through further, spontaneous, probing questions (Gay, 1992, p. 232; Sarantakos, 1994). Interviews with drop-in centre youth workers were used to encourage narrative relevant to practice by the use of an interview style which is “passive-stimulating, friendly and permissive” (Sarantakos,
1994, p. 185). These interviews were used to clarify both practitioner and management understanding of the purpose of youth work practice to ‘illuminate’ an aspect of the research problem (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

**Concept maps**

Conceptual mapping provides the participant and the researcher with the opportunity to gain insight into the participant’s current understanding of a given topic at the time of developing the Conceptual Map. A conceptual map is “intended to reveal the thoughts and beliefs of the author rather than a reproduction of memorised facts. The structure of a map is, therefore, unique to the author, reflecting his or her experiences, beliefs and biases as well as understanding” (Kinchin, 1998, p. 2).

Through identification and ordering of concepts, participants provided a map (similar to a mind map) of how they believe various concepts might link together. Through this process participants made sense of a particular concept, in this instance the nature of family violence as it relates to young women with whom they work. It was not expected that the connections made would always be valid or appropriate, but that they would make sense to the participant at that time. By exploring their own understanding, participants are better able to identify any inconsistencies in their thought processes, the concepts and linkages they are aware of and the gaps in their own knowledge. From here they are able to build on that existing knowledge and explore more appropriate forms of practice or develop a better knowledge base from which to order their practice and understanding. “[K]nowledge is created [therefore] rather than discovered” (Kinchin, 1998, p. 2); creation of this knowledge was assisted by the focus group discussions which took place either following or preceding map development.

According to Novak and Gowin (1984) concept maps “are intended to represent meaningful relationships between concepts in the form of propositions. Propositions are two or more concept labels linked by words in a semantic unit” (p. 15). Concept mapping is a technique for “externalizing concepts and propositions” (p. 17) – a process through which the learner frequently identifies “meanings they did not consciously hold before” (p. 17). An important point made by Novak and Gowin is that although we, for the most part, speak the same language, the words used often have different meanings for different people. Kinchin (1998, p. 3) also identifies “conflicts in the use of
language… [together with] preconceptions from prior experiences and inadequate prerequisite knowledge of the topic under investigation” as being barriers to shared understanding of meaning. The process of developing concept maps allowed both participants and myself, as the researcher, to identify what particular words or concepts meant to participants individually. More than this “(b)ecause concept maps are an explicit, overt representation of the concepts and propositions a person holds, they allow teachers [researcher] and learners [participants] to exchange views on why a particular propositional linkage is good and valid, or to recognize missing linkages between concepts…” (Novak & Gowin, 1984, pp. 19-20). A false proposition can, according to Novak and Gowin (p. 20), suggest misconceptions on the part of the author of the map. A map which contains linkages missing “the key idea relating two or more concepts” (p. 20) is also indicative of misconceptions on the part of the author. In order to prepare for further learning, Kinchin (1998) maintains that, it is important to identify any misconceptions held within naïve theories. Concept maps can do this by helping to “make the overall framework of the concept explicit” (p. 4).

One aim of this study is to assist youth workers in developing shared meanings relating to ‘family violence’ and its effect on young women living in a violent environment. Novak and Gowin (1984) maintain that recognition of what one sees, touches, or smells “is in part dependent on the concepts… [one] has in their minds” (p. 24). Kinchin (1998) further argues that “science (and therefore knowledge) is a creative human endeavour which is historically and culturally conditioned and that its knowledge claims are not absolute” (p. 2). In order, therefore, to enable workers to move past any preconceived notions they may hold and to develop shared meaning compatible to that of the young women for whom violence is a fact of life, it is necessary for them to understand what it is they currently believe and Kinchin (p. 2) tells us that the “development of such constructed and reconstructed knowledge can be represented graphically using concept maps”. Concept mapping, therefore, was used as the tool to accomplish this. It is also the tool used to help workers as participants, and myself as the researcher, see how their own understanding changes over the course of the study.

Participants involved in face to face youth work (that is drop-in centre and detached youth workers) were each asked to complete three concept maps in all. Based on the premise that the notion of ‘concept mapping’ may be foreign to study participants they were each individually provided with instruction at least once about the
construction of these maps (see appendices). Not all participants provided all the maps requested; however, those that were produced were useful in identifying the thoughts and beliefs that these authors held regarding the research question and regarding the issue of family violence as it may affect the young women with whom they work. The insight into worker understanding (‘thoughts and beliefs’) at the various stages of data collection provided by concept map offerings is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Detached youth work practitioners involved in this study were more likely to produce concept maps as requested than the drop-in center workers. Each of the detached youth workers involved in the study throughout provided two concept maps. Unlike the drop-in centre workers, the detached workers operated as a single team and therefore had greater opportunity to discuss practice issues together. As a team they were disciplined in their own practice and valued a team approach to what they did.

**Reflective journal**

As stated earlier, insufficient reflective journals were kept by youth worker participants to include data collected from this source as relevant to the analysis process. The value to practitioners of keeping a reflective journal as a tool with which to explore their own practice is acknowledged and, for this reason the process that participants were asked to follow is outlined below. The detached workers were better disciplined in keeping and providing journals in which they recorded their thoughts, however the thoughts recorded were most often about the research process rather than their practice with young women living with violence.

According to Tripp (1993) reflective journal writing is a tool used to develop professional practice through the process of ‘problematising’ and critically analysing everyday incidents. The experienced practitioner, claims Tripp, develops routines which “become habitual, and so unconscious, as expertise is gained over time. Indeed, our routines often become such well-established habits that we often cannot say why we did one thing rather than another, but tend to put things down to some kind of mystery such as ‘professional intuition’ or simply ‘knowing’” (1993, p. 17). So, where the practitioner has developed routines, and does things simply ‘because’, they may lack awareness of what they actually do and why, even though their practice may be ‘excellent’ and produce the anticipated results they have no idea ‘why’. As Dadds (1998, p. 41) puts it, in journal writing “(t)he main purpose of the enquiry is to shed light on aspects of that work with a view to bringing about some benevolent change”.

For this reason, participants were asked to reflect critically on their practice and to record that reflection in a journal.

There are a number of frameworks that may be adopted for keeping a reflective journal. The framework chosen for the purpose of this study is the problem (or issue) solving framework proposed by Barrie (1994). Again, as with the conceptual mapping exercise, it was not assumed that workers had prior knowledge of how to keep a reflective journal or what is required of that journal. For this reason they were provided with an outline of a suggested framework they might follow and some instruction on the process involved. The focus groups held prior to workers being asked to keep a reflective journal provided a format for the planning identified by Barrie as essential to the definition of “a topic, issue or problem as relevant” (n.p.n.). However, even though the problem is one that has been identified by the practitioners involved as relevant to their practice, youth work practitioners are frequently not sufficiently organised in relation to their own professional development to be able to effectively set time aside to ‘reflect’ in the manner required.

**Data Analysis**

As discussed, a variety of data collection techniques have been employed for this study; these include individual interviews, focus group interviews, concept maps and reflective journals – which, as discussed previously were not included in the process of analysis. Analysis of data necessitated two separate approaches: taped interviews and written journals were analysed according to the method outlined by Colaizzi (1978); and conceptual maps were analysed according to the methodology outlined by Novak and Gowin (1984). Both these methodologies have been amended to better fit the data being analysed and are discussed in detail below.

**Conceptual Mapping Analysis**

According to Novak and Gowin:

…meaningful learning requires a conscious awareness of new relationships between old and new sets of concepts….Concept maps, used as tools for negotiating meaning, can make possible new integrative reconciliations that in turn lead to new and more powerful understanding. (1984, p. 104).

It is this development of awareness as indicated by the particular workers’ concept maps that has been measured and analysed. Novak and Gowin suggest the ‘scoring’ of valid
relationships and valid levels of hierarchy. They also suggest that “Cross links that show valid relationships between two distinct segments of the concept hierarchy signal possibly important integrative reconciliations, and may therefore be better indicators of meaningful learning than are hierarchical levels” (p. 107). They suggest that ‘each valid cross link’ should be afforded more weight than each ‘hierarchical level’. Scoring was not included in the analysis of concept maps in this study, but the validity of content, concepts, linking and relationships was compared to the information provided and the language used during interviews and focus group discussion. Inconsistencies were noted, and these and unsubstantiated assumptions are discussed in detail in Chapter 4. Consistent and valid claims and linkages are also discussed.

Analysis of Focus Group and Individual Interviews.

The modes of analysis adopted for individual and focus group interviews comprised an adaptation of Colaizzi’s steps (Colaizzi, 1978; Crotty, 1996). Using what Crotty describes as a “Colaizzi-style method” (Crotty, 1996, p. 22), data from each of these data sources was organised and concepts built upon as they emerged (Colaizzi, 1978). Crotty (1996, p. 22) explains the process as:

• reading the descriptions
• extracting the ‘significant themes’
• formulating meanings
• organising formulated meanings into clusters of themes
• exhaustively describing the investigated phenomenon
• validating the exhaustive description by each respondent

The process of analysis is discussed in more detail in the following section of this chapter.

Summary

All those who took part in this study demonstrated a keen interest in meeting the needs of young women living with violence, although they had different views on how this should be achieved and different understanding of the issues involved. They all demonstrated a willingness to share their knowledge, beliefs and understanding; to provide information that may improve service provision and, hands-on workers were keen to explore what they do, as well as what they might do, to better meet the needs of
this group of young people. They were each involved as either a youth work practitioner in a drop-in centre or a detached youth work service or responsible for strategic decisions about services at a management level; and each of the services in which they were involved operated somewhere within the Perth metropolitan district. Five services in all were involved comprising a total of thirteen youth workers, two local government youth service ‘Directors’ and one Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a community based agency. Of the five services involved, three are operated by local government; one a community based agency and the other service operates within one of the larger, multi-disciplinary organisations operating within Perth.

Data collection methods included individual interviews with drop-in centre youth workers and the non-contact manager, responsible for strategic decisions about service provision, from three of the services involved. Drop-in centre and detached youth workers were involved in separate sets of focus groups and were each asked to complete concept maps and maintain a reflective journal throughout their involvement in the study. Analysis of data collected from these sources, not including reflective journals (see previous discussion), was also varied and comprised a ‘Colaizzi style’ approach to individual and focus group interviews. The process of analysis for concept maps was informed by that described by Novak and Gowin (1984).

**Procedure**

**Introduction - identification of the problem and participants**

As already discussed (see Chapter 1) the research problem was identified, over a number of years and through a variety of experiences, as an issue of concern for workers in the youth work practice field in Perth, Western Australia. Through these processes and my practice I developed an understanding of the degree to which other youth work practitioners identified, as an issue for their practice, an inability to adequately meet the needs of young women living with violence. I also identified a number of youth workers who work in an informal environment for whom this element of their practices is a concern. These practitioners indicated their keenness to explore, with others, their own practice to see if improvements could be made in meeting the needs of these young people. Seven workers in all were included in this component of the study: five worked for three separate local government youth services and two for a multi-disciplinary community based agency. The services operated across the metropolitan region in four different locations.
A process of triangulation was decided upon as a result of emergent themes indicating inconsistency between what drop-in centre youth work practitioners felt they should be doing (their capacity to provide support to the young people accessing their services) and expectations from their service management. Two sources were identified for clarification: non-contact managers responsible for strategic decisions within the services employing participants (drop-in centre youth workers); and youth work practitioners employed in an alternative informal environment (detached youth workers). Data collection with the new participants took a different format to that of the original participants. Agency managers were interviewed, and detached workers were involved only in focus group discussions, concept mapping and reflective journal keeping. An overview of the methodology used for triangulation is as follows.

- Three agency non-contact managers were interviewed individually. Two responsible for local government youth service provisions, and one from a multidisciplinary community based agency. They were each asked to discuss what they believed ‘the purpose of youth work’ to be and they were encouraged to explore the strategic arrangements of the service they managed, the aims of service provision and the reason why they believed their agency (or local government authority) was involved in providing services for young people.

- A team of detached youth workers, all employed within the same agency, participated in a series of three focus groups held within a period of four months. They each drew two concept maps and kept a reflective journal which was presented to me after the final focus group.

**Data collection and preliminary Analysis**

**Drop-in centre workers**

**Interviews and initial conceptual map:**

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, each drop-in centre focus group participant was asked to complete a conceptual map prior to the first focus group discussion. They were at this time provided with an explanation of conceptual mapping; the purpose of a conceptual map, and how it could be developed (see appendix 10) as well as a verbal explanation of the process of developing concept maps. Most participants were able to complete the map at this time,
although some of them did request ‘an extension’, and asked if they could send it to me later. After a number of telephone call reminders these maps all eventually appeared.

A preliminary analysis was undertaken mainly to gain an understanding of participants perception of the issues. This initial analysis identified contradictions in the use of language and apparent understanding of issues. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Focus Groups: Focus group interviews were transcribed and initial analysis was completed immediately following each focus group.

The first focus group:

Drop-in centre youth worker participants were brought together in April 2001. They introduced themselves and their place of work to other participants and were presented with information gathered from my previous study (Kulisa, 2000).

Outcomes: Participants identified:

- some issues, particularly violence perpetrated by young men within their service and couple violence;
- commonalities between agencies;
- disparities between expectations of some workers and their management; and
- clarification of own understanding of DV and the effects on children/young people

Discussion: “What does this mean for my practice?”

Action: Participants were asked to explore new ways of thinking and responding to young people in their service for whom they thought DV might be an issue; to keep a reflective journal of their practice; and to draw a further concept map.
Second focus group:

Prior to the second focus group meeting, one local government worker dropped out of the research process as she had changed jobs and moved out of the metropolitan area.

Participants discussed:

- what had happened since their last meeting, and provided specific examples of incidents they had dealt with;
- what was different about how they approached what they did and how they understood the issues;
- what worked;
- what didn’t;
- what else could be done.

Third Focus Group:

The final focus group meeting was held early in 2002 and participants discussed much the same issues as at the second focus group meeting:

- Participants appeared to be unable to move further forward. An apparent hindrance for some workers was management expectations/limitations/understanding of practice.
- Participants were asked to complete reflective journals and to present these to me – only a couple were done. They were also asked to complete further Conceptual maps, again only a couple eventuated.

Triangulation - Service Directors

Two local government Community Service Directors and the CEO of a multidisciplinary community based agency were interviewed individually. Themes emerging from these interviews confirmed themes which had emerged from drop-in centre focus group discussions. Management understanding of youth work practice differed from the understanding of youth work practitioners employed in the services for which they were responsible and management styles varied significantly from manager to manager. These are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4. Transcription and analysis of these interviews was undertaken at a later stage.
Triangulation – Detached youth workers

Three separate focus groups were conducted with a team of detached youth workers. No transcription or analysis was done during this process. Reflective Journals were religiously kept and handed to me at the last meeting and conceptual maps were also drawn prior to the first focus group interview and at the end of the last.

This group demonstrated a greater awareness of the issues of DV than the drop-in centre workers, but still maintained as a focus for their discussion male violence within their service and partner violence. The service they are employed in operates at a crisis level with homeless young people on an ongoing basis and the nature of this service does not permit them to explore in depth issues emanating from the family of origin of their clients.

Analysis of Data

As previously stated, data analysis reflected the process identified by Colaizzi (1978). The following identifies the steps taken and links them to the original as describe by Colaizzi (1978, p. 59 and p. 61):

1. Separately, transcripts from individual and focus group interviews and reflective journals were read “in order to acquire a feeling for them, a making sense out of them.” (p. 59). This requires becoming ‘absorbed’ in the data.

2. From each transcript or journal “significant statements” (that is “phrases or sentences that directly pertain to the investigated phenomenon” (p. 59) were extracted. Where a significant statement from one data source closely resembled that of another they were worked together to avoid repetition. It was at this point that the decision was made to exclude the journals from the data analysis process.

3. Interpretation of each significant statement: from what was said or written an interpretation of participant meaning was formulated. According to Collaizzi, this step involves leaping “from what…subjects say to what they mean” in order to “illuminate those meanings hidden in the various contexts and horizons of the investigated phenomenon which are announced in the original” (p. 59). In doing so, Collaizzi cautions
against introducing meaning and concepts not part of the original. He claims that the researcher must “go beyond what is given in the original data and at the same time, stay with it. He (sic) must not formulate meanings which have no connection with the data” (p. 59).

4. Once the meaning of each significant statement was clarified and new meaning formulated, these were then ‘clustered’ into ‘themes’. A further ‘leap of faith’ is required here to evolve “what is given in the meanings to themes given with them” (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 59). The original transcripts were consulted at this point to ensure two things: that meanings included in them were incorporated and that meanings not “implied in the original” (p. 59) were not included in the clusters. The importance of “contradictions” is highlighted by Colaizzi as they provide greater depth to the data rather than being ‘contra-indications’. A number of contradictions were found in the data and these are discussed in Chapter 4. Data collected from concept maps was included in the development of themes.

5. The fifth step involves an integration of themes into an “exhaustive description” of the topic (p. 61). Separate thematic descriptions were developed around each emergent theme.

6. At this point a clear “statement of identification of its [the problem’s] fundamental structure” (p. 61) was formulated. This statement remains descriptive. According to Crotty (1996, p. 168) it is this that tests the data to see whether it:

   …is of the essence. Is what we are describing that which makes the phenomenon the phenomenon that it is? Would it be this phenomenon if what we are describing were not there? Is what we are describing really characteristic of the phenomenon as precisely this phenomenon, distinguishing it from other, perhaps similar, phenomena?

7. According to Colaizzi (1978), the final step of analysis is to return to each subject to ask for feedback on how the findings so far relate to their experiences and to ensure that nothing has been omitted. Any new data should then be included in the final results. In this instance this step was modified and became part of an ongoing process of clarification.
Clarification of the interpretation of data was ongoing during data collection and led to the introduction of triangulation as discussed earlier in this chapter under ‘Triangulation’.

N-Vivo, a computer analysis tool used in qualitative research, was used to assist in the organisation of data at the stage of identifying ‘significant statements’ and again at the stage of organising ‘formulated meanings’ into ‘clusters of themes’. Data was entered, at the initial stage of organisation as raw data in the form of extracts from the transcripts and at the later stage as the statements of ‘formulated meaning’. Finally, a matrix format was adopted and data was organised into tables without the assistance of N-Vivo. These tables were developed through the process of analysis and presented in Chapter 4 to explain organisation of the raw data and development of themes as they emerged.

Summary

This section of the chapter has provided an overview of the procedure followed for collection and analysis of data. Although the procedure adopted is informed by the research design, the research design was modified as the research process unfolded. Analysis of data was ongoing throughout the data collection process and the final step suggested by Colaizzi, checking with participants about the validity of the researcher’s interpretation of the data, became an integral component of data collection and data analysis. The process of checking with the primary participants in the study took place as an integral component of focus group discussions and follow up interviews and provided the basis for ongoing conversations with study participants. Based on themes that emerged during the series of focus group interviews with drop-in centre workers, a process of triangulation was introduced into the research design. Using a mix of a Colaizzi style (Crotty, 1996) mode of analysis for spoken and written data and an adaptation of Novak and Gowan’s (1984) method of analysis for conceptual maps, the data was analysed with the aid of N-Vivo and then collated into themes and organised into matrixes as shown in Chapter 4. The findings of this analysis are explored in detail in Chapter 4, and further discussed in Chapter 5. The next section of this chapter discusses the issue of ‘ethical considerations’.

Ethical Considerations

Youth Worker participants in this study were each individually approached after permission to do so was given by the drop-in centre or detached service coordinator.
Non-contact service managers were approached once they had been identified by their staff (drop-in centre youth workers) as the person responsible for decisions regarding the strategic direction of the service. Participants were provided with detailed description of the nature and purpose of the research process and the requirements of participants. An Informed Consent form was signed after participants were advised of their right to anonymity and confidentiality and their right to withdraw at any point during the research process. They were also each assured that any information about their agency, the young people who use their agency, or their own practice discussed during the research process would be treated with confidentiality and anonymity unless I was explicitly asked to identify them or their agency when reporting the study. I was not asked to do so. They were each assured that any information relating to the young people with whom they worked would not be disclosed in a manner that would identify the young person or the agency, or that the young person could recognise as relating to themselves. However, the nature of youth service provision within the Perth metropolitan area suggests that it is almost impossible to provide both sufficient information about the particular services included in this study and to guarantee that anyone who is familiar with the youth field in this environment is not able to make an informed guess as to which agencies might be involved. Care has been taken, therefore, to provide only as much information about the services involved as is required for the purpose of this study.

A further ethical consideration taken into account in the reporting of this study is the nature of the process that participants have been involved in. Through the course of data collection, the youth work participants in particular have exposed themselves, their beliefs and their practice to scrutiny by others involved in the process of data collection and to myself. For this reason, during the course of data collection care was taken to assist participants in the process of reflection; and during the process of reporting the raw data and its analysis care has been taken not to be critical of the position that individual youth workers have taken or of the beliefs that they have articulated. Care has also been taken in the reporting of data collected from non-contact agency managers to ensure that the information provided has been treated with sensitivity particularly where my own beliefs regarding safety for young people and youth work practitioners were challenged.

Finally, family violence is generally considered to be a sensitive issue; however, the emotional wellbeing of participants was not a consideration for this study as
participants are all professionals who face violence and the traumatic experiences of others on a regular basis. Had any of the participants indicated that they were disturbed by the research process I would have ensured that they were immediately offered appropriate support either through their agency’s clinical supervision arrangements or through one of a number of counselling agencies that deal with these issues. This situation did not arise.

**Conclusion**

The conceptual framework informing this study is based on a world view that incorporates Social Constructionism, Critical Theory and Socialist Feminism. The study which is informed by this conceptual framework has been developed from the premise that how the individual experiences the world is influenced by the culture which surrounds them; that our social and political structures are negatively affected by what socialist feminists refer to as ‘dual systems theory’; and that violence in the family is common place. Using the feminist assertion that Participatory Action Research is ‘empowering’, the methodology chosen for this research adopted a critical approach and used Participatory Action Research as its primary method. A total of sixteen participants were involved in activities encompassing individual interviews, focus group interviews, conceptual mapping and reflective journal writing. Participants comprised three separate groups: drop-in centre youth workers; non-contact managers responsible for the strategic planning of these drop-in centres, and detached youth workers. The data collection period began in April 2001 and was completed in December 2003. Data analysis followed a Colaizzi-style method (as described by Colaizzi, 1978; and Crotty, 1996) and an adaptation of Novak and Gowin’s (1984) process for analysing and ‘grading’ conceptual maps and was ongoing throughout the research process, informing development of the research design to include triangulation. Triangulation of findings necessitated increasing the original number of participants from the original seven drop-in centre youth workers by the introduction of the non-contact managers of the services employing six of these youth workers plus a team of detached youth workers. The ethical considerations for this study have also been discussed.

The findings of this study are described in the following chapter, Chapter 4, and the implications of these findings for youth work practice and service provision for young women living with violence is discussed in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

The research process and methodological assumptions underpinning the choice of research design were discussed in the previous chapter where links were made between the choice of design and the identified problem: informal youth work practice with young women living with violence. In this chapter the findings are reported; they are organised into themes according to the group of participants involved and the method of data collection employed. The chapter offers a record of the journey that participants took in the exploration of their practice. It records their starting point at the beginning of this study and continues through their discoveries and reflections to the point at which it was clear there was no more development that could take place and no more information that could be shared given the particular environment in which they each worked. The chapter comprises five sections: this introduction, which details the organisation of the chapter; analysis of data collected from concept maps developed by participants in Group 1 (drop-in centre youth workers) and Group 2 (detached youth workers); analysis of data collected through focus group interviews with Group 1 and focus group interviews with Group 2; analysis of data collected through individual interviews with drop-in centre agency youth workers and their non contact management (Group 3); and a conclusion. The middle three sections are further broken down to explore the findings according to the group of participants involved. Throughout the chapter, where emergent themes are discussed they remain descriptive. Further analysis and more detailed discussion will take place in Chapter 5 where emergent themes will be linked to relevant literature and theoretical perspectives, comparing and contrasting them across the groups of participants. Throughout Chapter 4 the emergent themes are firstly identified and then further explored and combined, resulting in three categories each containing three or four themes. It is these groupings of themes that will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Concept Maps

Concept maps were completed by two groups of participants: drop-in centre youth workers (G1) and detached youth workers (G2). As discussed in Chapter 3, the
technique adopted for analysis of concept maps is drawn from two separate processes of analysis. Using the understanding of valid levels of hierarchy and valid relationships offered by Novak and Gowin (1984) and an adaptation of ‘Colaizzi’s steps’ (see Colaizzi 1978 and Crotty 1996), meanings, incorporating similar statements, have been formulated from ideas extracted from the maps. The following section explores these maps and the original maps can be found in the Appendices.

**Group 1: Drop-in Centre Youth Workers**

All drop-in centre youth worker participants completed at least one conceptual map; three of this group also completed a second map. Analysis of the maps has been undertaken according to the point during data collection the map was completed and maps 1 and 2 are dealt with separately.

**Conceptual Map 1**

The first concept maps drawn by this group of participants indicated a ‘common sense’ understanding of domestic or family violence reflective of the broader community (see discussion in Chapter 5). A number of themes were repeated in all but one of the maps. Something that came up very strongly is the issue of the family being in some way at fault. Four maps – ‘A’, ‘B’, ‘C’, ‘D’ – indicated a sense of the family lacking skills or being under stress due to poverty, substance use, or ‘dysfunction’. The family was blamed and excused at the same time. Although not clearly articulated, or even clearly recognised, in most instances, is a sense that the perpetrator should shoulder the weight of blame; or that the family or even the victim themselves is somehow responsible. The dangers inherent in these assumptions are discussed in detail in Chapter 5. Six of the seven original members of this group drew maps highlighting ideas about the nature of family violence and its implications and effects on the individuals concerned. The remaining group member’s map showed ideas relating to the involvement of various agencies and factors that agencies or workers should consider. A compilation of the themes depicted in these concept maps, and identified intuitively (see Colaizzi, 1978; and Novak & Gowin, 1984), is set out in Table 1 below. The language used was developed to reflect collectively the inherent meanings within each of the concept maps.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beliefs and behaviour</strong></td>
<td>Behaviour within the family is developed according to the culture of the family which has developed over time and is a social construction. Where violence is present families generally lack interpersonal and communication skills and parents have limited understanding of the experience of their children. Violence erupts through a sense of frustration and limited ability to communicate effectively. Communication, therefore, is through aggression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power &amp; Control</strong></td>
<td>Control is maintained through intimidation and fear. The family is private and therefore behaviour within it remains 'hidden' and 'secretive'. The victim is always fearful because they have no control over when the violence will occur. Family violence is about power and domination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sense of Self</strong></td>
<td>Young people are pushing boundaries and inciting the violence. Changing gender roles makes men feel less in control and threatened by women who appear to have more control. Expectations on women have increased. Women have become disempowered through post feminist assumptions as to what the diverse roles of women should be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cyclical</strong></td>
<td>Young women experiencing violence at home feel confused, unworthy of being loved. They have low self esteem and may hate themselves. They also feel guilt and shame, but question &quot;Why me?&quot; They have a sense of being out of control and having no control over their environment. Their sense of self includes 'self as victim'. They are unable to defend themselves as they have 'no voice'. Young women may choose to remove themselves from the violence but are socialised into remaining within it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anxiety &amp; stress</strong></td>
<td>Family violence takes place as a result of the hegemonic processes and becomes inherent within family culture. It is 'inherited' or learnt behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships</strong></td>
<td>Family violence takes place because people lack education, awareness and skills to avoid it. In contrast to the sense of 'fatalism' is a sense that it doesn't have to be. People do have choices and certain (unstated) factors can determine the outcome - people will show resilience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sense of discipline</strong></td>
<td>Young women living with family violence are generally vulnerable and suffer from anxiety. There is a fear that they will continue the cycle and they are influenced by their family culture, lack of understanding, shame and peer group expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Love</strong></td>
<td>Family violence takes place as a result of the hegemonic processes and becomes inherent within family culture. It is 'inherited' or learnt behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other agencies</strong></td>
<td>Important that any intervention does not infringe the rights of the child. When a young person is not given choice but has intervention 'forced' upon the 'does this infringe the rights of the child'?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External factors</strong></td>
<td>Young people living with family violence understand this behaviour as 'normal' therefore it is not identified as violent. Music and popular culture reinforces the acceptance of violence particularly towards women. Violence is 'normal'. The use of alcohol and other drugs influences violent behaviour. Violence can result from young people exploring their sexuality or striving for independence and pushing boundaries. Poverty, 'broken homes', divorce and financial loss can be indicators of abuse or violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Factors for consideration by other agencies</strong></td>
<td>These were mentioned only by one participant. They suggest that workers and agencies need to consider a variety of issues before deciding whether to or how to provide support for young people living with violence. These include policy and legal obligations, available resources, consequences for the young person, other family members and others involved.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Concept Map 1 Description of Themes
Conceptual Map 2

Second concept maps were completed by participants ‘A’, ‘D’ and ‘F’. The range of concepts identified is noticeably less than across the seven original concept maps presented. However, the concepts themselves seem to be more clearly defined and continue to cover a range of issues from factors associated with the individual to factors associated with society. The maps are less complex and show greater clarity of thought about the topic. The second concept map was drawn following the first focus group discussion in which many of the issues surrounding family violence were explored by participants. At this point, participants were also provided with information gathered directly from young women who have lived with violence. Clarification of some of these issues together with a developed understanding of the lived experience for young women is evident in the second concept maps. Table 2 below, provides an overview of concepts identified. The most significant changes in understanding are shown in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>DESCRIPTOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Societal</td>
<td>Family beliefs about relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family beliefs about and acceptance of violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance use</td>
<td>Alcohol and other drugs used to excuse violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of alcohol and other drugs exacerbates violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>Has responsibility for confused concept of women’s status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker / Agency</td>
<td>Complexity of problem masks real issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Issue of family violence masked by ‘presenting’ issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complexity of problem makes it difficult to deal with all the issues - no one agency is resourced to do so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No one defining characteristic or behaviour often results in issue being completely missed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff/Agency development</td>
<td>Training to develop awareness and skills to work more effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agency needs to continuously strive to improve service provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Burnout is an issue that can be avoided by debriefing workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>Need to be supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client Young Person</td>
<td>Needs to be in control and have information about legal and welfare issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsible for violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unable to tell anyone else</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fearful of loss of relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influence by peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Normality of situation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Concept Map 2 Description of Themes
Table 3: The development of awareness among Drop-in Centre workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>PARTICIPANT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Old</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Most issues depicted in the old map showed young women as being &quot;indirectly&quot; affected. The second reflects an understanding that suggests that the influence is far more direct.</td>
<td>The first map shows concepts relating to the young person may feel and how the perpetrator may act, as well as issues relating to broken homes and poverty. The second places a greater emphasis on the difficulties of service provision and the needs of the young person living with violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families at fault</td>
<td>Support for families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxity &amp; Fear</td>
<td>Sense of Self, Silence &amp; Self-blame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not previously included</td>
<td>Service provision (including difficulties in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance use</td>
<td>Worker frustration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Development of awareness**

The second concept map drawn by these three participants demonstrates a degree of awareness not indicated in the first map. These workers appear to have moved beyond the commonsense understanding indicated in the first maps. Two of these participants identify issues and concepts relating to service provision directly. They also record concepts relating to the young person’s need to feel safe and comfortable in their disclosure and to have control of events as they unfold. The third participant drew concepts more clearly than in her first map, depicting societal issues relating to the topic. Each of these maps demonstrates that the understanding of the author has developed and become more focussed, but the maps still display differences in understanding. Table 3, below, provides a comparison of differences in awareness shown in the individual maps.

**Group 2: Detached Youth Workers**

Each detached youth work participant agreed to complete a concept map prior to the first focus group interview and again a further map was completed after the final focus group discussion. As a team, this group of participants had indicated previously that they were concerned about the level of violence that they witnessed daily in their work and their perception that violence was a normal everyday fact of life for many of the young people with whom they worked. They were also concerned that they may not be providing the level of support these young people required or responding in the most effective way to what they were faced with. The initial concept map that they each drew reflected a relatively informed understanding of family violence and its effects on young people who live with it. Using the technique described earlier in this chapter ideas have been extracted from the maps and meanings have been formulated and then organised into themes. Rather than working with each map separately and reporting themes from individual groups of maps, the information from both maps drawn by each participant has been collated and reported together. Common themes across the maps have been identified and a compilation of these themes is set out in Table 4.
Table 4: Description of themes drawn from Detached Worker concept maps.

Drawing the themes Together

Significant themes emerging from an analysis of the concept maps produced by participants from the drop-in centre group of youth workers (G1) and the detached youth workers group (G2) have been drawn together into clusters of themes and are depicted in Table 5 below. The themes depicted were identified firstly by drawing together all themes emerging from the concept maps that related to the following categories:

- Workers, their practice and influence of agency management
- Participant, as youth worker, understanding and experience of violence for young people
- Service users, sense of self and social and structural issues

Themes were then further organised to bring together divergent and common concepts as they are identified in the concept maps. Using Colaizzi’s method of
analysis (as described by Colaizzi, 1978; Crotty, 1998), a descriptive statement was then
developed to fully describe the emergent theme. Concepts, identified by participants,
drawn out to develop the descriptive statements are presented according to theme in
Table 5 and further discussed below.

**Themes Described**

**Workers, their practice and influence of agency management**

**Family violence, the non presenting issue**

Participant concept maps highlighted the complex nature of family violence and
the challenge it offers to youth workers in informal settings. The challenges identified
are outlined below:

1. **detection**

   Unlike many presenting issues, family violence does not come with a set
   of indicators that make detection of young people living with violence easy.

   'No one defining characteristic or behaviour → Difficulties in attributing any one-behaviour to domestic violence so sometimes workers miss the issue entirely' (‘D’ G1 M2)

   Often a variety of other issues will mask the situation for a young person.

   'Masked by other presenting issues' (‘D’ G1 M2)

   It is important to develop a relationship with young people that will enable the worker to ask questions of an intimate nature and allow young people to feel comfortable discussing such issues with the worker.

2. **sense of helplessness**

   Workers recognise the difficulty in identifying young people living with violence and the sensitivity of the topic; they often feel helpless to intervene because they believe they lack skills and knowledge about family violence. Workers need to be informed about the issues and to develop and use extensive professional networks that will enable them to provide a supportive and timely response to the needs of the young person.
Table 5: Combined themes drawn from all concept maps

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>DESCRIPTIVE STATEMENT</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Worker understanding and experience of family violence</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The effects for young people</td>
<td>Violence is all pervasive in young people’s lives and their peers may feel confused, frightened or angry; often violence is not recognised and is seen to be ‘normal’. Young people do not believe that anyone is interested in what they have to say and will not listen to them. Childhood experiences will influence how the person behaves as an adult. Young women are controlled by young men and isolated from their peers, family and other supports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural issues</td>
<td>Family violence takes place as a result of the hegemonic processes and becomes inherent within family culture. It is ‘inherited’ or learnt behaviour. The expectations of women have increased and women have become disempowered through post-feminist assumptions as to what the diverse roles of women should be. Combined with this, men are feeling less in control and a greater sense of threat from women who appear to have more control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural issues</td>
<td>The family is private and behaviour within it remains hidden. When family violence is an issue it may be as a result of poor parenting and coping skills or it may be as a result of cultural beliefs about parenting and about the nature of violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cycle and how it works</td>
<td>Family violence is about power and domination and may take the form of physical, emotional or verbal abuse. Control is maintained through fear. However, violence in the family may also result from a combination of lack of interpersonal and communication skills and frustration; individuals learn to communicate through aggression. Young people may also incite violence by ‘pushing boundaries’. Violent interaction is learnt behaviour and children learn how to be violent and they learn that violence is ‘normal’. Childhood victims of violence often become perpetrators of violence towards their own children and interaction between partners replicates the violence they experienced or witnessed as children. Young women are often controlled by young men who feel powerless in every other aspect of their lives. Poverty, ‘broken homes’, divorce and financial loss are presented as indicators of abuse or violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice (Jack of all Trades)</td>
<td>Youth workers are expected to either have or be able to access knowledge, information and skills relating to a wide range of issues. They need to have access to training to develop awareness and skills to work more effectively with young people living with violence and agencies need to strive to improve service provision. Services need to be approachable and workers need to raise their ‘heads out of the sand’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>Youth workers often feel frustrated when attempting to identify and support young people living with violence because of a number of difficulties which include: identification of a young person living with violence; lack of resources; heightened sense of responsibility for the young person; too many issues to deal with; too many other presenting issues masking the underlying issue of violence at home; and lack of respect for youth workers from other professionals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debriefing</td>
<td>Opportunities for debriefing are an essential part of youth work practice if ‘burnout’ is to be avoided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Service users, sense of self and social and structural issues</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of self</td>
<td>Young people living with violence may experience a sense of isolation and entrapment. They may experience fear and helplessness. They are likely to accept the normality of violence and to equate love with violence. There is often a sense of confusion in which they feel shame and guilt whilst questioning ‘why me?’ Young people often see themselves to be the cause of the violence, excusing the perpetrator and maintaining relationships in which they feel comfortable. They may have low self-esteem and notions of self-worth; they may have a sense of being out of control and having no control over their environment. Their sense of self includes ‘self as victim’. They are unable to defend themselves and believe they have no voice; and when young women choose to leave the violence they are socialised into remaining.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance use</td>
<td>Alcohol and other drugs may exacerbate violence; they may also be used to excuse violence. The use of alcohol and other drugs is often a coping mechanism to deal with the violence of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture and the family</td>
<td>Violence takes place where families are ‘dysfunctional’. Cultural values influence behaviour within the family and notions of violence are also cultural. Changing social role expectations influence levels of aggressive and abusive behaviour. Physical discipline is acceptable and young people received mixed messages and inconsistent discipline. Popular culture – music and film – reinforces the acceptance of violence towards women and normalises violence. Young people who live with violence are likely to possess poor relationship skills and to select others with whom their relationships will be unsuccessful.</td>
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</table>

Family violence is complex and often masked by other presenting issues. Young people living with violence are not easy to identify as there is no one characteristic by which to identify them. It is important for workers to develop a relationship with young people that will encourage the young person to discuss issues of concern with the youth worker. Often, young people living with violence will not receive support from youth workers because the worker may feel confused and frustrated and unable to respond appropriately. To provide appropriate support for young people workers need to be informed, to develop and use professional networks and to provide a supportive and timely response. Workers and agencies are urged to consider such as: policy and legal obligations; available resources; consequences for the young person, other family members and others involved. Before intervention takes place consideration should be given to whether the intervention will infringe the rights of the child. For example, does lack of choice regarding intervention (as in mandatory reporting) infringe the rights of the child? Services ‘need to listen to’ young people who live with violence.

Violence takes place where families are ‘dysfunctional’. Cultural values influence behaviour within the family and notions of violence are also cultural. Changing social role expectations influence levels of aggressive and abusive behaviour. Physical discipline is acceptable and young people received mixed messages and inconsistent discipline. Popular culture – music and film – reinforces the acceptance of violence towards women and normalises violence. Young people who live with violence are likely to possess poor relationship skills and to select others with whom their relationships will be unsuccessful.
3. legal obligations and rights of the child

Concern was indicated in some of the maps about the wisdom of intervention that did not first consider all of the associated implications. It was suggested (‘E’ G1 M1) that workers should consider the implications of agency policy and legal obligations; available resources; consequences of intervention for the young person as well as others involved (including family members). Infringement of the rights of the child were also raised as a consideration (‘G’ G1 M1), with the suggestion that intervention about which the young person is not consulted or in which the young person is not provided with informed choices may infringe their human rights.

Practice (‘Jack of all Trades’)

The role of the youth worker is multifaceted and requires a broad range of skills, knowledge and understanding. It also requires that the practitioner knows where to go to for specific information, support or referral. The maps indicated concern that some agencies or workers did not provide the level of service required by young people living with violence or that youth workers were not confident in their ability to do so. Participant ‘M’ (G2 M2) claimed youth workers:

- are expected to be a ‘“Jack of all Trades” Get specific info when prob(lem) comes e.g. specific mental illness’
- provide ‘informal counselling (whilst still trying to say “not a counsellor”)
- are ‘task focused’;
- ‘may ignore “process” stuff or “not my role”’.

Collectively participants identified the need for training and development of awareness of family violence for individual workers so that young people living with violence were better provided for within youth services. Participant ‘F’ (G1 M1) maintained that services should:

- ‘strive to improve service provision’,
- be more ‘approachable’

and, that workers need to raise their ‘heads out of the sand!’

Frustration

A number of sites of worker ‘frustration’ were identified. These include:
1. Detection

Difficulties, mentioned above, relating to lack of specific indicators of family violence.

2. Lack of resources

Lack of resources both within and external to the service in which the participant is employed. In some cases this referred to time and support of colleagues to explore the issue with a young person. In others it referred to services and options available for the support of young people living with violence, including accommodation and counselling services. The following claims were made by participant ‘D’ (G1 M2):

‘Lack of Resources – to deal with many issues surrounding domestic violence’.

‘Too hard basket – often an issue that gets neglected because there are so many other issues involved and no-one agency is equipped to deal with them all’

3. Heightened sense of responsibility

Participant ‘D’ (G1 M2) in her second concept map, claimed that workers feel ‘frustrated about lack of options and a sense of responsibility to deal with it on your own’.

4. Youth work role not respected

Lack of recognition and understanding of the role of the youth worker was mentioned specifically in relation to mental health issues. Participant ‘M’ claimed:

‘lack of respect for youth worker (difficult referral) because of

- discourse,
- costume (youth worker casual dress),
- lack of knowledge re youth worker role.’ (‘M’ G2 M2)

5. Masking of real issues

Many of the maps indicated a range of issues associated with family violence. Participant ‘D’ (G1 M2) made a number of references to identifying and responding to family violence, some of which have been shown under ‘lack of resources’ above. She also claimed in Map 2:
Family violence ‘often goes unnoticed because other issues/behaviours become focus of attention’.

‘First point of contact – often a youth worker is 1st point of call and then they are faced with the dilemma of where to from here’.

Debriefing

The necessity for debriefing was raised in only one concept map. I have chosen to include it here however, as it was raised a number of times in the discussion during focus groups and appears to provide an area for concern for most workers. As a concept it also links closely to ‘lack of resources’ under ‘Frustration’ above. Participant ‘F’ (G1 M2) claimed:

‘Family Violence’ → ‘burn out rates’ → ‘need to debrief’

The suggestion then, is that in order to support young people living with violence, workers also need to be supported with the opportunity to debrief at least with colleagues otherwise ‘burn out’ will occur.

Worker Understanding and experience of family violence

The cycle and how it works

Participants indicated varied understanding of family violence, its causes and its effects. The concepts indicated throughout the maps include:

1. Forms of family violence

Family violence may consist of physical, emotional and verbal abuse. Often when young women leave the family home they retain ‘victim’ status in an intimate relationship which is also violent and as such may be ‘controlled financially’ (‘M’ G2 M1) she may also be ‘physically injured’. Partner violence was raised as an issue in four maps (see ‘K’ G2 M1; ‘M’ G2 M1; ‘J’ G2 M1; ‘I’ G2 M1).

2. Why it occurs

Participants’ maps offered a whole range of reasons for family violence. These have been drawn out and organised into the following categories: Structural, Individual and Conflict. Where the concept was explicit rather than implied the participants words have been used.
a. Structural

Three participants identified that family violence is about power and domination. Participant ‘G’ identified specifically the patriarchal nature of society and claimed:

‘Men’s/father’s/husband’s rights → Parents rights → discipline, corporal punishment’ (‘G’ G1 M1)

‘History – ancient laws’ (‘G’ G1 M1)

For participants ‘M’, ‘F’ and ‘J’ powerlessness is an issue (this is discussed in more detail in a later section of this category of themes). They claim:

Young men feel ‘powerlessness’ (‘M’ G2 M1)

‘Feelings of powerlessness over your life and feelings can lead to using physical/emotional violence to make you in control’ (‘F’ G1 M1)

‘Dispossession (stolen generation)’ (‘J’ G2 M2)

Participant ‘D’ (G1 M1) identified poverty as an ‘underlying issue related to – family violence’.

b. Individual

Again, some of the concepts raised which have been included here are also included in a later section under “Service users, sense of self and social and structural issues”. According to a number of the participants, individuals and families lack interpersonal and communication skills, have poor parenting skills and are often frustrated (‘D’ G1 M1; ‘A’ G1 M1 & 2; ‘L’ G2 M2; ‘F’ G2 M1). Violence is commonplace in the homes of the young people many participants are involved with and therefore violent interaction is learnt behaviour, children learn how to be violent and they learn that violence is normal (‘A’ G1 M2; ‘B’ G1 M1; ‘G’ G1 M1; ‘H’ G2 M1; ‘M’ G2 M2; ‘L’ G2 M1 & 2; ‘K’ G2 M1; ‘J’ G2 M1; ‘I’ G2 M1 & 2). The following extracts are explicit statements which are indicative of these claims:

‘young mum and bub [baby] → Sees and hears violence → developmental delays (attachment, speech, etc.) → possible victim of FDV and neglect’ (‘J’ G2 M1)

‘Violence normalised’ (‘M’ G2 M2)

‘Live what you learn’ (‘G’ G1 M1)

‘Lack of skills – communication, emotion’ (‘J’ G2 M2)
The cycle of abuse is specifically mentioned by three participants, who claim:

i. ‘Journey – cycles of abuse’ (‘J’ G2 M2)

ii. ‘On-going cycle of violence – family of origin; ongoing cycle of violence – partner’ (‘I’ G2 M1)

iii. ‘explained as a cycle → The Cycle’ (‘F’ G1 M1)

c. Conflict

According to Participant ‘D’ (G1 M1) violence in the family may be as a result of young people causing ‘conflict’ through ‘misunderstandings between young person and family’ and the young person seeking ‘independence/pushing boundaries’. Young people are likely to be ‘alienated by family’ (‘J’ G2 M1).

3. Perpetuation

Participant maps were clear about the intergenerational nature of the perpetuation of violence. As well as indicating an understanding of the nature of the cycle of violence and that violence is often learnt behaviour (these two concepts are discussed above), participants indicated the following concepts in relation to the perpetuation of violence.

a. Control is maintained through fear

‘Victim often feel → Fear, intimidation. Perpetrator often use → intimidation’ (‘C’ G1 M1)

b. Dependency

‘Perpetrator is usually someone the young person is dependent on i.e. parent, partner.’ (‘D’ G1 M2)

‘Victims sometimes get into the frame of mind that they don’t deserve any better and almost seek out such relationships which continues the cycle.’ (‘D’ G1 M2)

‘past abuse, poverty, violence, low education’ (‘J’ G2 M2)

4. Indicators

Poverty, ‘broken homes’ (‘C’ G1 M1), divorce and financial loss are presented as indicators of abuse or violence. The second group of participants also expected that the young people living with violence using their service are most likely to be either homeless or at risk of homelessness. Frequent references are made to ‘street culture’ (‘I’ G2 M1; ‘L’ G2 M1), ‘streets’ (‘H’ G2 M1), ‘youth homelessness’ (‘J’ G2 M1 & 2), ‘YSAAP’ (Youth Accommodation and Assistance Program) and ‘refuge’ (‘K’ G2 M1).
**Cultural issues**

According to participant maps there is a level of secrecy maintained around what happens within the home. Detached youth workers indicated an element of secrecy between the partners with whom they worked (in which violence was a factor); as workers with both partners they found that they were often involved in maintaining secrets to protect themselves or the young woman in the relationship. The role of culture, ethnicity and ‘family history’ (‘A’ G1 M2) were also indicated. Participant ‘B’ identified links between ‘culture’ and the ‘peer group (which) legitimises Family violence’. Explicit statements taken from the maps will be included later in this section under ‘Service users, sense of self and social and structural issues: Culture and the family’.

**Structural issues**

Again, participants presented a variety of concepts they perceived as relevant to their understanding and experience of family violence. Included in this section are those concepts identified as ‘structural’.

a. The ‘hegemonic process’, according to participant ‘B’ (G1 M1), feeds the linked concepts of ‘society/history’ and ‘public/private’ leading to ‘shame’ and ‘family violence’.

b. Participant ‘C’ (G1 M1) identifies ‘broken homes’, ‘poverty’, ‘financial loss’, ‘divorce’ and ‘fear of poverty’ as both a result and a causal factor in family violence

c. Confused status of women

‘Disempowerment through forced compliance with new rules of feminism. Changing the expectations but not breaking the box just making it heavier. Women must be feminine, masculine, mother, worker, strong, invisible, perfect.’ (‘G’ G1 M1)

‘women and men’s changing roles →socialisation and workforce → men are feeling less in control – threatened’. (‘F’ G1 M2)

‘Media – its role in confusing the status of women’. (‘A’ G1 M2)

‘View of women in society – confusion as to women’s status’. (‘A’ G1 M2)
d. Participant ‘J’ in her second map identifies several structural issues which she depicts as impacting directly onto the young person and their family. These include:

i. ‘dispossession (stolen generation)’

ii. ‘institutional abuse’

iii. ‘racism’

iv. ‘Homelessness’

e. Young men feel ‘powerlessness’ which translates to ‘violence’ as a ‘reaction to powerlessness (get power from somewhere) \(\rightarrow\) crime \(\rightarrow\) intimidation of peers’ (‘M’ G2 M1).

**The effects for young people**

Violence is depicted by several participants as cyclical (‘B’ G1 M1; ‘F’ G1 M1; ‘M’ G2 M1; ‘L’ G2 M1; ‘K’ G2 M1 & 2; ‘I’ G2 M1 & 2; ‘C’ G1 M1; ‘D’ G1 M2; ‘G’ G1 M1; ‘A’ G1 M1 & 2; ‘H’ G2 M1), ‘entrenched’ (‘F’ G1 M1) and all pervasive and therefore ‘normal’ (‘M’ G2 M2; ‘H’ G2 M1; ‘L’ G2 M2; ‘I’ G2 M2). The concept map drawn by Participant ‘H’ (G2 M1) depicts all aspects of the life of a young person she might typically be involved with in her work – violence is everywhere. Developmental delays such as ‘attachment, speech, etc.’ (J’ G2 M1) are also indicated for children living with violence. Other participants claim that young people living with violence will exercise ‘intimidation of peers’ (‘M’ G2 M1) as a result of feeling ‘powerless’; they may feel ‘intimidated’ or ‘anxious’ (‘C’ G2 M1), ‘submissive’ or ‘macho’ (‘L’ G2 M1). Others claim that young people may feel or experience:

- ‘Shame’ (‘B’ G1 M1)
- ‘fear’ (‘B’ G1 M1; ‘F’ G1 M1)
- ‘Frustration’ and ‘anger’ (‘F’ G1 M1)
- ‘vulnerability’ (‘D’ G1 M1)
- ‘depression’ or ‘Mental health’ issues (‘J’ G2 M1; ‘I’ G2 M2)

- **Low self-worth/self-esteem** (‘D’ G1 M1; ‘G’ G1 M1; ‘L’ G2 M2; ‘J’ G2 M1; ‘I’ G2 M1 & 2;

- **On going violence** (‘K’ G2 M1 & 2; ‘L’ G2 M1)

No-one interested: ‘Are you listening to me?’ (‘M’ G2 M1); ‘A feeling that there is no-one to talk to’. (‘D’ G1 M2)

- **Drug use** ‘L’ G2 M2; ‘K’ G2 M2; ‘J’ G2 M1 & 2; ‘I’ G2 M1; ‘L’ G2 M2;
Participant ‘D’ (G1 M2) claims that often young people ‘seek out’ similar relationships (see ‘Worker Understanding and experience of family violence: The cycle and how it works: Perpetuation’ above):

‘Because of the dependency there is often a lack of willingness to break cycle and see that they are provoking it.’

‘Young people often use self blame to excuse perpetrator.’

Participant ‘F’ (G1 M1) also introduced the concept of ‘LOVE’, asking ‘how does it fit as a concept?’ to family violence; suggesting that young women may feel undeserving of love whilst needing ‘someone to love’ resulting in ‘young/teen pregnancies’. She also identified ‘fear’ for both young men and young women of continuing the cycle through their own violent and abusive behaviour.

**Service users, sense of self and social and structural issues**

**Sense of self**

The concepts raised that indicated how young people living with violence might feel about themselves are quite diverse but not contradictory. Young people living with violence, these maps claim, are likely to feel: isolation, anger, that violence is normal and equate violent actions with love. They may feel trapped, alone; they may also feel guilt and blame their own behaviour for the violence. They may have a sense of not having control over their own lives and of being out of control themselves. They are likely to see themselves as victims or to believe that no-one will listen to them or believe them – they have no voice. Often, when young women choose to leave a violent environment (family of origin or partner) they are socialised into remaining. The following statements are used to illustrate these claims:

‘low self esteem’; ‘issues of self worth’. (‘J’ G2 M1&2; ‘I’ G2 M2; ‘G’ G1 M1; ‘D’ G1 M1; ‘F’ G1 M1; ‘B’ G1 M1)

‘Disempowerment’; ‘Fear’ (‘L’ G2 M1)

‘Silence: A feeling that there is no-one to talk to’; ‘I caused it so I’m not going to tell anyone’ (‘D’ G1 M2)

‘Lack of support, confusion, anger, frustration’ (‘I” G2 M1)

‘Isolation’; ‘trapped’; ‘confusion’; ‘normalising’; ‘depression’; ‘poor self esteem’ (‘I’ G2 M2)
‘Anger management issues’; ‘no sense of control in life’; ‘social isolation’; ‘low self esteem’ (‘J’ G2 M1)

‘confusion, powerless’ (‘H’ G2 M1; ‘F’ G1 M1)

‘invisible’ (‘G’ G1 M1)

‘vulnerable’ (‘D’ G1 M1)

‘deserving treatment → feelings of worth → place in life/society/family → behaviour lady like?’; ‘disempowerment through feminism → takes away → choice → socialisation’ (‘G’ G1 M1)

‘Self hate’ (‘F’ G1 M1)

Substance use

Concepts relating to the use of alcohol and other drugs are raised mainly by the second group of workers; although Participant ‘A’ does identify, in map 2, that parents as well as young people use substances (alcohol or other drugs) as a ‘coping mechanism’. He also identifies that the young person may excuse the violence and the use of substances because they believe that ‘he/she wouldn’t do it unless they cared for me!’ (‘A’ G1 M2). The following statements were used in concept maps in relation to alcohol and other drug use:

‘Alcohol abuse – both parents’ (‘A’ G1 M1)

‘drug abuse’ (‘J’ G2 M1&2)

‘Alcohol and other drugs (psychosis often prominent)’ (‘I’ G2 M1)

‘Alcohol and other substance use – drug abuse in family of origin’; Young person’s ‘Drug and alcohol use’ (‘J’ G2 M1)

‘Alcoholism’ (‘K’ G2 M2)

‘Drug abuse’ (‘L’ G2 M1) and ‘dysfunction → drugs → alcohol’ (‘L’ G2 M2).

Culture and the family

Several different concepts, linked to culture and the family, have been indicated across a number of participant maps. The first group of participants in particular identified the concept of ‘family dysfunction’, although it was not explicitly stated in all maps. The group raised such concepts as:
‘broken homes, poverty, financial problems, divorce’ (‘C’ G1 M1)

‘poverty’ and ‘frustration’ linked to ‘family violence’ (‘D’ G1 M1)

‘Need for family liaison and support’ (‘D’ G1 M2)

‘Dysfunctional nature of many families today’ and ‘lack of parent communication (life) skills’ (‘A’ G1 M1)

‘Beliefs and behaviour’ informing ‘parenting skills (lack of) → can lead to’ or ‘→ stems from → Family violence’ (‘F’ G1 M1)

Cultural values influence behaviour within the family and notions of violence are also cultural.

‘Cultural Factors i.e. ethnicity. Family History – how things are done. i.e. Keep things in this family!!’ (‘A’ G1 M2)

‘Ethnicity → culture → religion → what is violence?’, ‘History. Ancient laws’. (‘G’ G1 M1)

‘Culture → determines → Family violence’ (‘B’ G1 M1)

Changing social role expectations influence levels of aggressive and abusive behaviour.

‘Failed relationships’ linked to ‘women and men’s changing roles → socialisation, workforce → men are feeling less in control – threatened’ (‘F’ G1 M1)

Physical discipline is accepted and young people received mixed messages and inconsistent discipline.

‘History – right of punishing young people endorsed by certain sections of society i.e. “rough justice”’: ‘mixed media messages on how children should be treated’ (‘A’ G1 M1)

The concept of patriarchy is indicated by participant ‘G’ (G1 M1) (see ‘Worker understanding and experience of family violence: the cycle and how it works’, above).

Popular culture – music and film – reinforces the acceptance of violence towards women and normalises violence.

‘some music and movies endorsing violence towards women (generally)’ (‘A’ G1 M1)

‘culture of family environment’ (‘A’ G1 M1)
Young people who live with violence are likely to possess poor relationship skills and to select others with whom their relationships will be unsuccessful.

‘failed relationships’ and ‘seeking a man who may also abuse me – unconscious’ (‘F’ G1 M1)

Other concepts suggested which relate to ‘Culture and family’ include:

‘Culture of family environment’. (‘A’ G1 M1)

‘Street culture (DV can often be seen as norm)’ (‘I’ G2 M1) and ‘street culture’ (‘L’ G2 M1)

‘dispossession (stolen generation)’ and ‘institutional abuse’ (‘J’ G2 M1)

‘History’ (‘J’ G2 M1; ‘B’ G1 M1)

Participant ‘L’ (G2 M1) also introduces notions of ‘class’ through linking ‘Family violence’ to ‘lower social class’.

Focus Group Interviews

Three focus group interviews were held with each group of youth workers. Analysis of the data collected through these interviews is dealt with in the following section of this Chapter and the information organised according to worker group (Group 1 or 2) and focus group (Focus Group 1, 2 or 3).

Group 1: Drop-in Centre Youth Workers

Focus Group 1

The initial focus group discussion provided a forum in which drop-in centre youth work participants were able to develop their understanding of the complexities for young people of the experience of living with violence. They were able to share their own experience and understanding with other drop-in centre workers (some of whom they already knew and worked alongside and some who were new to them), and begin to think about their own practice with young people especially young women who may be living with violence. Through the process of directed but open discussion a number of themes emerged. These themes have been organised according to whether they relate to the worker, their practice or the agency in which they work; or whether they relate to young people, the coping strategies they have developed or the indicators of living with violence. These themes are listed in Table 6 below.
Table 6: Drop-in Centre worker focus group 1 Themes

The process of talking with other people who work in a drop-in youth centre environment, participants claimed, was a useful and positive experience. Some claimed that they were too involved in the work of the agency to take time to talk about aspects of their practice with their colleagues; listening to the views and experience of people working in similar but different environments was something they were not used to doing. The value of this process was acknowledged by everyone involved. This and other themes raised during the first focus group are discussed in more detail in the following section of this Chapter.

**Themes**

Many of the themes discussed below are interrelated and at times may appear repetitive; they were however raised as separate issues in the discussion and I have chosen to deal with them both separately and in combination with other linked concepts as they emerge.

**Worker: Practice**

Issues of practice that were discussed indicated that workers were often frustrated, that they believed that there are ways of working which may be positive and ways of working that may be dangerous. They identified in-service training as something that would be helpful for them.
Frustration:

Participants indicated frustration at three separate levels:

- At the level of service provision these workers felt unsupported and under-resourced by their own agency; they also claim that they lack training and awareness specific to the issue of family violence. This sense of lack of support was indicated by those workers who claim to have been directed not to provide counselling or referral as well as those who clearly have a mandate to provide this level of support. All workers indicated their frustration at a sense of limited knowledge and understanding and limited physical capacity to effectively deal with the presenting issues.

- Services whose purpose is to work with people affected by family, or domestic violence, do not offer a model that is youth friendly and often are not available at a time when young people may want to access them. The focus of these services, participants claimed, is either women as victims of domestic violence or children as secondary victims, but not young people.

- The third level of frustration was identified by the worker who claimed that young people often only want someone to listen to them but do not want anything done to resolve the problem. This was considered frustrating because participants believed that they should be able to do something to remove the young person from the violence or to stop the violence – they wanted to do something.

Positive practice:

Participants defined positive practice as the provision of a safe and approachable environment in which young people feel comfortable to discuss any issues with youth workers. Young people want to know that someone will listen to them and that they will be encouraged and supported to make their own decisions. Worker awareness should be sufficiently developed to enable them to look past the obvious and to support young people in identifying the issues that are of concern to them.

Dangerous practice:

Practice that made the task of youth workers more difficult, and labelled here as dangerous practice, includes expectations of services for workers to either under service
young people – that is to provide only limited services for them such as recreation – or to stretch the service offered past what workers have the ability or resources to do. Not having guidelines in the form of developed policies and procedures and the practice of short term or ad hoc funding were also considered detrimental to effective service provision.

Helpful:

Participants agreed that they would be better placed to provide appropriate support for young people living with violence if they were offered in-service training to help them develop an awareness of the issues and the skills to deal with them. Participant ‘A’ thought it would be beneficial if the counsellors available to young people living with violence could make themselves known by attending 'drop-in' services on a regular but informal basis. Others thought that they would be better placed to provide the required level of services to these young people if more workers were rostered on. This would only happen, they believed, if their management were more familiar with what went on within the service and the difficulties they faced on a daily basis.

Limitations placed by Agency:

The worker who articulated the specific limitation alluded to above, said:

‘Our agency is set up to be a recreational agency. We do well above what we are required to do. We're not even supposed to do referrals or counselling or anything like that’ (‘C’).

Value of networking:

The process of networking that participants were introduced to was seen to be a useful and relevant resource; they claimed that it is important to understand what other workers in the same agency are dealing with and what strategies they use. They also claimed that hearing from workers in other agencies provided further insight into options for their own practice and development within their own agency.

Focus Group 2

At the completion of the first focus group participants were asked to spend the following few weeks exploring their practice as it relates to young women living with violence. Many of the issues and concerns discussed in the first focus group were raised again and the previous discussion was built upon during the second focus group.
interview. For this reason some of the themes identified from the second focus group are the same or similar to those identified from the first focus group (see Table 7 below).

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**Table 7: Drop-in Centre worker focus group 2 Themes**

The themes identified have again been split into two groups: those that relate to workers and those that relate directly to the perception of participants about the behaviour, belief or position of young people. These are discussed in the following section of this chapter and explored in more detail in Chapter 5.

**Themes**

**Worker: Practice**

**Referral options and difficulties**

The issue of referral is problematic because services designed to deal with the issues at the level for which workers would refer do not, according to participants, cater for the needs of young people. The examples cited included the limited crisis accommodation options for a young woman under the influence of illicit substances or alcohol and the slow pace of support offered by under-resourced and overwhelmed counselling services to which young people might be referred.
Support or Control? (non-youth work activities)

Participants claimed that much of their time is taken up in work that is peripheral to ‘youth work’ per se. They talked about:

- policing of behaviour where there are substantial numbers of young people (around 50) with only two or three workers rostered to work;
- ensuring that illegal behaviour such as the use and supply of illicit drugs does not take place within the boundaries of the youth service, that alcohol is not consumed on the premises and that cigarettes are not smoked by young people in a place where they are visible to the public (or doing so contravenes legislation covering the consumption of cigarettes in public places).

Also included is support for parents and families in crisis as well as dealing with issues of partner violence with young people.

Presenting Issues

The range of issues participants discussed in relation to their day to day work with young people is quite diverse and covers such areas as illicit drug use and supply, crisis and longer term accommodation, aggressive and anti-social behaviour, family support, family violence and partner violence. For some of these issues a counselling response is required; for others the response is policing; whilst for others the response is one of physical support. Irrespective of the response, and the issue may require a combination of responses, participants identified that it is important that young people experience the encounter as supportive.

Hit or Miss: an issue of understanding and boundaries

Among the implications for practice that were discussed is the issue of participants not knowing where to intervene when faced with a situation that they believe is clearly indicative of family violence, but is not understood in that way by the young person involved.

This issue is twofold and participants indicated concern that they were either too involved or not sufficiently involved. Some participants have found that their role has moved beyond providing support for young people to supporting parents who are struggling; whereas others are concerned that they may not be picking up on the signs and that they have not built the necessary relationships with young people to encourage disclosure.

The question of staff resources, training and skill development were raised in this context. Participant ‘A’, whose role includes supporting parents and other family
members as well as the individual young person, reported feeling that his capacity to deal with the situation is stretched beyond his training but that he was not aware of any other service that would or could take over the family support role he had developed. Other participants thought that it was important to consciously build relationships with young people that would encourage them to disclose.

Relationships, respect and rostering

Participants discussed the difficulties that they experienced in developing relationships that are supportive to young people using their centres. These difficulties were associated with small numbers of staff employed at any one time, the necessity to police the activities of young people, and the practice of random rostering that at least one of the agencies employed. As a consequence of these agency practices, some individual workers were not consistently available to young people. Some participants had regular rosters with regular duties each week. Both they and the young people they worked with knew that they would be there on certain days at certain times and for certain activities. Others had set times that they worked on programs offered by their service other than drop-in, but their agency employed an irregular roster for drop-in. They found that this made relationship building difficult. Participant ‘E’ claimed that she would not encourage a young person to develop a relationship with her if she knew that she would not be available to the young person for a couple of weeks. She claimed that she felt it unfair

‘for me to go in and open up some stuff and then not be there to follow up…’

Participant ‘G’, whose agency employed regular rostering, said that she would ask another worker to talk to a young person if she thought that support might be needed and she would not be available next time the young person was likely to be at the centre. All participants claimed that they discussed with their colleagues concerns raised through their interaction with young people and shared any relevant information with them whenever possible. There was consensus that, as well as consistency, mutual respect was a key component in the development of any relationship. Youth workers needed to treat young people with respect and to begin any relationship building by recognising and ‘being where they (young people) are at’ (‘A’). Participants identified relationship building and the creation of a comfortable and welcoming environment as skills which are central to youth work practice. As participant ‘B’ said, getting young
people to respect themselves, other people and the centre may come naturally ‘but that actually is a skill’.

**Worker: Agency**

**Environment**

The environment experienced by young people at the service is important and needs to be *informal and safe*; a drop-in centre should be somewhere where a young person can relax and be themselves; somewhere where they can be as identified or as anonymous as they choose to be. It is also important for workers to take control of the development of that environment within agency policy and procedure guidelines. Some agencies involved in the study did not have policies and procedures for workers to follow, whilst others may have the policies in place but did not have processes in place to ensure that policies and procedures are complied with.

The transient nature of the youth work sector often makes it more difficult for workers new to a service to understand how the environment is created and maintained within that service. Participant ‘G’ claimed that as a new worker at her service she found that, in the absence of formal guidelines, young people were trying to convince her about practice that was totally inappropriate. ‘The things they come out with in drop-in!’ she exclaimed. Maintenance of a comfortable and non-threatening environment within the service, all participants agreed, relies on effective youth work and team participation.

**Working conditions**

Conditions of employment for participants varied. Some are employed on permanent contracts with regular hours of work whilst others are casual employees either with irregular but frequent ‘rostered’ hours or with infrequent, ad hoc hours of employment. The permanent employees with regular hours (participants ‘A’ and ‘B’) felt that an incentive to work antisocial hours (Friday nights) is provided through having ‘good salaries’ and one Friday night per month where the centre is closed and they don’t have to work.

These participants also worked as a close-knit team with opportunities for regular, informal ‘debriefing’. The lack of opportunities to discuss events during the shift with other team members was identified by all participants as symptomatic of poorer working conditions and reduced capacity to provide effective services.
Participant ‘G’ claimed that workers within her agency did not have time to debrief with other team members and that any issues that arose during the shift would only be recorded if the worker took the time (unpaid) to go to the office (in another suburb), find the relevant forms and complete and submit them. Any communication that took place between team members was done informally and pithily. Short-term, one-off funding was identified as an issue impinging on working conditions and service provision.

One participant considered himself and his agency to be ‘community resources’ (‘A’), but said that this takes time to establish and that it takes most new workers at least six months to develop the networks necessary for effective service provision. This means that when funding is only available for a twelve month program, the first half of the program is likely to be ineffective, he claimed. Participants agreed that effective service provision is not only reliant on worker continuity but that professional supervision for workers is essential to ensure that teams are able to communicate effectively with one another and that individual workers have the opportunity to debrief and share issues of concern at least with their colleagues.

**Worker: Understanding the issues**

**Gut feeling – the great (im)mobiliser**

All participants appeared to recognise the value of gut feeling and their response to it. They discussed their sense of knowing and some indicators they had picked up through working with young women they believed were affected by family violence. There was concern about how to deal with their suspicions based on a fear of not responding appropriately when family violence or sexual assault was indicated whilst being frightened of taking action and then discovering that their suspicions were unfounded.

**Local culture or Family Violence?**

Although participants agreed that some behaviour, such as the way a young woman dresses, might be indicative of sexual abuse this notion was later dismissed by other participants who claimed that style of dress was more likely to be indicative of local culture than of abuse. For example, participant ‘B’ claimed that all the girls from a particular area dressed in a similar way; they wore baggy clothes and ‘dress down a bit’ in order not to look like ‘a tart’, added participant ‘A’. Cultural explanations were also used by participants ‘A’ and ‘B’ to minimise the possibility of sexual abuse within
a particular Maori family. The issue was raised when one participant (‘B’) discussed the involvement of a very quiet and reserved young mum who, it was claimed, had never had a boyfriend, but who came from a large family ‘where everyone’s in each other’s pocket’ (‘A’). When the participant was asked what she knew about the father of this young woman’s child, she said she didn’t know but thought that it was ‘Just a one-night stand...’ (‘B’). In so doing, these participants dismissed as ‘cultural’ some behaviour that may be indicative of sexual abuse and they dismissed the possibility, based on the culture of the family, that the father of one particular young woman’s child may be a close relative.

Worker Frustration

Participants felt frustrated because they believed they were hindered in their support of young people they were concerned about by the young person, the services to whom they might refer and their own hesitation to take action based on the fear of being wrong.

‘Naming’ violence

This concept applies particularly to participant ‘B’ who found it difficult to identify as violent anything other than physical violence. She differentiated between violence, as physical and abuse, as verbal, emotional or sexual. In discussing young women and family violence she did not include in her definition other behaviours which, although not identified as violent, she considered unacceptable.

Normality and ‘culture’

Two separate issues were raised here. The first is that young people become accustomed to violent behaviour within the family, within their neighbourhood, and within their peer group. The examples offered ranged from young men thinking it’s okay to demand money from their mother and to threaten her with physical violence if she doesn’t comply (‘A’); a background noise of physical violence and verbal abuse from neighbours houses (‘A’); a young woman who got ‘drunk and punch(ed) her boyfriend’ (‘B’) because that’s how her parents behave. The second issue raised is that different ethnicities have different understanding of acceptable or normal behaviour. The examples used related to particular Maori and Aboriginal families in which violence was thought to be the norm and in which ‘empowered’ young women were considered arrogant (‘B’)!
‘Sometimes if you’re too cool or too confident when you’re a Maori “Oh she thinks she’s so fucking good!” it’s that kind of thing... being loud being empowered being assertive - “who the fuck does she think she is?”’

Worker: Peer Support and Reflection

The process of reflection and peer support that participants engaged in throughout the focus group discussions they claimed to be a useful learning tool. As one participant said

‘You see you don’t think about these things until you sit down and talk about it’. (‘C’)

She also acknowledged that the tendency of young women to ‘keep on saying just these little comments’ (‘C’), that she had previously taken to mean that the young woman did not want to follow through, was probably an attempt to engage workers and to ascertain the safety of disclosing. Participants agreed that although they had not always done so previously, it is essential to make time for informal debriefing at least during the quieter times at the centre, because through this process they can reflect on issues and develop team approaches to their work with young people.

Young Person: Disclosure

A window of opportunity – lost (‘Boom – and then they’re gone!’)

The experiences of disclosure participants reported were fleeting comments made by young women who did not provide the opportunity for the worker to follow up on what was said. Participant ‘C’ maintained that

‘It hasn’t got to the point where you can actually sit down and do that (talk through the issues with her).... She’s so quick. She makes these comments and then she’s gone!’

Another participant suggested that it’s as if the young women are ‘testing you’ (‘D’) to see if the support they are wanting is available to them. So, even though she may

‘... follow you into the office and shut the door and – Boom!’ (‘D’)

‘or lean over and whisper in your ear.... ’ (‘C’),

young women are likely to quickly disappear or move into a crowd so that it is difficult for the worker to continue the conversation with her. This type of disclosure appeared to be a typical experience of disclosure for all participants.
Young Person: Behaviour

Gender Specifics

The behaviour discussed by participants differed according to gender. Where boys were the primary service user participants claimed that they tended to be aggressive, disruptive or destructive, to ‘treat the girls really bad’ (‘G’) and to be abusive to workers. The description of girls that participants worked with suggested that they were ‘needy’ (‘B’) or ‘very quiet’ (‘C’) or self-conscious about their bodies or the way they looked. One young woman, it was claimed, always wore ‘big clothes, covering up’ (‘B’) and kept herself covered up. This young woman responded to compliments by changing the way she looked by dressing down her appearance.

Coping strategies

Young people use a variety of strategies to survive. For some it’s having a conscious awareness that there is someone (a youth worker or a boyfriend) who they could talk to if they want to, but who does not attempt to force them to do anything they may not be comfortable with. For others coping is about remaining in control at all times; or telling stories to gain sympathy; or using their peers as a reference point and source of support.

One young woman participants identified as probably living with violence would stay away from home, either at the youth centre or a friend’s house, until she knew her mother would be there, or she would wait for her mother to collect her to take her home. She had an agreement with her mother that she would not be home alone with her father. This young woman has a close knit friendship group of mixed gender all of whom appeared to understand her position and to be comfortable discussing their own feelings with one another.

Another friendship group identified by participants was made up of young women only, all of whom appeared to have a first hand understanding of living with violence. They spoke openly to one another about their issues.

Fear

There is concern amongst participants that young women believe that disclosure means that the youth worker is obligated (or mandated) to report the situation and that ‘welfare’ or police may become involved and the young person be separated from their family or forced to take action through the courts.
Focus Group 3

The third and final focus group discussion with these participants demonstrated that they had gone as far in exploring their practice with young people living with violence as they were able to given the constraints of their work environment. Only a few of the themes raised previously were discussed; the main focus of discussion revolved around the normality of violence, the ways in which family are supported, the behaviour of young people, and the lack of support for young people and their families.

Participants were given a synopsis of Narrative therapy (Morgan, 2000) methodology as it might apply to their work prior to meeting for the third time. (See appendices). Their attempts to use this methodology in their daily work were also discussed (see Table 8). Emergent themes have been arranged according to whether they describe what youth workers do; are directly related to their practice; or whether they are descriptive of the situation for young people, their family or their behaviour.

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Table 8: Drop-in Centre worker focus group 3 Themes

Themes

Worker: Practice

Using a Narrative Approach

Participant ‘C’ attempted to use a Narrative approach and found it ‘Easy!’ to get the young woman concerned to open up and talk about herself but was not able to ‘see a positive opening to get in there, though’. The participant claimed that although the young woman was very clear about what was going on. She distanced herself from it and did not ‘own’ anything but the negatives about herself.
Specialist Family Work

For some participants, working with the family was peripheral to their youth work activities. One claimed that it is not possible to adequately support young people and to support their family. She claimed

‘I don’t think you can to do it properly, I don’t think you can.’ (‘D’).

Participant ‘C’ said that their agency worked closely with an ‘indigenous liaison officer’ (‘C’) to support local Aboriginal families. A further participant claimed to be very involved in family support work and that his agency was

‘the lead agency for ‘Safer Families’…. an initiative (pilot) of Safer WA…facilitating …agencies to sit around the table…with clients. In this case it’s a mum with two boys, one’s 16 and one’s 18… We have grass roots contact with the family. We see this family…just about every second day; see how they’re going, and if they have any issues.’ (‘A’)

This participant claimed to be struggling because,

‘I’m not a specialist…. This family has really serious issues and we’re struggling with just the whole procedure stuff.’ (‘A’)

Others agreed that what he was doing sounded like

‘… something which is probably more than should be expected of a youth agency to deal with’ (‘C’, ‘D’, ‘G’)

even though his agency were providing ‘…a familiar face, that’s always there’ (‘E’).

Concerns about other agencies

The participant providing intensive support to families was also concerned about the lack of support available through other, mainstream agencies. For example he claimed that

The State welfare service, ‘Family and Children’s Services (now Department for Community Development) were the only agency who couldn’t offer any support...’ (‘A’)

to the mother of a particular family because she didn’t fit their criteria. This participant claimed that young people are expected to either wait

‘three months to see someone’ or to ‘open up to the psych one week and then not see that psych for two weeks… you’ve basically just spilt the beans about your life and you walk out the door...’ (‘A’)
without any immediate support in place.

**Young person: Culture of the environment**

**The Normality of Violence**

Participants discussed young people and families they are currently working with and what appears to be a normality of violence. The young people concerned were either witness to, or the recipients of physical, emotional and verbal violence such as being thrown, screaming and yelling, and fear of being hit or abandoned. It appeared that the young women involved were generally victims, whilst the young men were more likely to be both victim and perpetrator. Young men discussed threatening their ‘partners, girlfriend, mums, parents’ (‘A’) with physical violence. This threatening generally occurred when the young men were intoxicated, but they also talked about ‘remorse’ (‘A’). Participants identified this as a ‘developing pattern’ (‘A’) of the cycle of violence. Young women were seen to feel responsible for the abuse believing that ‘it will only happen if she pushes the right buttons’ (‘D’). Both young men and young women were reported as feeling self hate. Some were reported to ‘self harm’ (‘A’) or have negative coping strategies such as drug use and crime. Some of the young people with whom participants worked also experienced neglect in the form of un-medicated ADHD, lack of food, and one parent’s apparent lack of concern that her children do not attend school.

**Young person: The family**

Lack of parenting skills was identified as a huge problem among the parents of a number of the young people with whom they worked. One mother was said to belong to ‘the stolen generation’ (‘C’). This parent and others lacked communication skills and parenting skills. Lack of these skills was seen by participants as being a factor in the experience of violence by these young people, with one mother being described as having stress levels ‘so high that basically anything is setting her off’ (‘A’).

**Young person: Behaviour**

Participants identified extremes of behaviour amongst young people they believe to be living with violence. Participants identified that these young people either ‘act out’ to get attention or behave in a mature and responsible manner. For example two young people were described as belonging to ‘the few we have at the drop-in centre who
actually behave all the time...’ (‘C’). Whereas another participant described a young man they were dealing with as doing

‘.... silly things to get people’s attention. I’ve often just watched him hanging about, and he’ll be fine. For half an hour, he’ll do his own thing quietly, mucking around with the other kids, and then all of a sudden you’ll see him just looking around for something to do. It’s like he’s trying to get our attention. So you’re in there and he’ll keep doing stupid things; and the more you pounce on him the more he does stupid things its like cat and mouse sort of thing’. (‘D’).

A further young person was suggested as being ‘enabled’ in his use of drugs and violence by the behaviour of his mother. This young man, the participant thought, needs to be removed from his environment because

‘the behaviour of other people is actually enabling him to continue behaving like he is.... if he moves into a different environment (with consistency and boundaries) that enabling will stop’. (‘A’).

**Group 2: Detached Youth Workers**

**Focus Group analysis**

Three focus groups were held with the team of detached workers. These meetings took place over a short space of time (around 10 weeks) and were introduced into the study to triangulate the findings of the focus groups held with drop-in centre workers. Emergent themes have been organised into groupings and categories according to their relationship to the agency, the worker or young people and remain descriptive at this point.

**Themes**

**About the Agency: Resources**

**Staff support**

The agency in which all detached youth work participants are employed has a ‘clinical supervision’ (‘H’ FG1) policy and provides regular internal supervision for team members through the service coordinator as well as access to an external employee’s support program.

**Staffing levels**

‘I feel pretty comfortable with how well resourced this program is – I know that’s unusual. But having said that if we had more staff we would do a different
range of things. But, for what we currently undertake we are quite satisfactorily staffed’,

the service coordinator (‘H’ FG1) claimed.

Agency Structure

The service operates within a large multifunctional agency and offers direct access to a number of relevant services such as

‘crisis accommodation, there’s a JPET program, a young parent’s support group... There’s a lot of overlap in between services that makes it easier for us because we’re the kind of service that refers to others’ (‘H’ FG1).

Barriers to practice

As a street-based service it is not always possible to find a quiet spot to talk with young people when it is required. ‘You don’t get that (a quiet, private place) on the streets. This building (the administration centre) is not very youth friendly’ (‘K’ FG1) but participants claim to have ‘the flexibility to be able to meet young people where they are comfortable... So I wouldn’t have seen that as being too much of a hindrance’ (‘L’ FG1) ‘so we look elsewhere to fill that need’ (‘K’ FG1).

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Table 9: Detached Youth Worker Focus Groups Themes
About the Worker: Practice

Principles informing practice

The principles informing this service are underpinned by an 'empowerment' ('H' FG1) approach to youth work practice. The young people are encouraged to make their own decisions and choices about what they will do. They are however provided with as much information as possible on which to base these decisions. Primarily the service operates on an understanding of respect:

‘...like treating young people with respect and expecting the same in return and asking young people to treat one another with respect when they’re actually using the service which probably doesn’t actually appear as a policy in our procedure manual but forms part of the principles which underpin the way we approach everything that we do’ ('H’ FG1).

Changes resulting from focus group involvement

Participants indicated that the experience of being involved in the reflective process facilitated through the focus group discussions was helpful in the development of their practice, claiming that, in relation to family violence:

‘I feel more confident in bringing the issues up. As in beforehand I would probably spend longer time with the client or sort of beating around the bush before addressing the issues... I probably feel more confident... Just because it's a harder subject doesn’t mean that it should be dealt with any different to any other issue on the street.’ ('L’ FG3).

‘My awareness is probably a bit higher or a bit more sort of in the forefront of my mind.’ ('L’ FG3).

During the third detached youth worker focus group, three group members discussed the nature of the evolvement of their practice:

‘L’: ‘...work has become more constructive... Its much more planned or there’s a vision of what you are doing, whereas before it was pretty much just reacting to emergencies.... you were fumbling a bit...’

‘I’: Would you say you would be now more ‘solution focussed’ or ‘goal orientated’? ‘...

‘M’: ‘I’ve always been like that but it’s actually the way to get that happening is much more constructive’..

The way in which they have begun to think about what is happening in their work place has changed also. One participant claimed that the process:
'has led me to start questioning a few things about youth work as well in terms of dependency and allowing young people to access a service where you are just continually maintaining that cycle... Rescuing,... So, you don’t really look into changing that behaviour as much and then you go back to support whenever something happens.... You know I can see it as perpetuating some sort of dependency as well...’ (‘I’ FG3).

Others claimed that:

‘ Its been quite good professionally to talk about the issue of DV in a team setting and just throwing it up and reflecting on it. I mean I reckon that it would be quite helpful to do so on any subject just to spend a couple of hours talking about things.’ (‘L’ FG3).

‘It’s definitely been great to reflect but for me last time we met I felt quite exhausted and sort of quite down after last time. I don’t know why particularly that session rather than the first or this one...’ (‘K’ FG3).

Team approach

These participants work together as a team and have in place efficient ‘hand-over’ (‘L’ FG1) procedures and regular team meetings ensuring that all team members are aware of what’s happening with different young people. Although they are aware that, should they call, a colleague would take their place on the shift to free them up to have a quiet discussion with a young person, they tend not to call on one another because, they claimed, the time they are rostered to work in the office is ‘precious’ (‘M’ FG3) time and this time can be used to meet with young people if necessary.

About the Worker: Supporting Young people

The relationship

Building relationships with young people was identified as a crucial but slow process. Participants aimed to encourage young people to talk openly about their life and what is happening for them:

‘...you ask them how they feel about it and what it does to them and it’s a long process I reckon to have that rapport and to have that acknowledgment that you can actually talk about the issue. And sort of get it out in the open and from that to... come with... constructive possibilities’. (‘L’ FG1)

The importance of not judging the young person but listening to them and asking ‘What are you gonna do?’ (‘L’ FG3) was raised as was the necessity of providing the opportunity for:
‘... positive interaction with a person... who doesn’t fuck ‘em over!’ (‘M’ FG3)

Casework with partners

A casework approach is adopted by this service when both partners in a violent relationship are clients. Although different workers are assigned to the individual young people they work closely together to ensure that appropriate support is provided and to ensure that the ‘victim’ in the relationship is not put in further danger by action taken by the service.

‘We found ourselves, where ‘X’ would work with the male partner, there’s ‘Y’ working with the female partner... so we always had to set like a kinda fire-wall where both partners knew that this was the way it was working but made it quite difficult sometimes to deal with them together’. (‘M’ FG1).

‘But there were huge issues with that knowing what went on in the relationship and not putting her in bigger risk by knowing what was going on. If they were both accessing the service and trying to support her as much as we could and yes without putting her in more risk because we knew that he knew that she was accessing the service...’ ‘...he was denying that there was violence going on but she was telling us that it was going on and we knew that it was going on’. (‘L’ FG1)

‘We were trapped into secrecy in that situation and with a couple of others and you know when we were talking before about the enabling thing, we felt that by getting into a role of confronting the person actually perpetratiing the violence we were actually placing her in this situation at more risk. So we ended up in a double bind’. (‘H’ FG1).

Cultural considerations

One participant highlighted the difficulties she often faced when attempting to address issues with the partners of the young women she worked with. She claimed that it is:

‘... culturally unappropriate for me to do so as a white young woman to work with an Aboriginal man, or....older man, or even knowing how to refer them on appropriately... ’ (‘J’ FG1)

Barriers

The main barriers to supporting young people living with violence that these participants identified include:

1. The normalisation of violence;

‘...depending on the setting and the people that are in that environment they can make it the norm as well, by saying “Oh Yeah! That happened
to me as well”. You might have four or five young people who are basically saying the same thing as if that’s just what happens – Get over it! And that leaves you with an even narrower window of opportunity to say “Well, no. That’s not the right behaviour!” (I’ FG1)

2. ‘Hairy and ethical dilemmas’ such as ‘game playing’ and ‘enabling’ (‘H’ FG2);

‘There’s a bit of game playing going on between the couple... are we enabling that to happen. Like only phoning when he’s out or using code words, only posting certain things to her so that he doesn’t realise she’s receiving other forms of support and things like that. It’s been a big dilemma for us where... you’ve got contact with both, or situations where we’ve enabled the perpetrator, the controller of the violence to have an influence over the service we can provide’. (‘H’ FG1).

3. Previous experience of young people with government agencies;

‘And in actual fact...wanting young people to make informed choices for themselves; we’ve had to say the only way I can get you somewhere to stay is if we contact DCD for you. You understand that this is going to involve this, this and this. And they say, “Not on your life. I’d rather take care of myself, thanks very much!” Sometimes they’ll end up on the streets; sometimes we don’t see them again’. (‘H’ FG1).

‘They’ll squat around with some of the older guys’. (‘M’ FG1).

‘They’ll survive without an income for a little while...’ (‘K’ FG1).

‘Rely on their peers. Get into violence on the streets’. (‘J’ FG1)

‘If young people give the message that they don’t want to proceed any further, we generally don’t push it. And we don’t push it: a) because we like them to have the choice and that’s the philosophy we work by, but b) because we know it’s gonna be probably an extremely fruitless very hard road to go down. And if a young person says, “NO, don’t worry about it”, I think that my inclination would be to go “Okay then, leave it at that”. Because I know that if a young person says, “Yes, I’m abused at home and yes I do want to go to DCD about it”, the chances are the situation is not actually gonna improve from the process that you are about to enter into’. (‘H’ FG1).

‘Then there is the younger group that have tried to go through DCD and its just such a bad experience that they refuse to go back to DCD. So, whenever any other issues comes up where it would be beneficial to have DCD involved they choose not to.’ (‘L’ FG1).

4. Other professionals not understanding what youth workers do;

‘It’s the once off meeting – the crisis meeting – that they won’t respect anything you are saying.’ (‘M’ FG3).
‘...but it’s the crisis situations that are really difficult where they have no prior contact with you, don’t understand what you do. I think that’s a big thing as well, same with the social workers and the psychiatrist part of the reason why we had the case conference they didn’t understand what a youth worker did. So, you’re a youth worker! And that was the same comment from Graylands, she says “that’s my youth worker” – “What’s a youth worker?”’ (‘M’ FG3).

5. ‘Lots’ of mental health issues;

‘This girl, her mother’s just been shot by her father... 15.... she said she wanted a mental health assessment, so I rung up the hospital and they said “yeah, no worries love, we’ll do it in the order of the Triage”. I said, “look, you know, this girl is really distressed and I did want to tell you that she’s coming in because if she has to wait too long she might either not stay around or you know there could be an incident or something”. “Oh right, that’s okay. We’ve got police here for that!”.
And there was nothing much you can do.... You’ve got a hospital system that it’s Friday night and they’re overwhelmed....’ (‘J’ FG3)

6. and, the depth of support young people want

‘The other thing is that.... they often seek emotional support from their friends.... They don’t like the youth worker getting involved because that can bring up too much stuff and you know... So they might go there just to talk to a friend about it who might give them a hug and a few words that they need. Whereas we might tend to delve a little deeper maybe and that might be something they’re not comfortable with’. (‘L’ FG3).

‘We have to respect them not wanting to talk about it. Even if we think that is dead serious, if they don’t see it as an issue then there’s not really much we can do’. (‘M’ FG3)

Worker desensitisation

Participants discussed the issue of worker desensitisation from two perspectives. They discussed the perceived problem of getting so used to a ‘culture of violence’ that:

‘You tolerate a higher and higher level of it without even noticing it’s crept up on you...’ (‘H’ FG1).

‘...and when you’ve been working in the program for a while you start to tolerate things that you would never have tolerated at another youth service or think that its no big deal if someone tells you a story of being assaulted over the weekend’. (‘H’ FG1)

Participants also talked about a sense of despondency because

‘... they keep coming back again and again and again and again....’ (‘I’ FG3)
This participant also claimed that he

‘... just get(s) depressed about the fact “Why can’t you move on?” You know’.  
(‘I’ FG3).

The children

During the first focus group participants noted that they ‘do have a lot of contact with toddlers...’ (‘H’ FG1) ‘... who are very angry!’ (‘L’ FG1). ‘Really angry!’ (‘J’ FG1). ‘It’s brimming over in them!’ (‘H’ FG1) they claimed collectively. Later, during the final focus group, they discussed the changes they had seen in one two year old boy whose mother had moved out of a violent relationship and begun to move on with her life. Since the violence stopped her 2 year old son who had been very angry, but now he’s quite bright and is

‘Going ahead in leaps and bounds (‘M’ FG3)

‘Runs up to you now and gives you hugs like you know....’ (‘J’ FG3)

‘...you need the affection’.  (‘L’ FG3)

‘Interaction with other toddlers as well. A marked difference, I think. He’s going up to other toddlers and waving and touching. Whereas before he might have gone over and given them a hit, slapped them sort of thing. He’s really changed!’ (‘I’ FG3)

They did also note that the mother appears to have difficulty with discipline

‘I think she’s frustrated by his behaviour and doesn’t really have other strategies to use...’ (‘J’ FG3).

and so smacks him frequently.

Lack of Professional identity

Participants identified what they described as ‘lack of respect for youth work’ (‘M’ FG2) from other professionals, particularly those involved in Mental Health who they claimed are reluctant to take referrals from youth workers or to assist in the support of young people who youth workers identify as having mental health issues. During the final group discussion one participant claimed that Youth Link had been:

‘very helpful and gave me a very different kind of way to think about it (borderline personality disorder) than what most other mental health professionals had given me’.  (‘M’ FG3)
This service (which has a mandate to work with youth workers on issues of mental health for young people) also

‘gave me a lot of feedback about how I was feeling about it as well, which was really good. And about how that was affecting how I was dealing with it’. (‘M’ FG3)

Others found that mental health workers generally ‘won’t respect anything you are saying’ (‘M’ FG2) unless they know you.

‘I’ve talked to the psychiatrist and social worker at the community mental health service and they’ve actually understood my role and see my role as important and all that sort of stuff; which means that they can also facilitate the crisis stuff if I need it... ’ (‘M’ FG3).

**About the Worker: Violence**

**Worker Safety**

One participant discussed feeling unsafe when visiting young women at home. This, she claimed is a result of the conditions in which the young women are often living, the other people in the house, the young woman’s partner and, frequently, drug use.

‘... sometimes they’ve been quite a bit older, just got out of prison... I never feel safe being in the house with them... ’ (‘J’ FG1).

**About Young People: Violence**

**Normality of violence**

Participants described young people who have limited experience of non-violent communication, suggesting that violence is how the young people they work with generally communicate with others. However

‘... you do get the opportunity ... when you say you’re working with a young couple that he will sort of acknowledge conflict and acknowledge that he loses his temper or gets out of hand and that... But that doesn’t really present that much. ’ (‘K’ FG1).

Generally partners did not acknowledge their violence and young women accepted it as the norm adopting the behaviour in their interactions with others: ‘the words that they use are so degrading to women... ’ (‘L’ FG2). The young women often ‘don’t see it all. Often they don’t know any better. That is reality and that is the world... ’ (‘L’ FG1)
Partner violence

Partner violence is a constant and consistent issue for this group of participants and it is not uncommon for partners to be supported separately by different workers. When this happens, a case management style of work is adopted. The young woman is supported in the development of a ‘safety plan’ (‘H’ FG1) and, where possible, the young man is supported in identifying behavioural and control issues that he may not be aware of. They reported that the young women often keep secrets from the young men and the young man will attempt to control his partner even though the behaviour he may adopt is like the behaviour of his father that he previously rejected. They said:

‘...we often see that violence increases when a child is born....’ (‘M’ FG1)

‘that fella rejected his father’s behaviour... we’ve known him since he was 14 and he used to totally reject his father’s behaviour. The moment that he had his own son, that was the acceptable thing to do...’ (‘H’ FG1)

‘Part of that control stuff was about knowing you can’t go and see (service name) unless I’m seeing (service name)! So sometimes we would have to structure it so we would see him, or make the visit like we were going to see him, to check that she was okay’. (‘M’ FG1).

‘or invite him to a rec activity so that she was freed up to go to the young mums’ group so that she could see that there was other people in the same situation as her’. (‘H’ FG1).

‘Patriarchy!’ (‘M’ FG1)

‘I think that’s where some of that violence comes from is that we are living in this patriarchal society and these expectations on these young men for example the one we were talking about to be the breadwinner, the father figure these kind of things. Society’s violence is such that they are not able to fulfil those roles. You know, they can’t get a job, they can’t.... You know, they are so powerless that the only place they have power is in their private relationship, domain. And so they exercise that power with violence’. (‘K’ FG1).

Sometimes the violent partner is several years older than the young woman. In one case the workers found the partner to be ‘obnoxious’ and avoided contact with him based on the fact that he was outside of the age range with whom they worked. However, after focus group discussion one participant claimed to have

‘made a bit more of an effort to get a bit of background to see where he’s at and just basically offering a bit of support to him instead of just cutting him out completely...... he is quite a big and intimidating guy, but you sit down and have a talk with him and I think that he obviously realises that he does have some issues with domestic violence and if you sit down and have a talk with him about some of the stuff.... he’s a bit of a puppy dog...’ (‘I’ FG2)
Family of origin

Many of the young people these participants work with have lived with violence in their family of origin; some of them talk to the participants about their previous experiences. Those who acknowledge their previous experiences are quite clear about how they are now involved either as victim or perpetrator in a new violent relationship. Most of them are concerned about the perpetuation of the cycle of violence:

‘...someone that ‘X’ has been working with said.. “You know my history is this, this and this. Now look at me, I’m just stuck on a merry go round and I’m doing the same thing to my partner and my child that happened to me.”’ But their lives are so hard already that for them to just change... I mean they’ve got so many issues that they need to work with that the way they are with their partners is so far down the track....’ (‘H’ FG1).

‘...what is really sad about that couple is that independently they both said... You know, she said, “My mum was a victim of domestic violence” (she called it domestic violence that day) “my sister just escaped a violent relationship, and now look at me”. And he says, “Look at my family. My father sexually abused my siblings and my family went to shit and...”’ (‘H’ FG1).

‘I’m working with a young woman who disclosed to me about some sexual abuse that happened to her as a young child... she told her mum and her mum didn’t believe her and told her not to feel that way... and it has been repeated for her, she’s been in situations where she hasn’t been able to be in control or she hasn’t been able to be safe, so that’s been repeated.... And even now, on Friday we talked about this man that just walked into her house and started yelling and screaming. She was, like, frozen, she said she can’t do anything about it. And she was saying “I just can’t say No!” It was a man that she knew, a man that had assaulted her in the past. We talked about the situation and how to keep safe... just sort of planning ahead’. (‘J’ FG3).

Culture of violence

Participants identified a culture of violence at three different levels. Firstly, as a street-based agency, the client group is predominantly young people who are homeless as a result of violence within their family of origin. The young people using the service, participants claim, accept violence as normal and communicate with each other often in violent ways.

‘...we don’t see as much (physical) violence, but we do see a lot of intimidation and verbal abuse and control and partners that have very dysfunctional relationships’. (‘L’ FG1).

Then these young people enter a street culture that is inherently violent.

‘... something really important for the context in which we work is that almost all of the young people that we work with are living within a subculture which
includes whole new norms of behaviour in which violence is just passé’. (‘H’ FG1).

Finally they are forced to deal with a system that supports violence, intimidation and control.

‘... violence inherent in the system. I actually do think that a lot of that pattern that we described is underpinned by a system which is about control and intimidation’. (‘H’ FG1).

Variously these participants said about violence and the culture in which these young people exist:

‘most of the young people who we work with have become homeless are at the point where they have left their family of origin have done so because there’s been violence in the home, so its kind of conditioned them before they even get to us. And then they enter the street culture which says this is the best way to handle your problems, this is the only way....’ (‘H’ FG1).

‘Well if you don’t want to get run over you better get your hands up...’ (‘L’ FG1).

‘Abduction, kidnapping... that’s going on as well... small groups of young men have been holding young women against their will....’ (‘I’ FG1).

‘... some of the younger boys as well’. (‘H’ FG1).

‘It hasn’t just targeted women’ (‘L’ FG1)...

‘And (the young people believe) we can intimidate that victim so much so that they won’t approach anyone and tell them about it (law enforcement) and its really funny because the police haven’t got a clue. So it’s a power thing all round and....’ (‘I’ FG1).

‘So if we want to ground our work on the streets in a philosophy of non-violence and empowering young people who are victims of violence, then its just so far out of their sphere of what they deal with everyday that it just doesn’t compute!’ (‘H’ FG1).

**Drawing the themes together**

In the previous part of this section the themes identified through focus group discussion with drop-in centre and detached youth worker participants have been identified and discussed. These themes will now be drawn together and, using the headings (categories and themes) previously used for drawing together the themes from participant concept maps, they will be further discussed. The following table (Table 10) provides a guide to these themes.
Workers, their practice and influence of agency management

Family Violence as a (non) presenting issue

Concern was raised that participants did not necessarily recognise indicators that young people might be living with violence and that when the information is offered by young people it is done so in such a way that it is difficult to respond to. Only three participants (‘E’, ‘B’ and ‘A’) thought this was because they lacked skills which would enable them to identify and support young people living with violence. Predominantly participants thought that the nature of disclosure provided only fleeting opportunities for response. These opportunities were often lost when, after disclosure, the young person disappeared into the group; or they only make comments when the service was about to close or when the worker was too busy, dealing with a myriad of other things, to respond to what the young person was saying. The time and manner of disclosure is intentional, participants believed, either to ensure nothing happened or to test for safety. They agreed that it is important to find ways of being prepared when young women only presented ‘fleeting’ windows of opportunity. Participant ‘A’ suggested that

‘Just by being around is a strategy for her. You know how you were talking before if you were around (she sometimes opened up a little) that’s another strategy and even though you know you might not have fully explored it with her that she’s comfortable enough to be able to talk about it with you every now and then and that might be okay for her as a coping mechanism.’ (‘A’ G1 FG2).

A further concern is that young people may believe that disclosure means that the worker will need to report to the authorities:

‘They might think that “If I disclose now” then they have to go to the police and Family and Children’s Services. Whereas to just say... well if you keep presenting these issues then I might have to take it further. They need to be really clear about what they can tell you.’ (‘A’ G1 FG2).

Participant ‘C’ was concerned that as workers they may be ‘wrong!’ She said:

‘What if we make this assumption and we tackle it head on and we are just plain wrong?!’ (‘C’ G1 FG2).

Drop-in centre youth work participants agreed

‘That’s why you’ve got to wait, I think.... You’ve always got to believe it unless you just know....’ (‘B’ G1 FG2).
They further agreed that it is important to always check out with the young person any claims that are made and that this necessitates relationship building. This is what participant ‘D’ (G1 FG3) said about how she had changed her practice:

‘I’ve kind of been questioning why that is. Maybe we’re just not picking up on those signs and symptoms I mean…. Going through this now – every kid that comes through the door is a potential and... Yeah, just like making a conscious effort to explore those things.... I guess just making a conscious effort to make contact with the kids on a regular basis like just playing pool with them... something regularly so you're chatting to them all the time and you're finding out, you know... Just asking them what's going on at home. “How’s Mum and Dad?” That sort of thing. Finding out about what's going on. I mean obviously they're not all going through those issues but..... I guess just building a better relationship with them so if something did come up they would perhaps come and talk to you.'

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<th>CATEGORY</th>
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<td>Family violence, the non-presenting issue</td>
<td>Difficulty in picking up on signs and reticence by workers to act without confirmation. Young people reticent to disclose based on misunderstanding and incomplete trust. Workers feel unskilled to deal with ‘family violence’ but and partner violence is ‘commonplace’. Behaviour is gender specific.</td>
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| Workers, their practice and influence of agency management | Concerns relating to practice included:  
- The range and variety of presenting issues that needed to be dealt with  
- the level of support received from agency management  
- relationship building  
- access to other services  
- lack of respect for youth work as a profession; and  
- worker safety. |
| Frustration | Sources of frustration: resources within participants own service; limited referral options; guidelines for service provision which either limited or extended their ability to work effectively with young people; and young people who did not move. |
| Debriefing | Essential to practice, debriefing often took place in an ad hoc fashion. Clinical supervision was not available to many participants and talking with colleagues was often impossible. Networking as a form of debriefing would be useful. |
| The cycle and how it works | The ‘cycle of violence’ is maintained through lack of skills and learnt behaviour. |
| Cultural issues | Issues relating to culture identified included:  
- the culture of violence – from home to street  
- age, gender and ethnicity are considerations  
- culture and value systems |
| Structural issues | Society and the system are violent and DCD is unsupportive. |
| The effects for young people | The way in which young people dress may or may not be an indicator of sexual abuse; violence and addictive behaviours are ‘enabled’ in young people; children living with violence are angry and may become perpetrators as young adults. |
| Sense of self | Young people are often negative about who they are and what their options are. Violence is normal and communication is generally violent. |
| Substance use | Use and supply of illicit substances is a normal activity |
| Culture and the family | Cultural implications for parenting and concept of violence; family and street culture often inherently violent. |

Table10: Combined Focus Groups Themes
Throughout the focus group interviews participants discussed their practice in terms of young people with violent partners more frequently than young women living with violence in their family of origin. Practice then often included working with the violent partner as well as the non-violent partner and ensuring the safety of those involved. As a team, detached youth worker participants had developed a ‘case management’ approach with these young people, working with both partners separately. Both groups of youth work participants discussed issues raised in their practice with young men whose behaviour was overtly violent, aggressive or disruptive. Whilst, for the most part, young women they suspected may be living with violence were far more likely to be introvert or to find safety through the support of their friends (see discussion under ‘Detached youth workers Focus Group Analysis, About the Worker: Supporting Young people, Barriers). According to drop-in centre youth workers, young women are also far more likely to seek the support of others, including youth workers, to ensure their safety. In focus group discussions, these participants, referred to a young woman who’s friends are described as ‘just such a close knit, tight group’ (‘E’ G1 FG2). The young woman herself is described as

‘I don’t know she doesn't say a lot really she's so quiet, a very quiet girl. You can tell that something's bugging her, though - heads down... but, yeah, you know, nothing... Nothing we can actually see on her even. To look at her you wouldn’t see that she’s been (abused) at home. Yeah we give a cursory look when she walks in. Yeah, just those comments, those fleeting comments’. (‘C’ G1 FG2).

The help of participants at this service has been sought in ensuring that she gets home safely but not before mum gets home because

‘...my Mum doesn’t want me home by myself with my Dad and I'll say oh yeah “you know why?” she'll say to me “because (big pause)....” I think he gets a bit physical with her... and she will not go home early if the father's the only one there’. (‘C’ G1 FG2).

On one occasion this participant was called when she had almost reached home herself to collect this young woman from a friend’s house and to take her home because, as she put it:

‘I guess mum didn’t eventuate..... ’ (‘C’ G1 FG3)

**Practice (Jack of all Trades)**

The two groups of youth work practitioners involved in this study identified as a concern the diverse range of issues that they deal with on a day to day basis. However,
the drop-in centre youth workers fell into two discrete categories – those whose service operated predominantly as a recreational outlet and those whose focus was more holistic and included the needs of family as well as young people. The detached youth workers offer a holistic service using recreation as a tool; this service is available only to young people. The range of issues dealt with by these practitioners differs dependent on the service in which they are employed. The issues identified across both groups of participants include:

- substance use and supply
- anti-social behaviour
- homelessness
- employment, training and education
- partner violence, relationship issues and family conflict
- involvement with the law

Detached youth workers identified mental health as an issue that they also dealt with on a regular basis.

For detached workers, attempting to access support for young people with mental health issues also raised two other practice related concerns: access to other services, and lack of respect for youth work as a profession. Access to other services was raised by both groups of participants because they were seen to be either not youth friendly or they were not available when young people might most need to access them. For example, agencies dealing with issues of family violence have as their focus the needs of women as victims of violence in the home or children as secondary victims. Older young people (15 years and up) are less likely to be catered for by these services. The services also are most likely to operate during business hours, which is when young people are likely to be at school. Professional recognition and lack of respect for youth workers as professionals was discussed in depth by detached youth workers who have negatively experienced trying to access crisis support for young people with mental health issues. Other professionals they claim have limited knowledge or understanding of the youth work role and, unless a relationship had been developed between the referring youth worker and the mental health professional, information provided by the youth worker was likely to be dismissed or not taken into account when an assessment was made.

The remaining two concerns raised by participants (support by agency management and relationship building) are connected. For two of the agencies whose
workers participated in the study there appeared to be limited recognition of what goes into the process of relationship building with a young person. These two agencies were more inclined than the others to employ staff on a casual and irregular basis, making it difficult to establish consistency across the service. They were also more inclined to roster limited numbers of staff on to a shift irrespective of the numbers of young people who may use the service at that time. Participants were concerned that it is essential to invest energy into developing meaningful relationships with service users if they are to provide the level of support required by those young people. Where the service required that young people were referred on to other services for more intensive support, participants claimed that there was still a need to spend time with young people to develop that relationship and that this could not be done with ‘two workers and fifty young people’ (‘C’ G1 FG2). These same two agencies did not provide clinical supervision for any of their youth work staff and participants employed at only one of these agencies were able to find time to debrief with colleagues. Other drop-in centre participants felt supported by their management, but one (‘A’) claimed at times to feel stretched in his efforts to meet the needs of all services users – young people and their families. The detached youth work participants claimed to be well supported by their management; the expectations of their role were well defined without constricting their ability to meet the needs of young people using the service; they were provided the opportunity to debrief regularly with their colleagues and to have clinical supervision through the service coordinator. External supervision was also available to them should they require it.

The final concern about practice was identified only on one occasion; the concept of physical worker safety was raised in relation to making home visits to young women living with older partners in a violent (or in some other way unsafe) environment by ‘J’ (detached youth worker). Worker safety was discussed more broadly in relation to emotional safety and burnout and the need to debrief with colleagues or have some form of supervision available to all youth work practitioners.

**Frustration**

The focus of participants’ frustration varied dependent on the environment in which they were employed. Drop in centre workers were frustrated by the lack of physical resources within their own service and guidelines for service delivery adopted by management which either limited or extended their ability to work effectively with young people. Some drop in centre youth work participants identified lack of regular
shifts and inappropriate staffing levels as causes of frustration. Participant ‘G’ was frustrated by having to travel several kilometres from her place of work to complete incident reports or in some way communicate with her colleagues. The site of frustration for detached youth workers was predominantly in the frequency and intensity of violence among and for young people with whom they work. They also indicated frustration at the difficulty they had in being taken seriously by other professionals. Both groups of workers identified as frustrating the limited referral options available to young people requiring specialist services; and young people themselves were identified as frustrating. Young people are considered frustrating because they provided only fleeting opportunities for workers to pick up on issues of violence they may want to deal with (‘C’ and ‘D’) or because they didn’t move on (‘I’).

**Debriefing**

Debriefing was identified as a priority by all participants. Three teams of workers were involved in the two separate groups involved in the study; for some regular informal debriefing was undertaken, for others it happened only when necessary or when the opportunity arose. Participant ‘G’, who was involved in the study as an individual drop-in centre worker, claimed that debriefing never happened where she worked and that agency policy made reporting to colleagues too difficult to do (see ‘Frustration’ above). All participants identified the benefits of involvement in the focus group discussions and identified networking and debriefing as crucial to development of practice.

**Understanding and experience of violence by worker**

**The cycle and how it works**

Two contributing factors were identified by both groups of participants in the cycle of violence: lack of communication skills and learnt behaviour. Parents were identified as lacking parenting skills and communication skills and young people were identified as lacking communication skills and challenging boundaries. Often both young people and their parents were said to be surrounded by violence and that violence became a learnt behaviour. The role of both perpetrator and victim were considered to be learnt behaviours that also fuelled the cycle. Detached youth workers identified structural issues such as inherently violent social systems as being causative factors in the perpetuation of violence (see for example ‘H’ in ‘Culture of violence’ under detached youth worker themes). Participant ‘G’ suggested that power and control issues
generated by changing social role expectations were causative factors; and ‘patriarchy’ was mentioned by participants ‘M’ and ‘G’ as influencing gender role behaviours.

**Cultural issues**

Cultural issues were agreed by both groups of participants to be important when considering family violence. The way in which culture influenced value systems and provided an interpretation of behaviour as either violent or non-violent was raised by some as an important consideration; the influence of ethnicity was also discussed in relation to cultural values and expectations relating to age and gender and behaviour within the family. Participant ‘H’ identified what she described as ‘the culture of violence’ claiming that young people on the streets leave a family which is inherently violent and move into a street culture which is built on violence; they learn to live according to ground rules which are intrinsically violent.

**Structural issues**

According to the detached youth work group of participants, when young people are faced with the possibility of accessing support from the Department for Community Development they decline based on a history of lack of support from this agency. Given the choice of ‘DCD’ or relying on their own devices, young people choose to find their own solutions. Risk of exposure to violence as a result of involvement with the system was acknowledged by participants ‘H’ and ‘L’ (G2 FG1) as a reality and a concern; ‘its just such a bad experience that they refuse to go back to DCD’ (‘L’ G2 FG1). According to ‘A’ (G1 FG3), this particular government agency has also failed to respond to the needs of parents on at least one occasion.

**The effects for young people**

The practitioners involved in this study identified, among other issues, the following as possibly resulting from young people living with violence:

- accepting and acknowledging violence as normal and an acceptable way in which to communicate – particularly with loved ones;
- adoption of certain dress styles;
- learning how to be violent or to be a victim;
- and extreme anger.
Many of the young people youth work participants are involved with frequently display anger and this is particularly evident with young men using the services. Often young people are involved in intimate relationships which are also violent and partner violence was identified as a concern for participants. The detached group of youth workers commented that a number of small children attend their service with their parents and that they see these children adopting the aggressive behaviour of their parents. According to participant ‘H’ (G2 FG1), ‘They are like little sponges. I mean we do have a lot of contact with toddlers...’ These workers discussed the level of anger they see reflected in these small children (see ‘Detached youth worker focus group themes: The Children’). Parents who do not develop effective communication skills, according to participant ‘A’ are responsible for ‘enabling’ the violent behaviour and drug use of their adolescent children. Many of the young people using these services accept violence as normal and acceptable behaviour. Both groups of participants identified that removing the children and young people from the environment was the most affective way in which to change these negative behaviours.

Young women who adopt a style of dress which involves hiding the body with loose clothing was discussed by the drop-in centre group of workers. The participant who raised the issue (‘B’) did not believe that this style of dress was significant other than to be indicative of local youth sub-culture. She was supported in this assumption by her colleague (participant ‘A’). However, participant ‘E’ who is employed at a different service claimed that this style of dress might be indicative of an experience of sexual assault.

Service users, sense of self and social and structural issues

Sense of self

According to both groups of youth work participants, young people are often quite negative about who they are and what their life choices might be. The concept of self-esteem was not raised but it was suggested by drop-in centre participants that low self-worth might be an issue. Both groups suggested that the young people they are involved with did not have high expectations for their future. Some of the young people using the detached youth work service reportedly indicated concern that they had adopted behaviour modelled by their parents that previously had been considered unacceptable – with parenthood came a complete new set of rules of behaviour towards children that young people had previously claimed not to like. Non-violent
communication appears to be problematic particularly for the street present young people.

Substance use

Of concern for the drop-in centre participants is a requirement to monitor or regulate the use of alcohol around the youth service. Also a regular activity causing concern for these workers is the need to ensure that young people do not use or supply illicit substances on the premises. The detached youth workers did not have the same issues but were aware that the young people using their service also regularly used alcohol and other substances to excess.

Culture and the family

Culture was raised as an issue relating to ethnicity and value systems particularly where it informs understanding of parenting and violence. Both drop-in centre and detached youth workers were aware of a need for sensitivity when working particularly with Maori or Aboriginal young people and their families. Many of the young people using the detached service, it was indicated, came from a family in which violence was commonplace, demonstrating a culture of violence; street culture is also inherently violent whereas both drop-in centre and detached youth work participants attempted to develop a culture of non-violence within their services.

Follow up interviews

In order to confirm or challenge the perception, drawn from focus group interviews, that participants employed in a drop-in centre youth work environment may have a different understanding of their role to those who employed them, follow up interviews were conducted. The non-contact manager responsible for the provision of drop-in centre services to young people within three of the agencies involved in the study were interviewed to identify their understanding of the purpose of youth work; four of the original drop-in centre youth work participants were also interviewed.

Group 1: Drop-in Centre Youth Workers

Of the seven original participants involved in the first series of focus group interviews only four were available for an interview at the end of the process. At least one of these youth workers is employed in each of the agencies represented by a non-contact manager in the interview process. Two of these were interviewed together at their place of work; the remaining two were interviewed separately. The themes shown
in the table below emerged from these interviews and are described in more detail following Table 11. These themes have been arranged according to whether they are about the worker, about young people, or about the Community.

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Table 11: Drop-in Centre worker Follow up interviews – Emergent Themes

Themes

About the Worker: Motivation

Passion

Participant ‘C’ talked about having a ‘passion’ for working with young people, although the physical conditions within which she worked were difficult. For example:

‘I’ve gotta be crazy to work the unsociable hours I work; to work in the conditions I work in: its freezing here in the winter, boiling here in the summer. There’s no half way point. The mosquitos carry you off the back yard..... It’s a passion. You’ve got to love it; you’ve got to want to be involved to do it.’

...the environment was great because:

‘...the people you work with .... 99% of them have the same passion as you do!’

About the Worker: Practice

Young person as primary client

Youth work is young person focussed and involves working with or for young people to provide information and support to enable them to make informed decisions and become independent. Decisions may be made on behalf of young people where
development of services is concerned but only after consultation with the young people most involved, for example:

‘...we consulted with the young people who were using (injecting illicit drugs) before saying that we were thinking of getting the program (needle exchange) up and running, so we knew who they were.’ (‘A’).

One participant (‘G’) identified that there are times where the needs and rights of people other than the young person using the service might contradict this principle. The example presented was of a young woman with small children who insisted on exposing them to risk through her violent relationship with a new partner. In this instance the needs of the children were considered over the young woman’s right to self determination and DCD were informed of the situation. This decision was taken because the young woman did not recognise that her children were placed ‘at risk’ in this situation and it was thought that the youth work agency concerned had a responsibility to raise young people’s awareness to aspects of situations they might not otherwise recognise.

Concepts such as ‘self-esteem’ and ‘empowerment’ were also noted with concern by participants ‘A’ and ‘C’. Participant ‘A’ described empowerment as

‘Empower – information. Allowing young people to be aware of what their rights are as individuals and also information that they’re privy to have’.

His concern, however, was that although youth workers attempt to provide relevant information to assist young people to make informed decision it is not unusual for a young person to ‘hear what they want to hear’ or to ‘sift through the information to get what they want’. Participant ‘C’, on the other hand, claimed:

‘I hate the word empowerment.... ‘Empower young people!’ ...you can’t go “Shizzam!” You’re empowered now!” “Self-esteem!” I have an issue with that word as well... “Let me improve your self-esteem” – how do I do that? I think that’s something that comes though life’s journey. I don’t think its something I can bestow on someone; or I can sit down and write a program up to make them have self-esteem.’

A team approach

Practice is approached from a team perspective and participants have organised their work to enable them to spend time with their colleagues discussing issues as they arise and ensuring a uniform position in their practice. As one participant asserted:
‘...every single youth worker at this agency, and there’s ten of us, works the same. We are all different, but as a team we work so well together. We have such a high respect for everyone else we work with’. (‘E’)

Message from Management

Practice remains limited, for one group of participants, by the doctrine of their Management who insist:

‘...that we are here to provide a recreation service!’ (‘C’)

So, although participants employed by this agency in a youth work capacity are predominantly university youth work graduates the positions they are employed in have been developed to provide a limited level of service principally through recreation (see Appendix 7).

About the Worker: Young People

Social inclusion

Young people need to find a place within society that meets their needs and suits who they are. For one participant (‘C’) this required an ‘eclectic’ approach, adopting the aspects of society that best fit their needs. Another claimed that young people need to fit into society ‘because they need to be happy and exclusion and isolation generally make people unhappy. It doesn’t mean they need to be little conformists...’ (‘G’). Social inclusion necessitates ‘developing resources (because) young people often don’t know what’s out there...they feel that there’s no one out there who can help and there’s no where to go when in actual fact, as a youth worker, we know that in most situations there is someone out there you can go to...’ (‘E’).

About the Worker: Building Relationships

Acceptance

Building relationships is about developing a rapport variously described by participants as ‘friendship’ (‘A’) and ‘accepting of all things’ (‘G’). Two participants claimed to have ‘intimate knowledge of the lives (of older young people using the youth centre) and they know our role and they will pick the worker who’s best able to help them’ (‘C’ and ‘E’). Another (‘G’) maintained that, although ‘it’s up to the young person if they want to talk about it’, workers should ‘encourage them to because they may choose not to talk about it because they may fear recrimination’. The nature of the
relationship between youth worker and young person identified by these participants as appropriate is one that is both supportive and challenging. As participant ‘G’ claimed:

‘I’ve met youth workers who build rapport with young people by being like the young people and almost ridiculing others. And I really don’t... I saw some like that in my first semester of youth work (studies) and thought... I actually thought “Oh, yeah! They’re quite popular with young people” but I couldn’t do that because I wouldn’t feel right about it. After I got more into youth work I actually realised how wrong it was. And by avoiding practice like that and making yourself open to talk about things as well... ’ (‘G’).

About the Worker: Intensive support

Filling the Gaps

One participant described how his agency offered support to young people and their families not available to them through other agencies. He said in relation to a particular family:

‘I know a lot of agencies have dropped off support and the only (other) agency they get support from now is the Dept of Justice.... but we have such a good relationship through our intensive support program.... the work we’re doing the Dept of Justice can’t do because of their mandate to only work with the offender’. (‘A’).

About the Worker: Workplace environment

Constraints of Drop in

Limited structural and physical resources make it difficult to working effectively with young people who have complex issues. For example:

‘In a drop-in setting you can’t deal with every issue that comes up; you don’t have the time or the energy or the space.’ (‘E’).

‘There’s two of us and there’s 30 kids and, you know, one’s inside, one’s outside – you just don’t have time to deal with that one on one thing!’ (‘C’).

Participant ‘E’ claimed that she and her colleagues often didn’t have the necessary skills to follow through with presenting issues and relied heavily on their knowledge of where to refer young people on to.

Developing Management and Funding Body understanding

Participants who had previously identified concern about the level of constraints placed on their practice now claimed to have developed ways of working with their
Management to raise Management awareness of the nature of the demand placed upon workers by the young people using the service. Changes that have taken place include the introduction of regular days of work and recognition by management that the guidelines ‘we work under... (are) black and white but what we practice is grey. That’s the line, that’s where we are. It’s taken (supervisor) a long time to get through to the powers that be that we are grey, and we cannot work black and white’ (‘C’).

Funding bodies such as DCD acknowledge the value of intensive work undertaken with small numbers of young people. The worker who reported this also claimed that ‘organisations like local government, foundations and organisations don’t have a really good knowledge of what at risk (and working with that group) means. They still are a bit stuck in the numbers game’ (‘A’). He also claimed that responding to ‘the Shire’ required ‘quite specific ways of doing their reports but (that they included) things like attendances as opposed to numbers of young people’. They still have to explain to the Shire ‘what is a contact, what does outreach mean....’

About the Worker: Creative Practice

Working within Management Constraints

Within the constraints of management expectations one group of workers claimed that they had evolved as a team and were now better able to follow through on issues for referral than they were prior to their involvement in the focus group interviews. One participant said that she felt more ‘comfortable approaching young people to talk about issues whereas before I used to be more surface oriented with young people’ (‘E’).

Another participant, from a different agency, claimed that her work team had made a conscious decision to use funding creatively to meet the needs of young people whilst also meeting outcomes perceived by management and the funding body to meet their requirements. She claimed that as long as ‘you’re getting the results (management) don’t really care how you’re getting them...’ (‘G’). She alleged that the methods adopted were seen by Management to be ‘a better way of meeting their expectations’.

Yet another participant argued that:
‘I guess what it is: this is what we can and can’t do but within that I can do this. We spend a lot of time saying ‘this is policy and we can’t do that but we can look at it in this way...’’ (‘E’).

**About Young People: The effects of living with violence**

**Control**

The notion of ‘control’ becomes a dominating factor in the lives of young people who have lived with violence. They, in turn, ‘either become absolutely the controlling, in their own lives or someone else’s lives...’ claimed participant ‘G’.

**About the Community:**

**Attitudes**

Community attitudes are influenced by negative media reports and the community often make unsubstantiated judgements about young people based on the way they look. As one participant said, the only young people ‘you see in the media are the ones that have really, really excelled or the ones that are really, really stuffed....’ (‘C’). Working closely with young people, participants recognise that community attitudes work against young people and that ‘the stigma towards young people effects them in everything they do.’ (‘E’). As participant ‘E’ maintained:

‘You can have an adult doing something wrong and its ignored... you can have a young person doing exactly the same thing – the young person would get pulled up on that.’

**Social Change**

One participant acknowledged social change as an aspect of youth work. She also argued that often youth workers get so caught up in meeting the needs of the client that the negative aspects of society do not get addressed.

‘...you spend your time working with the client and the clients have such high needs that you don’t really have time’ for social change. (‘G’).

Social change is more likely to be addressed at a policy or management level where the worker can do more than make incremental changes in one person’s life. She said:

‘I see policy and politics go together; so that would be a management role to try and change society. Hands-on youth work is more work with individuals and while you might campaign for some social change it wouldn’t be on a large scale – although, the two are really inseparable’.
Group 3: Non contact Management

The management member with overall responsibility for the provision of youth services within three of the agencies represented in this study was interviewed to identify what they saw to be the purpose of youth work and where youth services sat within their organisation. These agencies were chosen because workers employed in them were involved in the drop-in centre focus groups from the onset of the study and remained involved when data collection was completed; during the focus group discussion issues were raised which might be indicative of conflict between management understanding of the purpose of youth work practice and the actual practice of some of these workers.

The emergent themes are listed in Table 12 below and then explored in more detail.

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Table 12: Management interviews - Emergent Themes

Themes

Practice: Attitude towards and understanding of youth work

Each of the managers interviewed had a different understanding of the purpose of youth work and each understood youth work practice differently. One (Agency 1) initially claimed that anyone involved through their work with young people could be considered to be ‘a youth worker’; as the interview progressed this participant identified that there is a difference between ‘youth workers’ and ‘workers with youth’. (Initially Council ‘Rangers’ and ‘Security Officers’ were included in the group of people claimed as ‘youth workers’). The other two managers agreed that youth work had as its primary concern the ‘needs’ of young people; they did not agree on how this translated to practice. This is discussed later in this section.

The different perspectives on youth work are encapsulated within these statements:
Agency 1: Youth work provides the opportunity to stop young people putting themselves and others at risk and to encourage better relationships between young people and the rest of the community, particularly the business community.

Agency 2: Youth work is holistic in as much as it provides services designed to support the social well being of young people. Youth work ‘promotes the position of youth in the community’ and works on behalf of local government to identify urban design issues as they relate to young people. Youth services should be offered within the confines of the organisations strategic plan and within strict policy frameworks whilst offering practitioners the opportunity to be flexible in their approach to individual issues. Youth work should offer only minimal support in relation to emotional or physical difficulties young people may be exposed to, referring these young people for services with other organisations.

Agency 3: Youth work is about making a difference in young people’s lives; its about offering intensive social support, identifying where young people are at and starting at that point to work with them to identify and reach where they want to be; its about listening to them uncritically and providing them with space just to be; youth work is about working with young people and empowering them to take control of their lives and to make decisions about what they will do, how they will do it and when they will do it. Youth work is also about working with the community developmentally to ensure the needs of young people and their families are met.

**Practice: What workers should be doing**

What youth workers should be doing was considered differently by each management representative. The following statements provide an overview of the perception of each and, although each is substantially different, there are commonalities. Among the commonalities were notions of community involvement and a sense of a safe environment for young people. The two local government agencies indicated a greater predisposition to ‘social control’ than did the community based agency. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Agency 1: The role of the youth worker is to identify what young people want and to ‘provide opportunities for them to find a place within the community’. An important aspect of this role is to change the attitudes of both young people and the community to encourage acceptance of young people across the community. Youth workers are expected to work with young people to identify and resolve issues that are of concern to young people; they are not expected to provide the answers but to work with young people to resolve the issues or assist young people to develop necessary resources for themselves. The youth worker in this context is seen to be the ‘carrot’ in a ‘carrot and stick’ approach to young people who do not
appear to have ‘respect for property and people’s livelihoods’. Counselling is not something that youth workers might do, at least ‘not the full blown clinical psychology type’.

Agency 2: Youth workers are employed to liaise with young people to provide a ‘safe place’ for young people to meet and socialise with their peers. If issues are raised by young people the workers are expected to refer these young people immediately to other services for ‘specialist’ support, but not to attempt to deal with the issues at the youth centre. The job descriptions of the workers in this setting precludes them from providing any form of ‘counselling’ or individual support and those employed in these positions are not expected to have more than basic interpersonal and group management skills. They are not expected to have any counselling skills.

Agency 3: Youth workers are expected to ‘build rapport’, provide a ‘supportive relationship’, ‘information and referral’ and ‘case management’ to young people. They are also expected to provide support for parents where necessary and to liaise with the community, to build networks with the community and other service providers whilst providing a safe place ‘where young people can play and grow and develop and you can empower young people to take direction to take ownership...’; a space ‘just to drop in to talk, to get off the streets, a space where the police won’t move you on’. Youth workers need to have advanced counselling skills and to provide services such as: a ‘needle exchange program for young people; a program for young mothers 15-20 years of age; intensive support program for young people on a pathway ending up in the law courts; a guys group which is trying to work with the fathers of the babies, not necessarily the partners of the mums but we’re picking up that the young guys get pretty angry about being left out of it all’ and an employment training program that deals with a range of ‘complex issues’ from ‘homelessness to drug use to fines which means loss of drivers licence which means loss of transport, to poor health, poor literacy, poor self esteem – all those things that present huge barriers to young people to turn the corner’. Youth work starts ‘where the young person is at’.

**Practice: What workers should NOT be doing**

Only one non-contact manager gave consideration for what workers should not be involved in. For this agency (Agency 2) there were concerns that youth workers might engage in practice for which they were not properly prepared, not properly skilled and for which there was not adequate professional support available. The following statements (direct quotations where indicated ‘‘) demonstrate these concerns:

1) Youth workers should not engage in intervention with young people because they are not equipped with the skills to do so and the agency does not have the resources to provide professional supervision for workers or the resources to ensure the
various kinds of support the young person would require. For example it would be necessary to have in place:

- ‘some good case management skills, some intervention programs, also some assurance of alternative accommodation for the child that’s divulging, some supervision for them, some long term counselling commitments, some welfare and health issues... I would be very, very concerned for the young person disclosing in the setting at the youth centre’.

- ‘A local government could not provide the resources to a young person in emotional crisis...’

- ‘Local government is not best placed to provide them and could never provide them and should not provide them because it’s not appropriate and they don’t have the resources.’

2) An opposing position indicated by a different manager (Agency 3) suggested that:

- Youth workers should work with the young people and their families to provide support in whatever way is identified by the young people and their parents as being required.

**Practice: Safe work practice**

Professional supervision was raised as an issue of safe work practice for youth workers by the management of two different agencies. One (Agency 3) claimed to have access to professional supervision for the service coordinator through a ‘pro-bono’ arrangement with UWA. The other claimed not to be able to provide professional supervision for their youth work staff and therefore did not include in the job description activities that were considered to necessitate this level of supervision or support (Agency 2). The remaining agency non-contact manager did not raise professional supervision as an issue; he did however discuss the necessity of ‘outreach’ workers operating only in pairs (Agency 1).

**Agency: Where ‘Youth Services’ fit**

In both the local government authorities involved in this study, youth services are located within the ‘Community Development’ or ‘Community Services’ areas. For one (Agency 1), this directorate also includes ‘town planning’. The two areas were deliberately located alongside each other in recognition of the need for a more coordinated approach to both community development and town planning. Further acknowledgement to the legitimacy of youth work was given by this particular agency
through the decision to employ an ECU youth work graduate (a youth worker normally employed elsewhere within the organisation) to coordinate the City Watch program for a three month period.

**Agency: Financial concerns**

The Chief Executive Officer of the community based agency (Agency 3) involved in this study discussed the financial constraints within which she worked and the way in which the agency had been built from a small community initiative with no funding into a large community organisation with several million dollars of funding annually. She claimed that the process followed was to identify the need, work with it and then find funding. The service began with the adoption of an existing, unfunded youth club for which seed funding was found and later Department for Community Development (DCD) funding obtained. The main source of funding for youth services through this organisation is from state government through DCD. During the twenty years funding has been received, the amount has only been increased in line with the annual CPI (Consumer Price Index) (standing at around $57,000 at the time of interview). Core funding (for Frail Aged) provides for the main agency infrastructure and is at least $200,000 more than youth service funding.

Each of the management people interviewed claimed that funding for youth services is limited. Local government agencies agreed that they have difficulty in persuading Council to release funds for what are considered to be ‘soft’ services without being able to ‘show some empirical evidence and some really tangible results’ (Agency 1). In local government, services to young people are only developed according to the amount of money available; the community based agency appeared more adventurous in as much as they will attempt to meet the need before attempting to find the money to maintain that service. Development and maintenance of services to young people remains dependent on the energy that individuals within the different agencies are prepared to put into finding money to do so. The local government services relied on their youth workers to identify and seek funding.

**Drawing the themes together**

The focus of the interviews with these two groups of participants (Group 1 and Group 3) was around practice and the role of the youth work practitioner. For this reason the concepts that have previously been identified and used in the drawing together of themes were not all addressed. The following will reflect this and not
attempt to complete all the areas that might have been otherwise suggested by the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>DESCRIPTIVE STATEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workers, their practice and influence of agency management</td>
<td>Family violence, the non-presenting issue</td>
<td>Without support from their management youth workers are less likely to encourage young people to disclose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practice (Jack of all Trades)</td>
<td>Two very different perspectives on practice were identified by management and practitioners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>Issues of funding Being creative about working within management constraints with limited resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Debriefing – safe practice</td>
<td>Team work Professional supervision Detached workers operating in pairs Too few staff and irregular rosters Team work and knowing when and where to refer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worker understanding and experience of family violence</td>
<td>The cycle and how it works</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural issues</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structural issues</td>
<td>Social inclusion, community attitudes and social change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The effects for young people</td>
<td>Issues of control Emotional crisis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service users, sense of self and social and structural issues</td>
<td>Sense of self</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Substance use</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Culture and the family</td>
<td>Not addressed</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 13: Combined themes from follow up interviews

**Workers, their practice and influence of agency management**

**Family violence, the non-presenting issue**

Family violence remains invisible in two senses: drop-in centre youth workers are not often faced with young people actually talking about violence at home and youth centre managers do not necessarily think about family violence as an issue that might be dealt with by youth workers at their centres. Of the three non-contact managers interviewed only one thought that family violence was an issue that could be addressed by their youth work staff. One had not given family violence much thought and the remaining service manager believed her service was not equipped to deal with an issue with this level of sensitivity. Youth workers themselves did not feel confident to encourage disclosure unless they felt supported by their management to provide effective assistance to the young person. Clinical, or professional, supervision (albeit through a pro-bono arrangement) for staff, was provided by the one drop-in youth service that supported their staff to encourage disclosure; this agency also provided other resources to uphold this practice.
Practice (Jack of all Trades)

Two very different perspectives on what youth work practice is all about were offered. Youth work practitioners considered young people as their primary client; they were clear that they were in their roles to work with young people towards meeting young people’s needs; young people are the main reason for youth worker participants doing what they do. They claim that youth work is diverse and requires a range of skills to ensure that the needs of young people are identified by young people and that they are appropriately met. Participant ‘C’ claimed that her practice was a ‘passion’ and that the people she worked with also had a ‘passion’ for what they did. Non-contact managers were more likely to define youth work practice in relation to developing positive interaction between young people and the community. Services for two of the three agencies revolved around recreation and leisure activities designed to encourage young people into adopting socially acceptable behaviour; whereas the remaining service provided a range of services offering young people the opportunity for personal development (employment training, communication and life skills, positive coping strategies, alternatives to drug use, and the like). Both management and staff at this service were creative in their attempt to fill the gaps in service provision for young people in their region. Other drop-in centre youth work participants were also creative in their practice; particularly where it meant adapting their practice to fit within the constraints of a management directive.

Frustration

Frustration for both non-contact management and youth work practitioners was associated with resources; however the sources of frustration were very different. Managers, who also demonstrated a passion for providing services to young people, were most concerned about the allocation of financial resources for youth services. In local government the Director responsible for delivery of youth services had to fight for funding for youth services (see “Agency: Financial concerns”, p. 135); unless they could demonstrate some ‘hard’ outcomes elected members were hard to persuade, they claimed. Community based agencies reliant on State and Federal funding do not fare much better. The community based agency manager involved in this study claimed that although the original purpose for their agency had been to provide services to young people, their core funding was for ‘frail aged’ and was at least four times greater than that received to provide services for young people. The
core funding for youth services had risen only minimally during the twenty years it has been received. Youth work practitioners’ frustration was concerned more with being able to provide an appropriate service to young people within the constraints of the expectations of their management. Participant ‘E’ claimed that she and her colleagues had managed to circumvent the problem of management restrictions because ‘I guess we’ve learnt to work within those boundaries and to just flex them out a tad’.

Debriefing – safe practice

Safe practice was recognised by two of the three non-contact management people interviewed. The manager who had not given much thought to the issue of safe practice did identify that where they used detached youth workers they always worked in pairs. The remaining two managers both strongly agreed on the necessity to provide professional supervision to staff dealing with sensitive issues such as family violence. This is where their agreement ended. Agency 3 provided professional supervision through a pro-bono arrangement with a local university whilst Agency 2 discouraged her youth work staff from attempting to deal with issues such as family violence because she considered her agency was not in a position to provide professional supervision or to provide the level of support necessary for young people who might disclose. Youth work participants involved in this set of interviews reinforced their belief that often too few staff are available to work effectively with relatively large numbers of young people and that it is essential to have regular hours of work. They believed that team work in the form of regular contact, debriefing and approach to practice is essential to ensure the safety and wellbeing of practitioners. They claim that it is not as important to actually deal with the issues as it is to recognise them and to know when and where to refer young people on.

Worker understanding and experience of family violence

Structural issues

Social inclusion was identified as an important aspect of youth work practice by management and practitioners. They each acknowledged that change needs to take place at two levels and that young people should be supported in the identification of their place within society and supported in either personal change or social challenge to ensure they can fit within it. Agency 3 identified structural inequality as an issue relevant to family violence and important to youth work practice; whereas Agency 1
and Agency 2 were most concerned with community perception and community attitudes towards young people.

**The effects for young people**

Young people living with violence, according to management, are likely to be in emotional crisis (Agency 2) or they are likely to be in need of intensive support across a multitude of issues (Agency 3). Not discussed in any detail by drop-in centre youth work practitioners at this time, it was suggested that young people who have lived with violence are likely to either be controlled or to be controlling (see ‘Follow up interviews: Drop-in centre youth workers: About Young People: The effects of living with violence: Control’ above).

**Conclusion**

This study has involved three separate groups of participants (16 individuals): the original group of drop in centre workers who agreed to form the focal point for data collection and two other groups who were included in the study for triangulation purposes. The further two groups comprised: members of the management bodies (non-contact manager) for three of the organisations in which the drop in centre worker participants are employed; and a team of detached workers who indicated concern regarding the level of violence experienced by the young people with whom they work.

Three separate modes of data collection were employed and analysed: focus group interviews, individual interviews and concept maps. A fourth mode of data collection was also included in the original design but, although some participants kept reflective journals a decision was made not to include the data contained within these journals due to the limited number of journals collected and the nature of the information they contained. Analysis was undertaken using techniques described by Colaizzi (see Colaizzi 1978 and Crotty 1996) and an adaptation of that described by Novak and Gowin (1984). The following table (Table 14) provides a collated view of themes taken from all sources and will be used in the following chapter as the basis for discussion. The emergent themes generated by these processes have been reported in this chapter, but remain descriptive. Their significance and the relationship between the themes identified by the different groups will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5. Links will also be made with relevant literature and theoretical concepts.
### Collation of Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worker understanding and experience of family violence</td>
<td>The cycle and how it works</td>
<td>Family violence was identified as a cycle of violence with both structural and individual causes. Structural inequalities lead to lack of skills at an individual level which then provide an environment in which young people and children learn that violence is acceptable and normal behaviour. Family violence may be perpetrated by an individual seeking power and control, which they maintain through fear, or family violence may take place as a result of poor parenting and communication skills; frustration; stress; and power and control. Children who witness or experience violence are more likely to perpetrate violence towards their own children and interaction between partners may replicate the violence they experienced or witnessed as children. Young women are often controlled by young men who feel powerless in every other aspect of their lives and poverty, broken homes; divorce and financial loss may be either indicators or precursors to family violence.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Family violence, the non-presenting issue</td>
<td>Youth work practice is not identified in the same way by all participants: two very different perspectives of youth work practice were identified by two of the non-contact managers involved in this study and by the youth work practitioners involved. These two agency managers included in their concept of youth work practice as it related to their services, elements of control over the practice of youth workers that was not necessarily accepted as legitimate by those who worked under them. This added another factor to the already diverse understanding that the youth workers identified in relation to practice. From the youth workers’ perspective it was agreed that practitioners needed a variety of skills and ability to access knowledge and information across a wide range of areas. Training and networking were identified as important; as was development of an awareness of the issues relevant for young people living with violence. One drop-in centre practitioner (‘F’) called for workers to develop services to better cater for the needs of these young people and it was agreed that services should provide a friendly environment for young people. The detached group of workers were concerned with the identification, by other professionals, of youth work as a profession in order that they may be taken more seriously when attempting to refer young people on. The particular concern was raised in relation to working with mental health professionals and accessing appropriate services for the young people they work with. Agency management (Agency 1 and Agency 2) considered that youth workers in their services were employed to identify and provide recreation and leisure services for young people. They were also employed to encourage the community to see young people more positively and to make valuable links between young people and the community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Practice (lack of all Trades)</td>
<td>The main issue of frustration identified by non-contact management across the three agencies is funding for services for young people. Individually they identified difficulties that they face associated with finding the money to resource the services they provide. Youth workers had four main sources of frustration: limitations of practice as a result of their own knowledge, limited understanding and ability to respond; lack of resources (including referral options) within the service and among other services; young people who refused to move on or who would only partially disclose their situation; and management constraints that made it difficult to deal with the issues as they presented.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Debriefing</td>
<td>According to many participants burnout is a real issue for youth workers and opportunities for debriefing (or professional supervision) are essential. However, in most instances debriefing often took place in an ad hoc fashion and clinical (or professional) supervision was not available to all participants; detached youth workers had access to professional supervision through their line manager and two service coordinators were provided with non-line management professional supervision. Other youth work participants accessed support either through regular team meetings or informal discussion with colleagues whenever possible. The process of focus group interviews was identified by youth work participants as a valuable form of networking which provided a rare opportunity to debrief with others, including people from outside their own service. Professional supervision was raised as an issue by non-contact managers in Agency 3 and Agency 3. The non-contact manager in Agency 1 had not given this consideration, but on questioning indicated an understanding of worker safety by claiming that his detached youth workers only went out in pairs. Team work was identified as important by all participants but drop-in centre workers were concerned about not having sufficient individuals available on any one roster to meet the needs of the numbers of young people using the service. They were concerned about this not only because of the need to control the behaviour of the young people at the service. Where practitioners were concerned about the safety of a particular young person they were reluctant to encourage disclosure for two reasons: they wanted to know they would be supported to do so by their management and they also wanted to be sure about their assumptions. When working with young people who may be living with violence it was identified that it is important for youth workers to listen to what young people are telling them, to work closely with their colleagues and to have a developed network and knowledge of services available to support these young people.</td>
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Cultural issues

Cultural relativism was raised as an issue that needed consideration by youth workers when looking at family violence with particular young people. Detached workers specifically noted that many of the young people they are involved with have moved from one culture of violence at home into another on the streets and the appropriateness of the involvement of youth workers needs to be looked at from a perspective of the age, gender and ethnicity of the worker and the individual with whom they might be working.

Structural issues

Varied structural issues were identified by youth work practitioner participants. Among these are: hegemonic social processes; the social or cultural acceptance of violence; increased expectations of and on women; men feeling less in control and a greater sense of threat from women who appear to have more control; social systems that are inherently violent; unsupportive social support agencies; social inclusion, community attitudes and social change.

The effects for young people

Young people living with violence are likely to also be living with emotional crisis and to have their own issues of control either as victim or perpetrator. Youth work participants identified that violence is all pervasive in young people’s lives and that they and their peers may feel confused, frightened or angry; often violence is not recognised or is normalised. Young people living with violence believe that no-one is interested in what they have to say and that there is no-one who will listen to them. As young adults, the experience of childhood will influence their conduct and some young people will adopt violent and abusive behaviour whilst others may adopt victim status. The children of these young people may display angry behaviour. Excessive alcohol and other drug use are also indicated as effects of living with violence.

Sense of self

According to youth worker participants the sense of self experienced by a young person living with violence may be at the same time diverse and contradictory. Sense of self for these young people is contradictory because whilst identifying as victim they also see themselves as responsible; they may have a sense of being out of control whilst having no control over their environment. It is diverse because sense of self might suggest helplessness, isolation and entrapment; violence is normal, but they may feel fear, shame and guilt as a result of their violent experiences. They believe that there is no-one who is interested in listening to their story or who would believe them; they are unable to defend themselves and feel as though they have no voice. They may have a negative sense of self and what their options might be; young women who choose to leave are often socialised into staying.

Substance use

Youth work participants identified the use and supply of illicit substances as a relatively normal activity around youth services. The use of alcohol and other drugs was identified as a copy strategy that may exacerbate violence or may be used to excuse the violence of others.

Culture and the family

Culturally our society adopts the position that violence occurs when families are dysfunctional. Participants identified that differing cultures will have different values and thereby different interpretations of what constitutes violence. Among the cultural norms for Australian society is an acceptance that punishment in the form of physical discipline is acceptable and young people often receive mixed messages and inconsistent discipline. Through popular culture in the form of music and film violence in general, and violence against women in particular, is reinforced and normalised.

Table 14: Combined Themes from all sources
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

In the previous chapter the data collected through the medium of focus groups, individual interviews and concept maps was presented. The natural process of theme emergence and development was recorded and finally organised in a manner which both informs and provides a basis for the discussion undertaken in this chapter. In this chapter (Chapter 5) the findings recorded previously have been drawn together and discussion developed to cover issues directly affecting the practice of youth workers in their work with young women living with violence. The chapter is organised into five sections: this section – the introduction; a section exploring worker practice in which the different ideological perspectives informing youth work practice and service provision are explored; a further section examining worker understanding of family violence and the context for service users; the fourth section draws together the discussion throughout the chapter and provides further discussion on the implications for youth work practice; as the final section, the conclusion reminds the reader of the original question informing the study, the aims of the study and its outcomes. Table 14 (see previous chapter) is used to guide the discussion which follows.

Youth work in context

Youth work practice is currently ill-defined (see Bessant, Sercombe, & Watts, 1998; Palmer, 2005; Sercombe, 2004; Watts, 2005) and for there to be a common theoretical underpinning “the activities of youth work need to be conceptualised and described” (Bessant, 2004b, p. 32). According to Hurley and Treacey (1993, p. i) “little or no sustained attention has been devoted to the development of a theoretical base for Youth Work. Any written reflection on the part of practitioners and trainers has been primarily….concerned with experience rather than theoretical concepts.” Without a theoretical underpinning it makes it difficult to claim that youth work is a specific form of practice or that youth work practice encompasses a specific theoretical base but is operationalised differently in different settings and with different target groups. Indeed writers such as White (1990), Sercombe (2004), Jeffs and Smith (1987) and Smith (1988) maintain that youth work practice does not take just one form. And amid a
variety of roles and lack of clarity surrounding the purpose or theoretical underpinning of youth work, it appears that there is no one universally accepted definition of what a youth worker does and as a consequence workers may be employed to undertake roles which conflict with their understanding of professional youth work practice. For example, according to Poynting and White (2004, p. 40):

> The daily challenges for youth work have always involved extending material and social resources to young people, particularly those who are disadvantaged, marginalised and socially excluded. For those of us interested in social justice, the perennial challenge is how to achieve this, while mitigating the most deleterious effects of the social control function of youth work.

Whilst acknowledging the variety of roles and types of practice that youth work practitioners might adopt it is this theoretical underpinning that needs to be examined. This part of the discussion explores the concept of *youth work practice* in relation to the emergent themes linking directly to context of practice for study participants including *influence of agency management*. Introduction of concepts from existing literature includes more recent Australian discussion on the nature of youth work as a *professional discipline*.

From the findings reported in the previous chapter and the discussion above, it is clear that there is a diversity of understanding of what constitutes ‘*youth work*’. Smith (1988, p. 51) goes so far as to say that there are “an extraordinary range of differences and disputes” when considering ‘*what is youth work?*’. Indeed much of the youth work literature from Ireland, Britain and Australia during the last two decades of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century have explored these different forms, or models, of practice (see for example Cooper & White, 1994; Hurley & Treacy, 1993; Wong, 2004). These authors, and others (such as Corney, 2004; Poynting & White, 2004; Smith, 1988; and White, 1990), discuss the influence of *ideology* on the choice of programmes or services offered to young people. They claim that youth work “is not value free”, nor does it “operate in an institutional and ideological vacuum” (Poynting & White, 2004, p. 40). The framework chosen for service provision, practice or program development, then, is chosen according to a set of values which inform the understanding of the individual or organisation. And these *values* not only inform the type of service provided they also influence the outcomes for participants. Hurley and Treacy (1993, p. iii) maintain that “(t)he values which inform the work in any given
situation influence the types of outcomes which are likely to be the result of the specific intervention. Such values influence the work at both institutional and youth worker levels”. They also claim that the “values and beliefs” (p. 3) of those who work with young people will dictate the implicit influence of the program or interaction between young person and youth worker. “These beliefs and values are in turn determined by the adults implied world view or theoretical perspective, whether this is specifically understood or not” (pp. 3-4). Accordingly, in a youth work context, action is governed by values rather than an “expectation of results” (Maunder, 1990, p. 48). What is argued here is that individual and societal values inform understanding of youth work practice and the different perspectives of management and youth work practitioners influence their understanding of what needs to happen in the youth service. Not only is the understanding brought to these services by the individuals likely to be diverse, but they will often conflict, further confusing what is considered to be the role of the youth worker. What needs to happen within the agency then may be understood differently by the employer and the youth work practitioner. Other professionals will also have their own world view which will influence their understanding of the role of the youth worker and their professional response to them.

Since the mid 1980s the practice of youth work has been discussed by a series of different authors (see previous discussion). Initially this discussion focused on the ideological perspectives which informed practice and provided specific frameworks for practice and from which particular programs evolved (see for example Cooper & White, 1994; Hurley & Treacy, 1993; Jeffs & Smith, 1987; Maunder, 1984; Smith, 1988; Wong, 2004). More recently, others (such as Bessant, 2004b; Bessant, Sercombe, & Watts, 1998; Irving, Maunder, & Sherington, 1995; Poynting & White, 2004; Sercombe, 1997, 2000; Wong, 2004) have discussed the evolution of youth work as a practice and a profession – whilst continuing to highlight the relevance of ideological positioning for the worker and the agency and, indeed, the funding body. The lack of clarity regarding what constitutes youth work is accentuated by the tension between expectations of management and the perception participant youth workers have of their role and what they believe they should be able to achieve in their work place (see previous chapter). The following four sections firstly explore the position of management involved in this study – acknowledging their differing positions – and offering some of the explanations raised in the literature for these standpoints. The understanding (expressions of values and ideological positions) intimated by the
practitioners employed within the different services is then examined in light of the literature and the tensions and contradictions in the individual environments are discussed. Professionalism, developing identity and the perception of credibility of youth work practitioners is then discussed and further discussion of the tensions and contradictions in practice takes place. Finally concerns which were raised by both youth work practitioners and service managers are discussed along with barriers to practice that emerge.

**Management**

As discussed in Chapter 4, each of the non-contact managers interviewed for this study articulated a different understanding of the role of youth work. Seemingly the aims and forms of the services they provide for young people are different. According to the local government business-unit directors concerned, Agency 1 expects that young people are assisted to avoid *putting themselves and others at risk*; and Agency 2 talks about making links with the community and supporting the *social wellbeing* of young people. According to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Agency 3, this service provides *support, guidance and encouragement for disadvantaged young people to achieve their potential*. What is argued in this thesis, however, is that the two local government youth services involved have similar expectations for the role of their youth workers and that the outcomes of all three services are likely to be the same. Youth work practitioners, in these local government youth services at least, serve the explicit function of controlling the behaviour of young people in order to affect better relationships between young people and the rest of the local community. From the perspective of these local government authorities, then, it is the anti-social behaviour of young people that is the problem. The community based agency expects that the youth work practitioners in their employ will work with young people and their families to reduce the level of disadvantage experienced. Lack of skills and opportunities are expressed as the issue facing young people served by this organisation. However, the funding which supports these activities is provided by State or Federal government to assist young people to develop to better fit society as it currently exists. Thus, there exists a tension between the expectations of the agency and the funding body and this tension significantly affects the agency’s ability to achieve its set outcomes.

The thesis argues that understanding of what constitutes youth work practice from the perspective of the local government management involved in this study is influenced by the ideological position of *neo-liberal* governments in this country during
the latter part of the twentieth century. It is also argued that where management understanding of youth work practice is more closely aligned to that of practitioners (at least the practitioners involved in this study who articulated a social justice perspective), funding to provide services to young people is likely to be strongly influenced by government ideology. Federal and State governments then, are primarily responsible for the funding and direction of youth service provision and this is most likely to be reflective of a functionalist paradigm. Local government can also claim responsibility for the direction of services to young people in their district where, as is the case of one of the authorities involved in this study, they provide money for service provision directly from their rates base. In this instance, it is argued, that the perspective of this local government authority is also informed by functionalism. From a functionalist perspective young people are viewed as needing to be controlled and provided with welfare; they are also viewed as constituting a threat to the stability of the social order. Rather than working towards social justice, from this perspective the role of youth work is to work with young people to ensure that they better fit society, thereby effectively ensuring maintenance of the status quo. The following provides the rationale for this claim.

Since the late 1800s youth work in Australia has been organised in response to the social concerns of the day with government having greater influence from the 1970s. (see for example Bessant, 2004b; Bessant, Sercombe, & Watts, 1998; Booton & Dearling, 1980; Davies, 1980; Irving, Maunders, & Sherington, 1995; Maunders, 1984, 1990; Nolan, 1980; Sercombe, Omaji, Drew, Cooper, & Love, 2002). Initially youth work in both Australia and England was conceived in response to concerns raised by the nineteenth century ‘child savers’ (Bessant, Sercombe, & Watts, 1998; Maunders, 1984, 1990; Smith, 1988) reacting to the effects of legislative changes regarding the employment of children in factories (as England passed legislation restricting child labour and requiring formal education) and the emergence of the construct of the category of youth (Smith, 1988, see also Aries, 1962). The focus of youth work at this point was both social control and welfare. Similarly, ‘moral panic’ (Cohen, 1972) re-emerging in the 1950s in response to young people ‘coming of age’ in an environment of economic prosperity directed the alternating focus of service provision to various levels of ‘social control’ and “solutions based on guidance and adjustment” (Irving, Maunders, & Sherington, 1995, p. 38). The contemporary position of government relating to the provision of services for young people in Australia is, according to
Poynting and White (2004), focussed on those considered to be ‘at risk’. Poynting and White also identify “the two-fold aims of the state...to protect society and to develop future leaders of society” (p.40). They claim that those ‘at risk’ are in reality considered a risk to ‘the community’ and to ‘good public order’ (p. 40) and that:

To protect means to protect from the unruly elements of working-class youth and their possible disruption to the established order. Future leaders, on the other hand, must be recruited and groomed from the middle strata and the respectable working class...Who youth workers work with, and why, has never been far removed from issues of class struggle and class politics.(p. 40)

Kelly (2003) claims that this distrust of young people has become institutionalised and that young people generally are causing adults to feel anxious. They are, as Corney (2004) suggests, being viewed as a threat to the social institutions as we know them.

Exploration of the models of practice offered by Cooper and White (1994) or Hurley and Treacey (1993) will provide better understanding of the way in which these claims of government and community perspective are likely to translate into practice at a local government level or into funding for community based services, and have, in fact been translated into practice at the local level in the agencies involved in this study. According to Poynting and White (2004, p. 45), we are currently operating in an environment that “stresses individualistic solutions to social inequalities and disparities, and whose workplaces reflect the pressures and limits of neo-liberal policies”. Discussing the position of second generation ethnic young people in Sydney, Poynting and White add that young people have been increasingly represented by government and in the media as the modern day ‘folk-devil’ (2004, p. 42) (a concept originated by Cohen, 1972). They say:

The portrayal in the media of young people generally, and cultural minority (including Indigenous) young people in particular, also presents an ongoing challenge to those who work with them. (Poynting & White, 2004, p. 42).

If we then look at the claims made by the directors overseeing the business areas of the two local governments involved in this study (see previous chapter) we will see that their aims in provision of services to young people are articulated as:

a) identification and provision of recreation and leisure services and personal development activities for young people;

b) enhancement of community perceptions of young people; and

c) encouraging links between the community and young people
What was clear during the interviews with these non-contact managers is that young people were understood as having problems and being problems and that the role of the youth worker was to ensure that young people did not cause irritation to the community more generally. This could be attained they believed through engaging young people in meaningful activities and highlighting the more positive aspects of ‘youth’ within the community. Young people then are identified similarly to that described by Poynting and White (2004) and Kelly (2003) above.

According to Hurley and Treacy (1993), services and programs that might be offered to achieve the objectives articulated above are likely to reflect Butters and Newell’s (1978) “Character Building” approach. Services provided based on this perspective fit within a ‘conservative’ or ‘functionalist paradigm’ and aim to maintain the status quo by providing young people with opportunities to be disciplined and adopt conventional moral values (Hurley & Treacy, 1993). Services for young people are designed to encourage young people

- ...to play “useful” roles in supporting society as it is.
- To encourage young people to adopt conventional lifestyles and values.
- To encourage young people to be good citizens

(Cooper & White, 1994, p. 31)

The role of the youth worker is confined to that of program organiser, controller (or ‘soft cop’ see White, 1990) and ‘role model’ (Cooper & White, 1994; Hurley & Treacy, 1993) and services offered by these local governments include detached youth work in ‘problem’ areas around the municipalities, leisure activities and employment training through the drop-in centres. The position of these agencies as articulated by management participants is also reflected in what Poynton and White (2004, p. 40) refer to as the ‘neo-liberal’ position of a “fundamentally inegalitarian late-capitalist state”. Social inequality is accepted and disadvantaged young people need assistance to ameliorate their situation whilst maintaining their social position. The Liberal perspective, as identified by Hurley and Treacy (1993) and Cooper and White (1994) above, provides opportunities for youth work to offer ‘personal development programmes’ or for the youth worker to ‘advocate’ on behalf of the young person. The focus of service provision remains individualistic and controlling and aimed at meeting the needs of the community more generally rather than the needs of young people.
Adopting a similar but less conservative position, the CEO of the community based organisation (Agency 3) indicated concern for the welfare of young people who lacked family support and described a ‘suite of services’ designed to provide personal development opportunities to these young people. She claimed that her agency dealt with:

“...complex issues which ranged from homelessness to drug use to fines – which means loss of driver’s licence, which means loss of transport – poor health, poor literacy, poor self esteem. All those things that present huge barriers to young people to turn the corner.”

The services offered, although individualistic in nature, demonstrate an understanding of social justice. Young people are seen to be disadvantaged by their inability to manoeuvre through existing bureaucratic systems and their lack of knowledge in relation to their rights within those systems (Cooper & White, 1994). According to Cooper and White, this approach to service provision might be labelled ‘non-radical advocacy’. And, although social justice is clearly articulated in both the actions and the vocabulary of this agency, young people are not encouraged to activism. Young people are encouraged “to take direction; to take ownership” and this is referred to as “empowering” them but in reality the main aim of the service is to support young people and their families to take control of their own lives. It is not to change society, but to help them to fit within society as it currently exists.

In contrast, empowerment – or at least a ‘radical empowerment’ model for youth work practice – is defined by Cooper and White as:

...changing the balances of power in society, avoiding oppression both structurally in society and at an interpersonal level. Because of its emphasis upon equality of power, collective action and the explicit anti-oppressive value base, the implementation of this model requires radical societal change, at both personal and institutional levels. (1994, p. 35).

Young people are encouraged to change their own behaviour and therefore their situation and workers within the agency will advocate on behalf of individual young people, but no social or political action is engaged in by either workers or the agency more generally. Within this agency, young people are encouraged to have influence over personal outcomes and to develop belief in their own ability to achieve. The explanation of ‘empowerment’ provided by Bessant et al (1998) supports the claim that an attempt is made in this agency to empower young people. Bessant, et al claim:
Empowerment…means making constituents aware of the contracts in which they are involved, aware of the obligations of delegates to whom they have given power, and the ability to hold such delegates accountable. It means making people aware of what is theirs. (1998, p. 236).

Workers within this agency are given free-rein (referred to by Cooper and White as a ‘laissez faire’ approach (1994, p. 34, see ‘non-radical empowerment model’)) and encouraged to extend their services to meet the needs of both the young people they are involved with and their families. Without sufficient resources this may be disempowering for the workers involved and participant ‘A’, who is employed at this agency, claimed to be ‘struggling’ (see previous chapter). The ability of youth workers to continue to operate with the level of stress indicated here is of concern and is indicative of the lack of clarity surrounding youth work practice. Poynting and White maintain that “we need to critically evaluate the occupational limits and pressures stemming from multiple demands being place upon youth workers to engage in “holistic”, community-based risk/protection strategies….“ (2004, p. 44).

From what these managers have articulated as their understanding of ‘youth work practice’, it is clear that at least two of the services in which drop-in centre workers are employed are likely to set out to provide services which reflect what Poynting and White (2004) refer to as one of the aims of the state – that of ‘protecting society’. The third agency is likely to be placed in a position of doing so by default based on the aims and guidelines of the funding they are able to access in order to continue to provide services to young people (core funding for youth services in Western Australia is primarily available through the Department for Community Development). A recent Request for Proposal document issued by the Department for Community Development (Western Australia) (DCD) (see Appendix 8) asked that the service provider should work with young people through ‘recreation’, ‘building relationships’, ‘advocacy’, ‘general education’ (alcohol and other drug specific) and ‘community involvement’ to achieve a number of outcomes which would effectively link young people considered to be “at risk” (see Appendix 9) more effectively into society. The objectives of the service are, among others, to ensure that young people develop “resilience” and that the “overall level of risk of the young person is reduced”. In order to achieve these outcomes the young people using the service will need to be worked with to change their behaviour and situation. Service providers will need to address, with the young people involved, issues such as “truanting, emotionally disturbed, disruptive behaviour, self harm, antisocial behaviour, violent behaviour,
social isolation, juvenile offending, vandalism, drug abuse, rejecting parental support, low self esteem, lack of social skills, poor communication skills” as well as “Situational indicators [such as]; unemployed, homeless, socially disadvantaged, family breakdown, transient families, poorer socio-economic families, abused children.” All of these indicators of risk are attributed to the individual, and it is the individual with whom potential service providers are required to work to address them. Following earlier discussion, it seems that young people at risk need to be provided with ‘guidance and adjustment’, as identified by Irving et al (1995), and contained in order to ensure the safety of the community, as identified by Poynting and White (2004).

If, therefore, funding and functionalism provide direction for provision of services to young people, “(t)he issue here is how the workplace affects the political orientation and ability of youth workers to put their values into practice” (Poynting & White, 2004, p. 44). Having acknowledged the importance of values to youth work provision and practice and the fundamentally functionalist influence on the provision of services, which it is suggested must translate to the working environment for youth workers, the following will explore the influence of their workplace on the ability of youth workers involved in this study to put their values into practice.

Youth work practitioners

The previous section identified that the services within which roughly half (7) of the youth workers involved in this study were employed are likely to be informed by a functionalist perspective (see Hurley & Treacy, 1993) either at a management level or through the direction of funding guidelines. They are most likely to reflect a view of society that is conservative, liberal, or possibly social democratic in nature (see Cooper & White, 1994). Corney (2004b), draws attention to potential tension between the expectations of the youth service and the workers within that service by identification of “degree-level youth work courses in Australia [as]...left of centre... advocating empowerment, community development, equity and so on” (Poynting & White, 2004, p. 40). It seems that youth workers are often educated in an environment that advocates social change and then employed in one that requires adherence to the status quo. Indeed, when quizzed on their interpretation of the purpose of youth work, participant youth workers articulated an understanding that reflected the empowerment model of practice but fell short of taking an activist stance. Some of these participants are fairly recent graduates; others have been in the field for a number of years but it was not clear
to what degree they recognised the conflict within which they operate. Poynting and White maintain that:

The challenge is how to defend such cultural politics when their practitioners are insecure, given the hostile relations of forces arising from a period of economic rationalism and the vulnerable occupational location of the profession.... How does the objective position of youth workers – as employees of local councils, state governments, charity organisations, state-funded non-government agencies and so on – impact upon and shape their work activities? How does public consternation regarding management of the “underclasses” and the new urban “dangerous” classes shape the government, the agency, and the youth work agenda?... For many youth workers, the actual doing of youth work constantly involves juggling how best to provide services needed by young people, while avoiding the role of “soft cops”. (2004, p. 40).

Not surprisingly, among the emergent themes identified in the previous chapter is the concept of frustration. Workers at Agency 2 claimed to be frustrated by, among other things, their inability to do what they thought they should be doing with young people because of limitations placed on them by their management. In the focus groups these practitioners demonstrated sensitivity to the needs of young women living with violence and articulated frustration about the organisation of their service which hindered their ability to spend time responding to a young person’s hesitant approach and suggestions of violence at home. These practitioners were in fact not just hindered, but prohibited from providing the support they believed the young woman living with violence required (see Chapter 4). The questions raised by Poynting and White (2004) above are important in considering the practice of youth workers who have been exposed to the radical approaches indicated by Corney’s (2004) study of ‘degree-level’ youth work training in Australia and then employed in services which, may or may not have social justice on their agenda but are funded – and often managed – according to the functionalist paradigm discussed earlier.

In fact, at least half the youth work practitioners involved in this study received their training in programs endorsing social justice, social change and empowerment models of practice. Ten participants are university graduates with disciplines including youth work (5), social work (1), leisure sciences (1), women’s studies (1) and psychology (2). Study findings suggest that these practitioners’ approaches to practice are influenced by the environment in which they operate, the skill level of the young people they work with and an understanding of the power imbalances impinging on the ability of those they work with to have their needs met. This meant that although they
retained a keen awareness of negative social influences surrounding their clientele, they adopted a range of models of practice dependent upon the particular circumstances at the time. The street based (detached) youth workers claim to operate within an environment which reflects the constancy of the violence which the young people they work with live. As participant ‘H’ claimed, the young people move out of an environment of violence within their family of origin into a different but all encompassing violence on the street (see Chapter 4). Poynting and White (2004, p. 44) quite rightly ask:

...what are the implications of being drawn into complex and time-consuming activities that are intended, not so much to change the world, but to address the worst excesses of unequal distributions of societal resources and alienated youth behaviour? How do we position this kind of work within the philosophical universe of youth workers?

These workers might respond that the implications are huge! They claimed to have become desensitised to the level of violence they witness on a daily basis and frustrated by often futile efforts to assist young people to recognise and then move on from the violence they experience. Much of the time of these practitioners is taken up by the ‘complex and time-consuming activities’ identified by Poynting and White above; and any social change that might take place is limited to the situation of a few individuals using their service.

Empowerment and social change might be ideals that are promoted by ‘degree level’ youth work courses (Corney, 2004). Empowerment and social change may be the agenda driving many youth workers in the field but, as indicators of practice they do not readily fit into the paradigm informing government funding and the organisation of many of the youth services currently operating. What we have seen in the discussion above is the tensions that are likely to exist between youth work practitioners and the services employing them. Youth work is not clearly defined and the lack of clarity as to what a youth worker does may add to these tensions. The lack of clarity surrounding youth work has been associated with issues of lack of credibility amongst other professionals impinging, practitioners claim, on their ability to effectively refer young people and ensure ongoing support for them. Lack of credibility for youth work practitioners is discussed below.
Credibility - developing identity

The discussion above has identified the tensions that frequently exist between the environment in which drop-in centre and detached youth work participants in this study are employed and their own motivation for what they do. This section will consider the causes of additional tensions that exist between these workers and other, non-youth work, professionals to whom they attempt to refer young people, or by whom they may be employed. Participants involved in both sets of focus groups forming part of this study claimed to have experienced having their professional status devalued and their opinions dismissed by professionals from other disciplines. In fact, the non-contact manager in Agency 2 explicitly states that the role identified for youth work practitioners within that agency did not include the necessary skills required to support young women who may have experienced violence. Because these skills were not included in the job description for youth work she asserted that young people should not be encouraged to disclose experiences of violence or abuse to practitioners at the agency. She claimed that “the youth centre is a safe place” and that disclosure of abuse or violence would negate this safety. According to Sercombe (2004) dismissal of the capability and knowledge base of youth work practitioners is not uncommon. He claims that professionals, with whom youth workers are involved through their work with young people, often have little understanding of the role or knowledge base of the youth worker. “Sometimes it may not be clear even to the employing organisation what skills, knowledge or credentials the person performing the job should have” (Bessant, 2005, p. 9). The end result of this lack of understanding is that the expertise and knowledge of other professionals is given greater credence than that offered by the youth work professional.

Detached youth workers taking part in the study claimed that they were concerned that many of the young people they worked with experienced mental health problems. They further claimed that on the occasions where they referred young people either to emergency departments at local hospitals or to health professionals for mental health assessments their opinions were often dismissed or completely ignored. The example offered by participant ‘J’, who claimed that the emergency department of a public hospital threatened to control the disruptive behaviour of a young person being referred for a mental health assessment by ‘calling the police’, appears to be fairly typical of the response received by youth workers to their attempts to support young people they believed needed immediate treatment for mental health disorders. These
practitioners also claimed to have difficulty in referring young people to mental health practitioners for formal assessment as the youth worker’s interim assessment was often dismissed as being unprofessionally based. The only exception to this, participants claimed, is Youth Link, an agency funded to work with youth workers in the identification of the mental health needs of young people.

According to a number of authors (see for example Bessant, 2005; Palmer, 2005; and Watts, 2005) the problem rests with lack of clarity as to what youth work practice is and therefore lack of credibility for the practitioner. Key note addresses by Watts and Palmer at the 2005 Youth Affairs Council of WA conference suggested that not only is youth work undefined as a discipline (see also Bessant, Sercombe, & Watts, 1998), youth work practitioners themselves are often unable to define what youth work is.

Bowie (2004) offers a number of characteristics which he claims distinguish the Australian youth work field from youth work in other western countries, although there are others among my colleagues who might disagree with these claims. These characteristics he suggests, include:

- High dependence on government funding
- Many small government-funded, community based organisations
- Few large-scale residential therapeutic treatment centres
- Voluntary part-time management boards
- Workers requiring a wide range of generalist knowledge and skills
- A focus on youth rather than child and youth care

(2004, p. 34)

These characteristics may identify in what way Australian youth work is different from that in Britain or America, but they do not clarify what youth work is. In an effort to further expand on the role of the Australian youth worker, Bowie provides insight into some of the skills youth workers are required to demonstrate particularly in smaller community based agencies in this country. These he lists as:

…basic financial skills, fundraising, public relations and media skills, submission writing and policy development, political analysis and lobbying. Problem-solving, counselling and group-work skills are also deemed necessary….In many instances the workers also have had to learn the skills to
“manage” their voluntary management committees.....So youth workers in small community-based services often have to be “Jacks or Jills of all trades”, which requires them to become “specialist generalists”. (2004, pp. 34-35).

Participant ‘M’, a detached youth worker, identified in one of his concept maps that he and his colleagues were expected to be ‘Jacks of all trades!’ His rationale, however, was the need to demonstrate skills in problem solving, counselling, crowd control, mediation in aggressive interactions between clients (or between clients and police/community members), welfare worker and mental health assessor. Bowie identifies Australian youth work practitioners as “specialist generalists” needing to demonstrate a broad range of skills. I would argue that the range of skills which need to be demonstrated by youth work practitioners across the globe will be similar with variations dependent not only on the country in which the service operates but the environment and type of service offered. So the lists offered above are likely to differ somewhat, dependent on the service within which the practitioner is employed.

As Banks (1999, p. 6) maintains the nature of youth work is “diverse and disparate” and therefore difficult to define. In an attempt to do so, particularly from a British perspective, Banks has claimed that youth work is “part of the ‘welfare system’” (p.6). She further claims that youth work is ‘informal education’ (Banks, 1999; Jeffs & Smith, 1987; Smith, 1988), the process [of which] is based on dialogue; it works with cultural forms that are familiar to participants; participation is voluntary; it takes place in a variety of settings; it has education goals but these may not always be clearly specified; and it makes use of experiential as well as assimilative patterns of learning....So education is both the process and the purpose of youth work. (Banks, 1999, p. 7).

Banks goes on to explain, however, that it is what is taught and how that education is delivered that is important. Education can be used for social control just as easily as it can be used to achieve Freirian goals; after all, education, like youth work is not value free (see Freire, 1972). According to Bessant et al (1998) it is the relationship between practitioner and young person that defines the youth work relationship. They further maintain that the concept of the ‘professional’ is useful when attempting to clarify the youth work role because it provides not only a requirement for ‘ethical practice’ (a component of professionalism) but better defines the relationship between young person and practitioner by the introduction of ‘boundaries’ within that relationship. The
professional youth worker then must take responsibility to operate “with integrity in situations that involve highly vulnerable people in highly charged emotional and political contexts, to work out where we stand, where our lines are; and to make that clear to colleagues, management, and the young person we work with” (p. 238).

Earlier discussion identified the different ideological positions that may inform service management, funding for programs and youth work practice. The discussion above also suggests that ethical considerations and boundaries in practice are important in the development of understanding what constitutes youth work. Based on this, it is essential for youth work practitioners to understand and to acknowledge the priorities of others – priorities which are often, at least on the surface, in conflict with those of young people. The importance of unambiguous contracts with opposing stakeholders in any youth work operation is discussed by Bessant et al (1998). Bessant et al claim that the youth worker must not only be clear about their position but must explicitly articulate this to those they are working with, are employed or funded by and others who have expectations of the outcomes of the service. The program or service becomes youth work only when it is made clear, they claim, that “the youth worker engages the young person as the primary constituent” (1998, p. 234). From this perspective, youth work needs to be unequivocal with all stakeholders that their priorities will be upheld and worked towards only where doing so does not infringe the rights of young people. That is, the often articulated aims of controlling and containing young people or assisting them to better fit into society as it exists become secondary to the concerns of young people particularly those agreed by worker and young person as in need of attention. After all, as Bessant et al maintain, “many other benefits may flow from the empowerment of young people, including decreased levels of crime, higher levels of school attendance and so on. Indirectly, mandates from other constituents whose interests lie in greater social order may be honestly fulfilled” (p. 234). It is up to the youth work practitioner to be clear about what they can or will do, and to negotiate with their management or funding body, to ensure that the needs of young people remain the first priority in their work. If, in the process, they are able to actively engage young people in activities which promote greater social inclusion then the functionalist agenda discussed earlier may also be satisfied. The problem here is that there continue to be youth service managers, and youth service funders, who understand youth work differently to the practitioners they employ (as we have seen in this study). For these workers, in order to avoid frustration, the choices are limited. They can attempt to
educate their employers; work subversively to meet the needs of their ‘constituents’; or find other employment.

Although clarity of what constitutes youth work will primarily benefit young people (Bessant, Sercombe, & Watts, 1998), it will also assist the employment of youth workers in environments that, although not directly supportive of the youth workers’ ideological perspectives, will at least acknowledge the skills they have (see earlier discussion regarding the position of the non-contact manager at Agency 2; see also discussion regarding the employment of ‘qualified youth workers’ offered by Bessant, 2005). Recognition of the ‘specialist generalist’ nature of youth work practice and the range of skills this necessitates may encourage greater confidence, on the part of management, in the ability of practitioners to undertake more complex activities and a greater range of support roles in their work with young people. Youth workers too, may not only find that they have clearer boundaries in their practice, but also more flexibility and freedom to undertake what is required by young people. They are more likely to be supported in the work they do either through professional supervision or peer discussions about their work. They are also more likely to find that clear articulation of the role of the youth worker will invite acceptance of their knowledge base and skills by other, non-youth work, professionals. Bessant (2005) argues that only those formally trained in youth work should be employed to work with young people and that doing so provides “advantages to employers, young people and to the wider community” (p. 11). Employing only ‘qualified youth workers’ also provides “some degree of quality assurance” (p.12) she claims.

Consideration of the above discussion as it relates to the findings reported in Chapter 4 provides some insight into the difficulties faced by practitioners in this study when attempting to support young women who may be living with violence at home. According to Table 14 (see Chapter 4) there were areas of concern for both youth work practitioners and for those who employ them. Brief discussion will now be afforded to these concerns, where they have not been covered in the discussion above, to clarify their relevance to the problems identified with meeting the needs of the young women about whom this study was originally concerned.

**Common concerns and barriers to practice**

Chapter 4 identifies the potential for management understanding to impede drop-in centre youth workers in the provision of services meeting the expectations of what
has been identified as *professional youth work practice* (see for example Sercombe, 1997; 2000). The differences in understanding between management and practitioner and the resultant tensions are discussed in the preceding section of this chapter. Although there are differences in the expectations of managers and practitioners, the data reported earlier (see Chapter 4) also identifies commonalities in concerns expressed in relation to the provision of services for young people. The youth work practitioners involved in this study were concerned about the level of violence they either witnessed in their practice or they believed to be present in the lives of the young people, particularly the young women, they work with. Through focus group and individual interviews these participants articulated concern about their ability to provide the level of support they believe is required by these young people and, in so doing, identified particular areas for concern that were also raised by drop-in centre management. These concerns include opportunities for debriefing and professional supervision; family violence which appears as an issue of concern not often presenting at the youth service; and various sources of frustration. These concerns are discussed below as they relate to the provision of services for young people living with violence.

**Debriefing and professional supervision: a reflective practice**

The opportunity to reflect on their practice and to *debrief* with their peers is something the focus group discussions offered that both drop-in centre and detached youth work practitioners claimed was not often available to them; they claimed to find it so useful that they were keen to find ways of ensuring that this type of discussion continued at least within their place of work. Although the opportunities for debriefing are varied across the services, the value of professional supervision was recognised by two of the three managers interviewed, one of whom ensured that external professional supervision was available to the youth services coordinator at the agency. Most practitioners either relied on their line-manager for professional supervision or debriefed informally with their colleagues. Sometimes this occurred in an *ad hoc* fashion; sometimes agencies (one drop-in centre and the detached youth work program) set time aside for regular team meetings. Working as a team was identified by all practitioners involved as important in helping to make decisions about the young people they work with. Team work was identified by participants as an essential component in ameliorating the potential for *burnout* of workers; particularly those who did not have access to professional supervision as they claim that working in an effective team provided the opportunity for workers to *debrief* with their colleagues and to explore
their practice. *Burnout* was identified by practitioners as a real and constant threat to their ability to provide effective support for young people.

Managers, on the other hand, had differing ideas about the provision of professional supervision. The detached youth work programme, as noted above, provides external professional supervision for the coordinator of the programme; the other practitioners in this service rely on the coordinator for professional supervision and also have available to them an *employee counselling* service to deal with both personal and professional issues that cannot be dealt with by their line manager. In contrast to this, three different perspectives emerged from the management interviews reported in Chapter 4. Agency 1 had not given any consideration to the potential for workers to either debrief or to have professional supervision. This agency did not have in place any mechanism for practitioners to discuss issues with one another and they didn’t have regular team meetings. Agency 2 claimed to have developed their expectations of what youth workers within their agency would do (see Appendix 7: Position Descriptions) to avoid the requirement for professional supervision. Professional supervision was identified as being required only when practitioners dealt with *sensitive issues* and the practitioners within this agency were directed not to undertake counselling of young people in order to protect them from the stress related to this aspect of the youth worker role. The non-contact manager interviewed at Agency 2 was very concerned that her youth workers should not be placed in a position where they needed to deal with sensitive issues for two reasons. Firstly, she was concerned that as the job description did not require the skills to do so, those employed as youth work practitioners would not have those skills and claimed that she would be “very surprised” if they did. Secondly, she was concerned that encouraging a young person to disclose family violence at the youth service would negate any sense of safety that might be associated with the centre. Her concern demonstrated a lack of understanding of the nature of youth work and the specific skills of the youth workers involved in this study. Her concern was not shared by the youth workers in her employ. In light of the discussion in the previous section, it would appear that young people using this service might be better served by open discussion and clarification of what constitutes youth work. With greater clarity, both management and youth work practitioners at this particular service are more likely to agree upon the skill level that might be expected of a youth work practitioner. And with this, there may also be agreement on, not so much whether a young person should be encouraged to disclose experience of family
violence, but in what way the young person could be encouraged to do so to ensure their safety and ongoing support.

A further concern articulated by the director at Agency 2 was the lack of financial resources available to meet the cost of effective professional supervision of their youth work team. Agency 3, on the other hand, reported negotiating a *pro-bono* arrangement with the University of Western Australia to provide appropriate professional supervision for the coordinator of youth services at this agency. Other youth workers at the drop-in centre relied on the coordinator for both line management and professional supervision. These workers communicated regularly about what was happening with young people at the centre as well as any personal concerns they may have; they worked closely as a team. All practitioners claimed to use whatever *quiet time* they may have at the youth service to discuss issues and practice with their colleagues; three of the agencies represented in this study, two drop-in centres and the detached youth work team, meet regularly in their teams to discuss issues of concern about young people, programmes and their practice. Although this may not be a perfect solution to issues of professional supervision the nature of the relationship developed between workers in each of these services provides assurance that the opportunity is available for workers to regularly debrief. In fact this is often an effective alternative model of supervision, providing benefits to those involved which might not otherwise be available to them.

**Frustration**

Although both youth workers and managers, articulated sites of frustration, they agreed on one area of frustration only; they agreed that funding for youth services was inadequate and difficult to come by. Local government business unit managers articulated their frustration in relation to needing to *defend* the services provided for young people in their locality. They each described the services offered to young people as ‘*soft*’, whereas they claimed that it was difficult to get elected members to recognise services unless they could provide ‘*hard’* evidence of their achievements. So, unless the service could demonstrate a satisfactory *cost benefit ratio* it was difficult to gain support for allocation of budget monies to keep the service operating. Less emphasis was placed on obtaining external funding by these managers than by the CEO of Agency 3 and the youth work practitioners. Agency 3’s manager claimed to spend a large proportion of her time researching funding sources and writing funding submissions. She also claimed that services were often provided without funding
because they were needed! After the need was identified and the service begun, a search for funding took place. Coming from a slightly different perspective, drop-in centre youth workers claimed that their services were under-resourced and under staffed. They claimed to have limited workers rostered on at any one time making it impossible to do more than crowd control; limited funding to provide opportunities for young people and old equipment and furniture which was often in need of replacement or repair. On the other hand, the detached youth workers were satisfied that their service was well resourced and, for the expectations of the service, was adequately staffed. The coordinator claimed:

“I feel pretty comfortable with how well resourced this program is - I know that's unusual.... But having said that if we had more staff we would do a different range of things. But for what we currently undertake we are quite satisfactorily staffed.”

A further source of frustration, which drop-in centre workers identified as limitations to practice, involved what they perceived as their own limited understanding of what is required by young women living with violence, limited understanding of issues of family violence and limited ability, based on management directives and agency and staffing resources, to adequately respond to the needs of these young women. They claimed to also be frustrated by young people who partially disclosed whilst the worker was preoccupied with other young people or activities and then failed to respond to later attempts at encouraging disclosure. They also claimed to be frustrated by young people who appeared to refuse to move on from their situation even though they were provided with a great deal of support. These workers were also frustrated by having a sense of knowing that young people they work with live with violence, but were unable to pursue the issue with them. Participants identified through their discussion that family violence was, in fact, a non-presenting issue. This is discussed below, but it is important to remember that, as a non-presenting issue it is also a site of frustration for practitioners who, keenly concerned about the level of violence they suspect some young people live with, believe that they are well placed to at least provide initial support.

Family violence, the non-presenting issue

That young women do not openly disclose family violence to the youth work practitioners involved in this study is identified as a concern in Chapter 4 and as a cause of frustration above. Some of the reasons why young women are reluctant to disclose
are implied in the discussion above; certainly questions have been raised; and these questions are explored further here. Chapter 4 shows that youth workers are often concerned that a young woman (or young person) may be living with violence but that the young person will only fleetingly, discuss what is happening for them. The young person may provide snippets of information at a time when the youth worker is not expecting disclosure or is not prepared or in a position to focus on what the young person is saying to them. When (and if) the opportunity arises for the youth worker to follow up with this young person at a later time, often the young woman will not discuss what had been hinted at previously. The question then, is ‘Why?’ Why does this happen? And how can the youth work practitioner meet the young woman’s needs? The salient points appear to be:

1. Family violence is not obvious but may underlie the more obvious presenting issues; it may never reach the surface because workers do not actively encourage young people to disclose;

2. Workers do not actively encourage disclosure because they may not recognise the signs; they may be too busy dealing with immediate concerns (*crowd control*, for example); or they may be concerned that they are wrong;

3. Does the worker have the necessary skills to support the young person? Do they have the necessary support from their agency to carry through? Is the agency prepared/able to provide the level of support the worker requires?

4. Is it right for workers to encourage disclosure?

5. Tentative attempts at *disclosure* appear to be the young person’s way of checking the environment and the worker to ascertain how safe it might be to disclose.

Previously reported data identified that these are issues of concern to most of the participants in this study – both management and youth work practitioners. How these concerns are responded to appears to rest quite heavily on how youth work practice is defined; what youth workers are employed to do; and what training (if any) they undertake prior to their practice.

To inform discussion, then, it makes sense to attempt to develop the definition of youth work practice and, as we have seen from the previous discussion there are many
forms of practice that claim to be youth work; in fact it is probably easier to say what youth work isn’t than to attempt to define what youth work is. However, Bessant et al (1998) claim that:

...we can perhaps define youth work as the practice of engaging with young people in a professional relationship in which:

- the young person(s) are the primary constituency, and the mandate given by them has priority
- the young person(s) are understood as social beings whose lives are shaped in negotiation with their social context
- the young person is dealt with holistically.

(1998, p. 239)

Banks (1999), maintains that youth work is in fact a form of non-formal education which borrows extensively from the tradition of Freire. A mix of these two explanations would probably be accepted by most youth work practitioners as fairly accurately describing what they do. The principle aim of youth work might be claimed to be:

- to work with young people professionally and ethically to identify and achieve their goals
- to assist young people to recognise the structural and social influences that enhance or impede their progress and to work with them to change the power structures that are currently working against them.

If these are accepted as representative of the work of youth work practitioners then we can see that the primary difficulty lies not in the knowledge base of the youth worker but with their work environment. The fact that the recently established West Australian Association of Youth Workers has adopted these principles in the working definition of youth work practice included in their constitutions suggests that this is what many youth work professionals consider as youth work.

Young women are unlikely to disclose that they live with violence unless they are comfortable that they will be listened to and taken seriously. Too often the person to whom they disclose has a limited understanding of the nature of family or domestic violence and it is possible that on previous attempts to disclose their concerns have been
minimised or misrepresented by the person to whom they chose to disclose. If the operations of the youth service are influenced by the understanding of the non-contact manager responsible for service provision or the funding provided, then we can see that it would be difficult for any youth worker employed at any of the drop-in services involved in this study to provide the pre-requisite for disclosure. As we have seen the youth workers at one agency have been directed *not* to encourage young people to disclose. The reasons articulated are that local government are not in a position to provide the follow up services required and that, without these in place, the non-contact manager would be concerned for the safety of both the youth worker and the young person. The young person she believed identified the youth centre as a “*safe place*”, which appears to mean that the young person identifies the youth centre as a place of anonymity; a place where reality can be left at the door! She also did not consider that youth workers were likely to have a sufficient level of skill to effectively support a young person who disclosed “*abuse*” (Agency 2) and did not believe it is necessary to provide professional supervision if practitioners were not dealing with ‘*sensitive*’ issues such as child abuse or family violence.

The non-contact manager at Agency 1 claimed that the role of youth work is to stop young people putting themselves and others at risk – presumably through entertainment. The youth work practitioner employed at the drop-in centre operated by this agency maintained that she often felt like a ‘*baby sitter!*’ and that staffing was provided on a casual and ad hoc basis severely limiting what youth workers were able to undertake with the young people using the service. Limited and irregular staffing, consistently high numbers of particularly boisterous and often aggressive young men and no areas in which private discussions could take place meant that it was extremely difficult for the youth worker to provide an environment in which a young woman might feel that it is safe to disclose. Often the young woman would find herself being bullied or harassed by the young men and the youth workers are likely to be spending their time attempting to control this unacceptable behaviour.

The understanding of what youth workers can, and should, do and the apparent perception of what the youth service can, or should, provide articulated by the non-contact managers of Agencies 1 and 2 negatively influence what youth workers within the agency can, and will, do to support the young people using their service. If youth workers are not employed to undertake the role of the youth worker as described above, but are educated to understand this as their role, they are likely to experience a sense of
disempowerment and impotence in their work place. Indeed this is how these and other workers involved in this study described feeling about what they do. They were desperately keen to work with young people for whom they had concerns; they knew that their attempts to do so were being impeded, but did not know why or by what or whom!

The remaining drop-in centre and the detached youth work project both maintain a social justice focus, the knowledge and experience of the youth workers within these agencies appears to be acknowledged by their management and they were encouraged to do what was required to meet the needs of the young people using the service. Both agencies worked frequently with older young people (17 – 25) often already in violent relationships. These workers found that much of their work was involved with educating both the violent partner and the victim to ameliorate the violence and to work on issues of safety for the abused partner. Some times this involved finding alternative accommodation for her. These two services also found that young women did not disclose issues of violence in their family of origin. The drop-in centre workers described similar experiences of tentative disclosure among the younger group who were using their service to that described by the other drop-in centre practitioners; and also claimed not to be able to follow up on the issues. Lack of confidence in their own knowledge and understanding was one of the issues they raised, but they also claimed to find it difficult to explore issues of concern with one young person whilst their colleague (and there would only be two of them working) attempted to effectively control the remaining relatively large number of young people using the service. They too felt a sense of disempowerment and impotence – as did the detached workers.

The difficulty facing detached workers, however, appears to relate more to the large numbers of older young people using their service who are, or have been, homeless (often as a result of violence in the family), who are still street present and currently existing within a street culture that is based on violence. In stark contrast to the claim made earlier by Participant ‘H’, that the detached youth service is better resourced than many other youth services, it seems that the service they are able to offer does not any where meet the needs of the young people using their service because of the intensity of those needs. The level of staffing and the physical resources available to them means they can effectively only work towards meeting the immediate needs of those young people. The service provided works with large numbers of street present young people to provide information, education, referral, advocacy and counselling for
issues which range from finding somewhere to live, accessing food or money, finding a job, to mental and physical health and violence. Drug use is an issue for many of the young people using the service and this adds to the level of violence experienced in any one day by both the young people and the youth work practitioners. Often, the young people using the detached service and Agency 3 are not only older than those at the other drop-in services but they are also at the point of crisis – generally not the case for younger attendees at drop-in centres.

Family violence appears to be a non-presenting issue, not because it does not exist, but because those who might be well placed to support young people living with violence are not provided the opportunity to do so. Discussion with youth work practitioners reported in Chapter 4 provides evidence that violence at home is a concern for not only youth work practitioners but also for young people. The environment in which services operate are generally under funded and under resourced. There are too few workers employed to meet the needs of young people and frequently the activities available to young people are not sufficiently challenging to encourage behaviour that does not need to be controlled. Family violence is not an issue that is often considered by non-contact management and youth workers may have quite limited understanding about family violence. Practitioners involved in this study, as identified in Chapter 4, demonstrated variable knowledge of family violence and changes in understanding were identified through the course of the study.

**Worker understanding and experience of family violence**

At the outset of this study, the youth work practitioners who took part claimed to have a good understanding of family violence and its constituent parts. However, often their understanding was confused by myths and erroneous belief consistent with that of the general population (Draper et al., 1991; Gilding, 1997; Gittens, 1993). Many of the original concept maps were quite simplistic in the understanding of family violence depicted; and in the initial focus group interview with drop-in centre youth workers, surprise was expressed at the examples of family and domestic violence presented. Although some of the participants claimed to have a comprehensive understanding of what constitutes family violence, some also were ‘gob-smacked’ (with one participant claiming that she felt as though she had been “smacked in the face” by the information presented). Previously young men who were aggressive or presented at the youth service with ‘acting out’ behaviour had been seen to be naughty and in need of discipline. At the end of this first focus group participants appeared to have developed
an awareness that this behaviour might result from violence at home – particularly if the young person was also aggressive and physically violent towards others using the centre. They were also aware of a variety of other behaviours which may be indicative of family violence and the definition of violence was extended to include a whole range of behaviours besides physical abuse. At first this appeared difficult for some to fully grasp, and discussion continued to underplay emotional violence in particular and claims were made to the effect that it wasn’t that bad because there were no bruises. Often discussion differentiated between violence and abuse and, although explicit definitions of these were not offered the suggestion is that violence happens between adults and abuse is something that adults do to children. The debate then, according to McIntosh (2003) might be the level to which the young person was caught up in the violence: whether they were “witness” to or “exposed” to violence, whether they “observe” or “live with” violence” (p. 220). The understanding demonstrated at least initially by the youth work practitioners reflected that of the community generally rather than what might be expected of professionals practised at working with young people living with violence; although, Gilding does point out that often women, as victims, are treated by service providers “with disdain and suspicion” (1997, p. 187).

Myths and erroneous belief then lay the foundation for public understanding of family (or domestic) violence and child abuse, a position which has been encouraged by the media. In a recent article, ‘Reframing public discourse on child abuse in Australia’, Adam Foster (2005) claims that as a result of media attention public focus of child abuse is on child sexual abuse which accounts for only 10% of last year’s (2004) 40,000 substantiated child abuse cases in Australia. “13 percent suffered physical abuse, 36 per cent suffered neglect, 11 per cent experienced emotional maltreatment” (2005, p. 14). Physical (and emotional) abuse is at least as harmful as sexual abuse; and poverty and structural inequality account for a large proportion of reported incidences of child maltreatment, he claims. The media framed understanding of child abuse appears to have influenced the understanding of the non-contact manager of Agency 2 in relation to what might be involved in disclosure of family violence in the youth centre; it certainly explains her concern for the safety of the young person and the youth work practitioner. When we consider that one in five young people have been exposed to physical domestic violence (Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia, & Donovan Research: Marketing and Communications Research Consultants, 2001) and that “Females, older teens, those of lower socioeconomic status and those not living
with both parents were found to have been more likely to have witnessed adult domestic violence” (Indemaur, 2001, p. 3) then we need to question how safe are the young women using the drop-in centre when concerns about their safety at home are not able to be investigated?

Drop-in centres in which participants are employed are situated in areas where there are levels of poverty and single parent families which are higher than the average for the Perth Metropolitan region (Glover, Harris, & Tennant, 1999). Each service is situated within the “urban fringe.... [in] areas characterised by relatively cheap housing and State housing authority rental accommodation” (p. 90). Young people using the services are more likely to come from families experiencing high levels of stress. High stress levels and limited social supports may indicate that family violence is also present (Indemaur, 2001).

The youth work practitioners involved in the study each identified a critical approach to their work, indicating that where possible they followed a social justice agenda with young people. They were aware and critical of the negative effects on young people of existing social and political structures and indicated practice that attempted, in conjunction with the young person, to alleviate this where-ever possible. Participants discussed the nature of the cycle of violence, reflecting on the combination of structural inequalities and learnt behaviour that might be prevalent.

They were also concerned with the notion of cultural relativism and identified that some eastern European and Australian (and New Zealand) indigenous communities may have a different understanding to that of mainstream Australia of what constitutes violence. Concern was raised as to the appropriateness of challenging this behaviour within these groups. Youth worker participants were unsure whether it was appropriate to challenge the beliefs of different cultures or to support the young person within that culture. According to the Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia, & Donovan Research: Marketing and Communications Research Consultants (2001) the question to ask is “what impact can be made within a certain culture to deflect or minimise the influence of cultural beliefs about gender inequality” (p. 16) in an effort to change attitudes and to reduce the violent cultural influences on young people. Similarly participants acknowledged that youth culture, particularly street youth culture, is inherently violent; in this instance the concern was not so much about the appropriateness of challenging violence in this context, but the relevance of attempting
to enforce a *non-violent* environment with young people who may never have experienced this elsewhere. The question then becomes one of cultural relativism versus human rights. If we accept arguments regarding the power of *peer influence* on young people (see, for example, Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia, & Donovan Research: Marketing and Communications Research Consultants, 2001) it becomes clear that this is no different from the concern raised above regarding other cultures or ethnic groups. The (Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia, & Donovan Research: Marketing and Communications Research Consultants, 2001) suggest that it is peer influence that is most influential in the formation and reinforcement of attitudes towards and normalisation of violence. They claim:

> Attitudes, beliefs and values may be formed initially in the family of origin, but they are essentially maintained, forged and developed into an instrument justifying the use of violence through interaction with like-minded peers in adolescence. A number of studies have found that, in adolescence, peer groups comprise the most relevant factor reinforcing the development and establishment of attitudes supporting the use of violence. In other words, peer groups can provide a cultural environment of societal acceptability of violence. This can serve to reinforce individual beliefs about the acceptability of violence. (2001, p. 17).

Based on this argument it is essential to challenge violent behaviour, no matter what cultural background the young people are from, in order to challenge the assumptions that violence is an effective way to manage relationships (Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia, & Donovan Research: Marketing and Communications Research Consultants, 2001).

McIntosh (2003, p. 230) reminds us that “the accessibility and robustness of social supports combine to foster resilient outcomes in children exposed to domestic violence” and that professionals need “to look at their role in building resilience, rather than assuming that it is an inherent property of the child.” Clarification is required regarding the role the youth worker can adopt to better support young people living with violence. If *resilience* is fostered through social supports, youth work practitioners are well placed to facilitate the development of effective social supports for the young people with whom they work.

The detached youth workers indicated a good understanding of how violence affected the young people they work with. They claimed that rather than changing street present young people’s attitude towards the justification of violence in every day
interactions they felt that they may be too accepting of the violence that surrounded them and were becoming “desensitised” to the level of violence they witnessed daily. They also acknowledged the normalisation of violence experienced by young people. A normalisation that Gilding relates to the pervasiveness of “the structures that make violence possible... which means that the threat of violence informs family life generally” (1997, p. 189). The detached youth workers recognised the violent behaviour displayed within their service as learnt behaviour and claimed that young people who were critical of their parents’ violence quickly adopted similar behaviour when they became parents. They noted that the children (generally babies and toddlers) of the young people using their service often demonstrated extreme anger. Behaviour that these and the drop-in centre workers claimed to be indicative of violence for the young people using their service is also discussed in the literature as being indicative of coping strategies adopted to deal with the violence (see Chapter 3). Young people for whom violence is common place are likely, they claim, to adopt a victim status, to become perpetrators, to act out, to be invisible, to use drugs, to adopt anti-social behaviour, be unemployed or do poorly at school. In fact the effects of family violence on young people described by youth work participants and by the literature (Chapter 3) are similar to those experienced by victims of trauma. McIntosh (2003) describes the experience of the child living with violence as traumatic and maintains that:

When a child is not helped to deal with and integrate the impact of family violence, the overwhelming nature of events is broken down into seemingly unconnected pieces, for example with fragmentation of immediate and long-term memory of the trauma... the child’s real experience can break through in disconnected expressions, often marked by acute anxiety and fear. (p. 223).

What is driving these young people then, is likely to be an intense sense of anxiety and fear. Young people living with violence, according to youth work practitioners involved in this study are likely to have a sense of being out of control, trapped, isolated, confused and capricious. They are likely to feel responsible for the violence whilst helpless to stop it; they are also likely to feel fear, shame and guilt and that no-one will listen or understand them. Not surprising then that young people living with violence are likely to develop “powerful defensive strategies ... in order to obtain a feeling of control, safety, and predictability within an environment where they are periodically faced with exposure to violence, parenting which may be considered neglectful, inadequate, or hazardous, along with an array of stressful life episodes that accompany this maltreatment” (2003, p. 224).
Managerialism as a barrier

Previous discussion has identified tensions between the functionalist paradigm informing practice through funding and management perspectives and the position, which includes social justice and empowerment models of practice, adopted by youth work practitioner participants in this study. What has not been articulated thus far is the influence on practice of managerialism. During the late 1980s, throughout the 1990s and into 2000 Australian governments (like their counterparts in most of the western world) have adopted an approach to public policy which is generally referred to as ‘economic rationalism’ (Bessant, Sercombe, & Watts, 1998, p. 190), and it is within this that managerialism sits as an ideology informing “public policy making, business administration practice and human service management” (Tsui & Cheung, 2004, p. 438). Central to economic rationalism and managerialism is the concept of the market as the dominant factor. A major assumption of managerialism is that:

...managers rather than front line staff are...the key persons in an organization (Pollitt, 1993). The proponents of managerialism believe that improvements in efficiency can be achieved by the appointment of an effective manager (or even an efficient manager). Staff simply implement what the manager thinks, plans and decides..... Staff are not only managerialized, but also marginalized in the era of managerialism. (Tsui & Cheung, 2004, p. 438, emphasis added).

As we saw in the discussion in Chapter 4, drop-in centre workers were concerned that they were restricted in their practice and those employed in Agency 2 were able to identify that what restricted their practice were the constraints imposed by management. Tsui and Cheung (2004, p. 439) remind us that “Quality is greatly emphasized under managerialism.... Managers tend to count instead of judge, measure instead of think, and care about the cost instead of the cause.” Many West Australian youth services receive core funding from State or Federal government sources. As can be seen from the example D.C.D. (WA State Government) service specifications included as Appendix 8, the ‘Output Measures’ require the service operator to provide, for 13 of the 14 required sets of data, numbers to represent achievement of these measures. So although youth work practitioners are keenly aware of the services required by the young people with whom they work there is a danger that their management or funding providers may be less clear and what constitutes quality, an essential component in a managerialist environment, is less clearly defined. Quality, as a measured entity has “the potential to become mechanistic, around measurable activities, detracting from the real, often less
tangible activity and task of caring” (Watson, 2003, p. 68). The most important direct work with young people is often less tangible and therefore difficult to measure and may potentially be lost in the drive by funding sources and management to be accountable.

**Implications for practice**

Chapter 4 and the preceding sections of this chapter provide discussion indicating a number of barriers currently in place which make it difficult for a concerned youth worker to effectively support young people living with violence. These existing barriers have been built through social discourses that construct young people as a problem – or as Poynting and White (2004) maintain, ‘folk-devils’ threatening the social order – and family as private. Additionally, services are often managed or funded according to a functionalist paradigm supporting these discourses; it seems, then, that these barriers are insurmountable and that young people will continue to live in violent environments without the support they need. University trained youth work practitioners, as identified by Corney (2004) and Bessant (2005), are skilled in identifying and challenging structural inequalities and supporting young people. They will often use a social justice and an empowerment approach to their practice. The implications for practice for these practitioners are that the structural inequalities reinforced through the provision of services as they currently exist must be challenged. In order to explore the implications for practice, it is necessary to acknowledge the prime focus of the youth work practitioner and the frequency of domestic, or family, violence currently accepted in Australia.

Firstly the frequency of violence as it affects young women living in their family of origin will be explored. Of prime importance is an appreciation of the inconsistencies involved in the identification of violence within the family. As we have seen from the discussion above, physical violence is often the only form of violence that is included in attempts to measure the frequency of domestic violence (see for example Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia, & Donovan Research: Marketing and Communications Research Consultants, 2001; and Gilding, 1997) particularly when researching the issue with children or young people. Presumably it is difficult for young people or children to identify violence when it manifests as emotional or financial or even spiritual violence; therefore these aspects and those of intimidation and fear are not included in much of the research with these groups of people. The way in which domestic violence is defined will change the recorded
frequency and recorded severity of levels of violence experienced throughout the community. According to McIntosh (2003) there is a difference between marital conflict and domestic violence and often researchers will also differentiate between child abuse and family violence. The child who is caught up in conflict between parents (or parent and a new partner) or the abuse of one parent by another (identified by McIntosh as domestic violence), whether on the periphery or centrally (as witness or victim) (p. 220) still suffers as an abused child and is subsequently traumatised (Osofsky, 1997) in a similar way to the child in a domestic violence relationship. However, it is now acknowledged (see Chapter 3) that it is possible to provide support to young people living with violence to enhance the potential for them to move on without violence. If we explore what Bowlby (1988), Garbarino (1992), Gonzalez-Mena (1994), McIntosh (2003), Osofsky (1997), and Zeannah and Scheeringa (1997) (among others) have to say, we can see that not only is it possible to support these young people but that it is essential that intervention takes place as early as possible in the young person’s life.

Since its identification as an issue in the middle of last century, domestic violence, as it has been known, has been acknowledged as being present in a significant proportion of families in the western world (Mugford, 1989; Seth-Purdie, 1996). According to Blanchard (1999, pp. 1 - 2), an Australian Bureau of Statistics (1996) study identified “that 8% of women in Australia have experienced violence from their current partners at some time in the relationship. When previous relationships are taken into consideration the figure rises to an alarming 42%.” Based on these figures, it is not surprising that at least one in five young people in Australia have witnessed physical violence between either their parents or one parent and a new partner (Crime Research Centre, University of Western Australia, & Donovan Research: Marketing and Communications Research Consultants, 2001). Introduction of the measurement of other forms of violence now commonly acknowledged as domestic violence and the concepts of family violence and child abuse would suggest that the experience of violence within the home is relatively common throughout the community, suggesting that the estimates provided by the Crime Research Centre and Australian Bureau of Statistics may be conservative. Additionally, consideration of the claim that young women, young people living with only one parent and those in lower socio-economic environments are at most risk of being witness to physical violence between adults within the home (Indemaur, 2001) might suggest that it is quite likely that many young
people utilising the youth services in which participant youth work practitioners are employed have been exposed to violence within their family. It seems then, that the youth workers involved in this study are right to be concerned for the young people with whom they work.

If young women, in particular, using the services involved in this study are more likely than others to have experienced some form of ongoing violence in their home, it seems logical that youth workers are best placed to provide the necessary support to them. The prime focus for youth work has been identified as the young person (see earlier discussion), but it has also been suggested that youth workers should be charged with working with young people to identify and change structural and social barriers that impede their progress. If this is accepted then youth work practitioners need to challenge the assumptions of their management and those who fund the services. What appears to be the situation at the moment is that workers whose education has been informed by an understanding of social justice and empowerment models of practice are employed in agencies that are either managed by or provide services funded through assumptions which are informed by a functionalist paradigm incorporating young people as a threat to the social order (see discussion earlier in this chapter). These two perspectives are in tension, suggesting that the values of youth workers and the values of the source of their employment are opposed. But as Bessant et al. (1998) suggests, it is possible to achieve outcomes which fit the requirements of both without compromising the belief of either. What is required is for youth work practitioners to acknowledge the paradigm informing the position of management and government and for management and those responsible for funding to be made aware of the purpose of youth work when it adopts a social justice and empowerment approach to its work with young people and for both to use the position of the other to their advantage. With a clearer understanding of the discourse which informs the funding for services and often the management of services, youth workers are better placed to use these discourses as political tools (Bessant, 2004a; Wong, 2004). The language, or discourse, adopted by government can be used by youth work practitioners in their role of advocate for young people to assist in the development of a common understanding of youth work which incorporates social justice and empowerment.

Services for young people are currently provided from a welfarist or altruistic perspective, which suggests that services are provided to support the needs of deserving young people and that those involved in providing these services would do so even
without payment. This again conflicts with the notion of the youth work practitioner as a professional with tertiary qualifications and a wide range of skills and political and social understanding. This perspective enables funding bodies to provide funds for services based on an in-kind contribution by the organisation; to fund a project to a minimal level which does not account for the ongoing cost of agency infrastructure; and for organisations to employ their staff on a casual and ad-hoc basis as is the case for two of the drop-in centres involved in this study. This perspective also enables services to be developed without clarification of boundaries around the practice of the youth workers within that agency. Workers in this environment are likely to feel that they are being asked to undertake tasks that are beyond their capabilities as was the case for participant ‘A’ who claimed to have become ‘a community resource’. In contrast, the detached youth work service provided clear boundaries around the practice of this group of workers. The limitation to services provided by these workers is a reflection of the structural inequalities affecting the young people they work with and the limits to funding common to youth service provision.

**Reflection on Process and Conclusion**

At the outset, the focus of this study was on what youth workers did or didn’t do in relation to supporting young women living with violence in their family of origin. The aim was to discover what they already did, how effective that was and what else they might be able to do to support these young women more effectively and to overcome their own feelings of helplessness in relation to their work with young women living with violence. What became clear quite quickly is that what had been assumed was a hindrance to practice – more of an irritation than a barrier – is in fact greater than had been realised. What had been taken to be a limitation of the understanding and skill base of individual workers (and I include myself in that critique during my own drop-in centre employment experience) has in fact been highlighted as a perennial problem that workers employed within youth services reliant on government funding or direction might be constantly attempting to deal with. The problem is not one of knowledge or skill level, it is of conflicting values and understanding as they relate to the provision of services for young people; the problem is of conflicting ideologies. This tension does not only relate to youth workers attempting to support young women living with violence, it is a problem faced in all facets of youth work. This particular issue becomes more problematic to deal with because of its hidden nature. Without clear articulation of youth work practice and the support of professional accreditation, the position is
unlikely to change. For the position to change and a new direction in service provision to evolve, management and funding sources will need to acknowledge and support the aims of the youth work practitioners involved in this study.

The participatory action research process assisted workers to better understand what they did in their everyday practice and what they might be able to do better. It assisted understanding in relation to why they did certain things and why other things were not done differently. As facilitator of this process I also became clearer about aspects of their practice, and potentially the practice of other workers not involved in this study, that had been previously hidden. From initial contact with the original group, drop-in centre youth workers, to the final interview with agency non-contact management individuals, my learning was ongoing as various aspects of worker practice became clearer. Both groups of youth workers demonstrated through increasingly enlightened discussion and, for some, concept maps, that their understanding of what they did and why became heightened. Detached workers identified the need for and began, through their own networks, to work towards greater recognition of youth work practice in order to better achieve desired outcomes for the street present young people with whom they work. One team of drop-in centre workers developed greater subversion in their mode of operation, consciously providing services to young people that lay outside their job description. They also attempted to work with service management to assist in the development of manager understanding of the role of youth worker as seen by the youth workers employed within the agency. One non-contact manager appeared to develop his understanding of what the youth workers he employed actually did as a result of the interview conducted; the other two non-contact managers remained consistent about their expectations for and the role of those that they employed.

As researcher and youth worker, now more involved in the training of others than in direct practice, the research demonstrated that these youth work practitioners approach their work as professionals who are both willing and able to learn from their own practice and from the practice of others. As practitioners it appears the experience of the research process enabled them to participate in the learning and to some extent a small scale change process that took place for each of them. As practitioner my personal learning revolved around not so much the practice of others as the potential for the recognition of youth work as a discrete professional discipline. A result of which has been the establishment of a youth work association in Western Australia. As
researcher I developed a better understanding of the intricacies of participatory action research and, in hindsight might attempt to include the non-contact managers in discussion with youth work practitioners from different agencies to expose them to an understanding of youth work practice as espoused by youth workers without placing those they employ in the difficult situation of possibly challenging their own employer.

What began as an exploration of the practice of youth workers in an attempt to identify what they could change in order to better meet the needs of young women living with violence has identified why it is that youth workers find it so difficult to do so. Rather than identifying specific practice that could be improved, this study has brought to consciousness barriers which impede the ability of youth work practitioners to effectively meet the needs of these young women. Acknowledgement of these barriers paves the way for practitioners to find ways of overcoming them, not so much through change in their practice but through the way in which they relate to the directives of funding bodies and management.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Appendix 1: Information Letter to Participants

Dear

In today’s society family violence is quite common (between 1 in 10 and 1 in 3 families are effected by it) and it is becoming an increasingly difficult problem to deal with.

As a youth worker I am concerned that young women are not receiving help in dealing with violence at home. For this reason I am asking young women, aged around 14-16 years, who have experienced violence in their family to talk to me about help they might have received from youth workers or from other professionals they may have come in contact with. I am also asking youth workers to talk to me about how they do or do not deal with the issue of family violence. Having worked in the field for a number of years I understand how difficult it can be to discuss the issue of family violence with someone who is not willing to disclose their situation.

I have recently completed a study which demonstrated that many young women in this situation feel unsafe about disclosing. Most often when they have tried to talk to someone, be it a friend, teacher or youth worker, their needs have not been met. I believe that young women know best what type of support helps them most in this situation. I also believe that it is important for young women, having experienced violence to talk to youth workers about what they found most helpful and what they found to be unhelpful when they talked to other people about their situation. For this reason I would be pleased of your assistance in this research.

The project is being undertaken for a post graduate degree (PhD) at Edith Cowan University. It will require the assistance of both young women who have experienced violence in their family and youth workers who might work with them. Unless you request otherwise, any information that you give to me will be treated in the strictest confidence and your identity will not be disclosed. It is likely that your employer will require to be aware of your involvement in this study, and I would, therefore, request your permission to discuss the project with them. You will not be asked to share with me anything which you do not wish to tell me, and you will have the right to leave the study at any time, should you choose to do so.

The project will take the form of Participant Action Research, and will require that you are interviewed on your own, initially. You will also be asked to take part in at least three Focus Groups with other youth workers involved in the study. You will be asked to keep a reflective journal during the course of the study as well as developing a concept map at specific points during the study. Instruction will be provided for the reflective journal and for the development of concept maps. It is anticipated that the project will run for one complete school year, over which time it will probably take up around 10 – 20 hours of your time. It is anticipated that during the course of the project you will examine your practice and make any changes you believe are appropriate. At all times, yourself, as youth worker, and the young women involved in the study, will be in control of the direction the study takes.

All interviews and focus groups will be tape recorded and then transcribed onto computer disk. Themes will be identified and used as the basis for the next period of discussion. The tape recordings will be destroyed after examination of the thesis and
the computer disks destroyed after 5 years. If you have any questions that you would like me to answer about the research please do not hesitate to contact me on [redacted]. I am usually available in the evenings or weekends.
Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form

I, ......................................................................, (the participant) have read the information about the study and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that any information I share with the researcher will be dealt with in a confidential manner, and that my anonymity will be maintained. I agree to participate in this study, realising I may withdraw at any time.

I agree that the research data gathered for this study may be published provided I am not identifiable.

Signed: ................................................. Date: .............................

(Investigator): ................................. Date: .............................
Participant ‘B’
Participant ‘C’
Participant ‘D’
Family Violence

Young Woman

School - interact with - Family - Young Woman

Perpetrator

Awareness

Obligations

Consequences

Action

Action

Family

Awareness

Obligations

Consequences

Perpetrator

Other Family Members

Young Women

Other Parents

School

Consequences for Peer

Awareness

Other Young People

Awareness

Obligations

Consequences

Perpetrator

Intervention

Action

Consequences for Themselves

Awareness

Action

Consequences for Their Children

Awareness

Obligations

Action

Participants: E

9/4/01
Participant F:

Need to Debrief

So complicated, like an octopus

need to listen to victims

Travel staff

Train staff
(most of my staff are already trained through CSIC)

Client needs to be in control as to legal action

Unresolved

Dont judge

Family Violence

Knowledge

how can my agency be more 'approachable'

how can my agency 'raise our heads out of the sand'

need to assess

Factors

trust
Participant ‘G’
Appendix 4: Concept Maps - Group 1, Map 2

Participant 'A'
CONCEPTUAL MAP #2

Participant 'D'

- Need for family liaison and support
  - A feeling that there is no one to talk to.
  - I camouflaged it so I’m not going to tell anyone.
  - Because of the dependency there is often a lack of confidence to break cycle and act accordingly.

- Silencing
  - Afraid of losing this relationship.
  - Dependent

- Self blame
  - They're punishing themselves.

- Domestic Violence
  - Young person often uses self blame to excuse perpetrator.
  - Perpetrator is usually someone the young person is dependent on (e.g. parent, partner).
  - Often too involved because other issues foreground become focus of attention.
  - To deal with the many issues surrounding domestic violence.

- Lack of resources
  - Often a youth worker is 1st point of call and then they are faced with the demands of where to turn from here.

- Cycle of abuse
  - Masked by other presenting issues

- Too hard basket
  - Often on issue that gets neglected because there are so many other issues involved and no one agency is equipped to deal with them all.
  - Frustration and Huge Responsibilities
  - Frustration about lack of options and a sense of responsibility to deal with it on your own.

- First Point of Contact
Participant 'F'

- Parenting Skills (lack of)
- Low self-esteem
- Frustration & Anger
- Failed relationships
- No conflict resolution skills
- Power
- Guilty
- Fear
- More violence
- Young/Teen pregnancies
- Violence
- Powerlessness, violence to make you in control
- Love
- Family violence
- Doesn't always get passed on
- Resilience
- Self-hate
- Abusers 
  - House 
  - Abuser
- More violence
- Young/Teen pregnancies
- Men changing roles
- Socialisation, work/life
Appendix 5: Concept Maps - Group 2, Map 1

Participant ‘I’I
Participant J

History
- FDV, Sexual abuse
- No Sense of justice
- Alcohol, other substances
- Youth homelessness
- HIV issues

FDV
- Good survival skills
- DV partner
- No financial control
- Kick & support
- Low self-esteem

At times transient (Homeless)

Unable to access services (partner control)

Social isolation

Mental health issues

No sense of control in life

Self-esteem

20/10/03

Disempowered health

Unemployment

Justice system (prison)

FDV background

No one supported by family

Drug & Alcohol use

Appropriate setting

Positive

Vicinity of FDV, Neglect

Sees reports

Violence

Developmental delays

Speech, etc.

Youth homelessness

HIV issues
Participant 'K'
Participant ‘L’
Appendix 6: Concept Maps - Group 2, Map 2

Participant 'I'
Participant 'J'

12/03

- dispossessing
- stolen generation
- lack of skills
- communication
- institution
- drug abuse
- racism
- low self-esteem
- homelessness
- emergency accommodation
- fasting
- violence
- hearing
- love
- education
- satisfying level
- income
- healthcare
- powerlessness
- challenge
- think
- appropriate services
- people
- participate
- listen
- learn
- acknowledge
- empower
- keep safe
- reflect

Love, love, love, love.
Participant 'K
### Appendix 7: Drop-in Centre Youth Worker Position Description

**POSITION DESCRIPTION FORM**

The Position Description Form is an important document. It may be used as part of the performance appraisal process, for job design/improvement, for classification or succession planning. Please ensure that both the Supervisor and Employee reach agreement prior to signing off.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITION TITLE:</th>
<th>Youth Worker Casual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REPORTS TO:</td>
<td>Youth Programme Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIRECTORATE:</td>
<td>Community Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWARD/AGREEMENT:</td>
<td>EGOA/EBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASSIFICATION OF POSITION:</td>
<td>Level 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUSTOMERS (internal &amp; external):</td>
<td>Council, Employees, Agencies, Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPENDITURE &amp; REVENUE $:</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES SUPERVISED BY THIS POSITION:</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**KEY FOCUS OF THE TEAM**

Efficiently and effectively manages and provides expert technical advice on all aspects of the City’s community programme development services.

**KEY FOCUS OF THIS POSITION**

Implements a range of the City’s youth programmes and provides direct contact time with young people on a rotating shift basis.

**ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUPERVISORS</th>
<th>SUPERVISORS DIRECT REPORTS</th>
<th>THIS POSITION'S DIRECT REPORTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth Programme Officer</td>
<td>• Shift supervision of 4 x Youth Workers</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Casuals and Volunteers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attributes (Skills &amp; Knowledge) Required for the Position</td>
<td>Context to Which Skills and Knowledge Applies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1. Working knowledge of the services provided by organizations and agencies within the youth sector. | * Ensure advice that is given to young people directly or through referral is appropriate and relevant.  
* Liaise with youth sector providers to maintain up to date knowledge on services available. |
| 2. Ability to deal effectively with young people, Council staff, people from within the youth sector and members of the public. | * The position will involve direct contact and liaison with young people involved in the City's programmes.  
* There will be a range of situations, which will require liaison with Council staff, people from within the youth sector and members of the public. |
| 3. Sound verbal and written communication skills. | * Provide information and assist with preparation of programme evaluation reports and other written communication such as meeting minutes and general business correspondence.  
* Able to effectively communicate verbally with young people, Council staff, people from within the youth sector and members of the public. |
| 4. Sound planning and evaluation skills. | * Provide input into planning, implementation and evaluation of programmes and specific service delivery at the Youth Centre to ensure its smooth operation. |
| 5. Ability work with limited supervision and complete tasks thoroughly, accurately and timely. | * The position will provide supervision to young people and programme implementation at the Kenwick Youth Centre based on a rotating shift basis. |

**Qualifications Required to Undertake the Position:**  
**Essential:**  
* Experience in working within the Youth Sector.  
* Current 'C' Class Drivers Licence  
* Current Federal Police Clearance  
* Current Senior First Aid Certificate  
**Desirable:**  
* Experience working with Aboriginal and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Youth  

**Physical & Environmental Demands of the Position:**  
* Ability to work in a variety of mediums both sitting and standing for long periods.  
* Ability to work in a range of environments in the community.  
* Ability to work flexible hours.  

**Key Areas of Responsibility**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Areas of Responsibility</th>
<th>Demonstrated Competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Adding value and completing position responsibilities | * Provides advice to the Youth Programme Officer of a general nature on programming and relevant individual information relating to supervision of young people.  
* Liaises with Youth Services Staff to achieve effective implementation of programmes. |
| 2. Achieving Customer Focused Service | * Actively assists in the effective and efficient operations of the Community Programmes Branch.  
* Behaves and works in a manner which demonstrates the City’s Youth Services is a customer focused, professional and reliable service.  
* Responds to queries and issues of young people in an appropriate way to ensure effective and responsive communication. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY</th>
<th>DEMONSTRATED COMPETENCIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3. Working with external and internal policies, systems, processes and equipment | - Implements appropriate policies and procedures relating to youth programme delivery.  
- Makes recommendations to improve systems, policies and practices to ensure the City of Gosnells reflects its service objectives in the area of youth sector.  
- Ensures service delivery complies with EEG legislation and Occupational Safety & Health requirements. Promotes safe working practices. |
| 4. Communication and Relationships | - Provides input to Youth Programme Officer in the development and implementation of programmes relevant to young people.  
- Demonstrates commitment to working both individually and as part of the Youth Services Team.  
- Plans, organizes and is responsible for quality of own work and the work of others as directed. |
| 5. Learning and Growth | - Participates in the Staff Development Cycle.  
- Learns and applies new competencies to keep up to date knowledge of services provided by the youth sector.  
- Uses feedback to develop skills, behaviour and attitudes. |
| 6. Finance | - Ensure programmes are delivered in a cost effective, efficient and consistent manner within an allocated budget and resources. |

**SIGNATURES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMPLOYEE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUPERVISOR</td>
<td>DATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIRECTOR</td>
<td>DATE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Youth Liaison Worker Job Description

SUMMARY OF DUTIES

Link with young people in identified area, to address anti social behaviors as they arise in that location
Work to form relationships with ALL young people in the identified location
Identify and target specific young people that need more intensive attention and support
Provide appropriate support wherever possible
Work to eliminate confrontation re antisocial behaviors
Develop trust and confidence between police, young people and youth liaison workers
Help to diffuse situations as they arise
Link with surrounding Youth Services and resources where appropriate
Provide information to young people re support services and resources
Work with young people to access support services on a "needs" basis
Attend weekly Debrief sessions
Work with an accepted bottom line that "the law will be upheld" whilst leaving law enforcement to the police
To use discretion in reporting illegal activity to police
Perform related duties as required.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Essential

Experience in working with young people from a variety of backgrounds
Excellent communication/liaison skills
Analytical and problem solving skills
Ability to work as part of a team
Ability to work evenings and weekends
Current Senior first aid certificate

Desirable

Completion of, or working towards a formal qualification in youth work or equivalent
"C" class drivers license
Knowledge of local support services and resources
Established networks in the designated area or ability to develop such networks
Experience in working in a detached youth model.
Appendix 8: State Government Request for Youth Service Funding Proposal

DCD File Reference: RFP0098/05

RE: REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) INFORMATION PACKAGE

RFP: Onslow Youth Service
Annual Funding Level: $67,265 per annum for 2 years

Enclosed as requested is a copy of the Information Package for Request for Proposal Number: 0098/04. The Department will only accept paper documents and documents submitted through email attachment (proposals on computer disk will not be accepted).

Please read the documentation carefully and if you have any queries regarding the specified service then contact Rick Maguire on 9222 2537. It is important to recognise that all information provided in Section 3 ‘Information To Be Supplied’ represents the respondents offer to the Department and therefore forms part of the final agreement if successful.

A briefing on this service will be provided at the Council Chambers, Shire of Ashburton, Second Avenue, Onslow at 10.30am on Wednesday 17 August 2005.

Nancy Bineham
Manager, Non-Government Funding and Agreements
PROGRAM AND SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

2 August 2005
ONSLOW YOUTH SERVICE

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) NUMBER: 0098/05

(Effective from the date of signing to 30 September 2007

CLOSING DATE, 4.30pm. W.S.T. Wednesday 21 September 2005

Proposals are to be submitted to:

CONFIDENTIAL – RFP 0098/05
DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PURCHASING AND ASSET SERVICES
LEVEL 1, 189 ROYAL STREET
EAST PERTH WA 6004

Proposals may be mailed to above address or ALTERNATIVELY lodged by:
(a) facsimile transmission RECEIVED IN FULL by 4:30pm on (08) 9222 2627
(b) hand at the above address
(c) e-mail to be RECEIVED IN FULL by 4.30pm to RFPDL@dcd.wa.gov.au

The Department for Community Development premises at 189 Royal Street East Perth has an established security arrangement where all Non-Departmental staff are required to register their details at the Commissionaire's desk prior to accessing their required location within the building. Organisations should be aware that these arrangements may cause delay therefore sufficient time should be allowed to ensure that tender documents can be lodged prior to the tender closing time.

FURTHER ASSISTANCE REGARDING THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL MAY BE OBTAINED FROM:
Name: Rick Maguire
Telephone: (08) 9222 2537
Fax: (08) 9222 2627
E-mail: rick.maguire@dcd.wa.gov.au

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS RELEVANT TO THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL.

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   Service Activities (Strategies)
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   Definition of Risk

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1. **THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL PROCESS**

A Request For Proposal (RFP) is used where a range of possible service solutions is invited and there is a service agreement to be awarded.

A RFP is defined by the State Supply Commission as an invitation to offer, seeking a specified requirement based on functional or performance specifications with scope for variety and innovation.²

This package contains all the information necessary to submit a proposal for the supply of this service from non-profit organisations.

An evaluation panel will assess the information provided by each respondent. Based on the panel’s assessment, respondents may be invited to an interview to clarify or expand information provided in the written proposal. The evaluation method will include due diligence. This involves verifying claims and ensuring that the preferred respondent has the capability to fulfil all of the contractual requirements.

Afterwards the panel will forward its recommendation to the Minister’s delegate for approval. All organisations submitting a proposal for this RFP will be notified of the successful respondent.

Following that advice respondents have two weeks to lodge an appeal and request a review if it is believed there has been a breach in the RFP process.

The successful respondent will sign a Service Agreement with the Minister’s delegate that will be effective from the date of signing for three years.

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**ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**


The Department’s **VISION** is:

Improved social well being for all Western Australians.

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2. SERVICE SPECIFICATIONS

ONSLOW YOUTH SERVICE

The Department for Community Development has the major responsibility for services which enhance the wellbeing of the community by strengthening families and protecting children from harm. The vision of the Department is improved social wellbeing for all Western Australians.

The work of the Department is guided by the four key principles of engagement, inclusiveness, collaboration and capacity building. They provide the basis on which communities are developed and services are delivered to individuals, families and communities. It is through the application of these four principles that the Department aims to enhance the capacity of individuals, families, communities and human services providers.

Engagement involves building relationships with individuals, families and communities, developing mutual trust and exploring common ground. Inclusiveness requires creating an environment that actively encourages participation of all relevant individuals or groups in the planning and decision-making process. Collaboration may be defined as a relationship where two or more stakeholders combine their skills and/or resources to achieve outcomes that enhance the lives of individuals, families and communities. Stakeholders include government, communities, the not for profit and business sectors. Capacity building is an outcome of the first three principles and involves developing the abilities of individuals, families and communities so they are able to work through and find solutions to issues and set and achieve goals.

The Department is committed to ensuring equity and access to services. Non government organisations funded by the Department should endeavour to provide services that are appropriate and accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE fall within the Department for Community Development’s output area of Community Development.

Description of the Funded Service and its Purpose
Services for Young People include centre-based services, outreach and mobile services. The outcomes for Services for Young People are that young people effectively manage their lives and increase resilience, reduce risk level, improve relationships with family, school and community, and are linked into appropriate services.

Services are encouraged to work in a collaborative way both intersectorally and with complementary services to ensure coordinated service provision. It is also essential that services work with young people and support them to connect with family members, natural supports and their communities. Services should use positive approaches in working with young people that build on their skills and abilities to enhance strengths and further develop resiliency.

Services are provided primarily to disadvantaged young people commencing secondary education up to 18 years of age who may be at risk due to a number of factors. These factors may include family conflict, truancy, drug and alcohol use including volatile
substances, poor social skills, and isolation from their peers. Young people may also be at risk if they have care responsibilities for a child/ren or a family member with an illness and/or a disability.

In some situations, particularly in rural and isolated communities, it may be appropriate for young people in the target age group to be accompanied by younger family members. In these circumstances, and provided the service has taken steps to assure their safety, the service may negotiate with the Department for Community Development for children below secondary school age to be included in particular service activities. It is important that the service provider is aware of the requirements of the Community Services Act 1972 and Community Services (Outside School Hours Care) Regulations 2002 regarding children below secondary school age. In some circumstances it may also be appropriate to provide services to young people up to the age of 25.

Young people with high support needs are likely to have experienced multiple risk factors. It is important that services are supported to access skills development opportunities to be able to effectively deal with emerging and complex needs of this group of young people.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, especially refugee young people, may face additional challenges and it is essential that these young people are able to access and receive culturally appropriate services.

Geographical area is the Onslow town site. Service delivery hours will reflect community needs and concentrate on delivering activities after school and weekends. The service will utilise existing community resources and facilities to offer activities and opportunities to the youth of Onslow.

Target Groups
- Primarily young people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, from 10 to 18 years of age who are at risk
- Young people with high needs and challenging behaviours
- Referrals from the Department for Community Development

Service provision should be appropriate to the cultural make-up of the target group.

Outcome Objectives
Core
1. Young people have enhanced their ability to effectively manage their lives and increase their resilience.
2. The overall level of risk of the young person is reduced.
3. Young people have improved relationships with their family, school, and community where appropriate (as perceived by the young person).
4. Young people are linked into appropriate services such as employment, training, education, accommodation, counselling, rehabilitation and recreation.

Service Activities (Strategies)
- recreational activities including camps, games, discos, movies

---

1 Definition of at-risk provided in the Data Summary Sheet information package.
• promotion of protective and family safety
• building community involvement with youth
• cultural activities including hunting and fishing
• provision of information
• referral to other services
• advocacy on behalf of individual young people
• building relationships between Aboriginal youth and non-Aboriginal youth in Onslow
• general education concerning the effects of drugs (including alcohol)

**Output Measures**

**Core**
1. The number of hours per week the service was available and the number of weeks the service operated in the reporting period.
2. Description and explanation of any periods when the service was not available at 100% funded capacity.
3. The number of cases worked on during the reporting period (as per service model).
4. The number of drop-in centre attendances during the reporting period (as per service model).
5. The number of streetwork or outreach contacts (as per service model).
6. The number and characteristics of consumers (age, gender and ethnicity).
7. The number of young people who are at risk and at extreme risk.
8. The number of young people who received different types of services.
9. The number and nature of presenting issues that young people have when they first make contact.
10. The number of formal referrals from the Department for Community Development.
11. The number of formal referrals to the Department for Community Development.

**Additional**
1. The number of young people participating in specific activities run by the service.
2. The number of community development activities.
3. The number of workshops held.

**Outcome Reporting**
Services are required to report against the outcome objectives listed above, in the Progress Report section of the Data Summary Sheet. The format for reporting is as described in Schedule 6 of the Service Agreement.

Services are also required to participate in regular customer perception surveys conducted by the Department.

In summary, services are required to report achievements for each objective and include information about factors contributing to and limiting success. Services are also to report other achievements and difficulties encountered during each reporting period.

**Service Standards**
Service Providers are required to comply with the *Working With Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004* once it becomes operational on 1 January 2006. In the interim criminal record checks are required for employees and volunteers working with
children and young people. This is in accordance with Clause 3.6(i) of the General Provisions (Indexation Version) of the Service Agreement.
SECTION 3
INFORMATION TO BE SUPPLIED
(Contains Selection Criteria)

Onslow Youth Service
RFP Number 0098/05

Detach the two forms (Organisation Details and Declaration by Respondent), complete them, and submit them together with your response to the selection criteria and other supporting attachments requested.

Place completed documentation in a plain envelope and address as follows:

CONFIDENTIAL - RFP 0098/05
DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PURCHASING AND ASSET SERVICES
LEVEL 1, 189 ROYAL STREET
EAST PERTH WA 6004

OR

Fax completed documentation to (08) 9222 2627.

E-mail to be RECEIVED IN FULL by 4.30pm to RFPDL@dcd.wa.gov.au

REMEMBER TO SEND ORIGINALS WITHIN TWO DAYS OF THE DEADLINE.
3. INFORMATION TO BE SUPPLIED

Instructions for Respondents

- Please check the documentation to ensure it contains all that is listed on the contents page of the Request for Proposal (RFP). It is your responsibility to ensure that you have received all the documents from the Department for Community Development.
- A briefing session will be held to discuss the service in more detail (please refer to the newspaper advertisement or covering letter).
- Where an alternative proposal (refer Section 4, GENERAL CONDITIONS OF RESPONDING) is submitted, please lodge each proposal in a separate envelope as a paper document. Proposals received on computer disk will not be accepted.
- Complete all sections of this document. All information provided in Section 3, INFORMATION TO BE SUPPLIED, represents the respondent’s offer to the department and therefore forms part of the final agreement if successful.
- Put enough information into the offer to allow the Evaluation Panel to assess it. You must address all the selection criteria and lodge all the required information otherwise your offer may be disqualified.
- Ensure that the information you supply to the Evaluation Panel about your ability can be verified. Provide examples to demonstrate ability.
- Lodge your offer by the stated date and time. We accept late offers only if they fit the criteria under Late Request for Proposal (RFP) in Section 4, GENERAL CONDITIONS OF RESPONDING.
- Ensure that there is nothing in your organisation’s constitution or charter that might prevent, or be construed as preventing, the delivery of the advertised service.
- Questions about the advertised service will normally be accepted up until one week (7 days) before the closing date, however if a major issue requiring clarification arises after that time, the department may consider an extension of the RFP. Questions and answers will be forwarded to all respondents to the RFP.

Minimum information to be provided by RFP closing time

(4:30 pm Wednesday 21 September 2005)

Organisation details (see 3.1).

Copies of relevant certificates, relevant financial documentation, and information (see Eligibility, 3.2 Part A and Bids from Local Government Bodies, 4.11).

Responses to the Qualitative Selection Criteria (3.2 Part B)

Nominated referees and comment on local presence (3.2 Part C1 and C2)

The signed (and, if appropriate, sealed) declaration. (see 3.3)

PLEASE PROVIDE AN ORIGINAL AND THREE (3) COPIES OF YOUR PROPOSAL AND ATTACHMENTS.
3.1 ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name: ........................................................................................................................................

Street Address: ................................................................................................................................

Address for notices: ............................................................................................................................
(if different from above)

Telephone Number(s): ............................................................................................................................

Mobile Number(s): ...............................................................................................................................

Fax Number(s): .....................................................................................................................................

E-mail Address: ....................................................................................................................................

Chairperson: ........................................................................................................................................
(Name)

Treasurer: ............................................................................................................................................
(Name)

Co-ordinator/Manager: .........................................................................................................................
(Name)

Contact Person: ....................................................................................................................................
(Name)

Referees Contact
Referees may be contacted to verify the capacity of the respondent to deliver the service. Please nominate 4 referees that should include should include, but not be limited to, current or previous funding agencies.

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3.2 SELECTION CRITERIA

RFP 0098/05 ONSLOW YOUTH SERVICE

PART A: ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be eligible for funding and to be eligible for the proposal to be further assessed against the qualitative criteria respondents must provide the requested information and be willing to comply with each of the following criteria.

Please respond to the following:

A 1. Incorporated Not For Profit, Local Government Authority or Religious/Charitable Organisation

Provide documentation verifying the legal status of the organisation as a not-for-profit organisation or Local Government Authority such as a copy of the organisation's Certificate of Incorporation under the Associations Incorporation Act (1987) or the Aboriginal Councils and Associations Act (1976); or other.

Provided and complies with not-for-profit or Local Government status:

Yes ☐ No ☐

A 2. Constitution

Provide a copy of the organisation’s constitution or charter to verify the organisation operates in accordance with the relevant Incorporations Act and the Object/Objectives of the constitution confirm that the service falls within the scope and purpose of the organisation.

Provided and constitution complies:

Yes ☐ No ☐

A 3. Criminal Record Screening

In order to be eligible to receive funding under a Department for Community Development Service Agreement, organisations are required to comply with the Working With Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004 once it becomes operational on 1 January 2006. In the interim a criminal record check is required for any officer, employee, executive member, volunteer, contractor or agent of the organisation working in ‘child-related work’ (child-related work is defined as: work that involves, or is likely to involve, contact with a child/young person such as child care services, residential facilities used by children/young people including refuges and other accommodation services, foster care, counselling, youth work, coaching, mentoring and support services, sporting and other recreational activities).
Please refer to the Department’s website for more guidance at http://community.wa.gov.au/AboutDCD/Legislation/WorkingWithChildrenChecks

Please state whether your organisation is willing to comply with the Working With Children (Criminal Record Checking) Act 2004.

Yes ☐ No ☐

In the interim please state whether your organisation is willing to undertake WA Police Checks for the officers and others described above.

Yes ☐ No ☐

**A 4. Secure Financial Base**

Attach a copy of the organisation's latest Annual Report and audited Financial Statements including:

- latest audited Income and Expenditure Statement (or Profit or Loss Statement) for the whole organisation
- latest audited Balance Sheet for the whole organisation
- Auditor’s Report to the Members
- Treasurer’s and Chairperson’s Report to the Members.

Yes ☐ No ☐

Provide any other relevant information to demonstrate the organisation's secure financial base.

In the proposed budget for the service provide details and explanation of any other forms of subsidy, grant, donation(s) or Government funding which will be used to support the service (See also qualitative criterion 6).

Please note: As part of the Department’s due diligence a financial viability assessment will be conducted on the recommended applicant.

**A 5. Registration with an Australian Business Number**

The Legal Entity has an Australian Business Number (ABN) as stated in the Declaration or is in the process of registering for an ABN.

Yes ☐ No ☐
PART B: QUALITATIVE CRITERIA

All qualitative selection criteria are weighted equally. Please refer to the service specifications (refer Section Two of this package) when considering your responses to the following criteria. In addition ensure you:

(a) **Address each element within each qualitative criterion** using the headings provided;

(b) Assume that the Evaluation Panel has no knowledge of your organisation, its activities, experience or any previous work undertaken for any organisation or Government Agency;

(c) Provide full details for any claims, statements or examples used to address the qualitative criteria;

(d) Refer to Appendices One– the Scoring guide to assist you in preparing your responses to the qualitative criteria;

(e) Seek advice if required from the Contact Person listed on page 1 of this package.

**B 1 Target Group**

1. Discuss the current, emerging and underlying issues for young people living in an isolated environment such as Onslow, particularly young Aboriginal men.

2. Discuss the risk factors identified in the service specifications: family conflict, truancy, drug and alcohol use including volatile substances, poor social skills, and isolation from their peers, care responsibilities for a child/ren or a family member with an illness and/or a disability.

3. Describe and illustrate with examples the organisation's experience or ability in working with young people, including with Indigenous and other CaLD young people with high needs and challenging behaviours and how the experience would transfer to this service for young people in Onslow.

**B 2. Culturally Appropriate Service**

The Department for Community Development aims to ensure all its funded services are sensitive to the needs of people from the cultural and language groups represented within the communities they serve.

1. Discuss your organisation’s practice, policy and values to ensure Indigenous and other CaLD young people feel comfortable accessing the service eg Indigenous/ CaLD workers, demonstrating sensitivity to culture eg Cultural awareness training of staff and volunteers, displays of Indigenous/ CaLD visual material.

2. Demonstrate a sound understanding of cultural issues relevant to the target group eg the importance of kinship for Indigenous people.
3. Describes in practical terms how the service will engage with and embrace the cultural needs of Indigenous/CaLD young people and how it will retain their involvement.

4. Demonstrate consideration of relevant cultural supports (eg elders, senior clergy) and demonstrate knowledge of services available to assist your organisation to work appropriately with Indigenous and CaLD young people.

**B 3 Service Model**

Based on the issues and needs identified in criterion B1 and taking account of the requirements of the service specifications (Refer Section Two of this information package), the proposal should describe the model of service your organisation will provide to the target group. The model should include:

1. A description of the evidence base and/or concepts and ideas underlying the service.

2. A description of the mix of service delivery strategies and activities that will be undertaken such as mix of outreach, centre based and case management approaches, individual or group activities, programs, recreational activities and other services to achieve the outcome objectives in the service specifications and which align to the community expectations for this service (see local description in the service specifications).

3. A description of how young people will be assisted to link into services such as employment, training, education, accommodation, counselling, rehabilitation and recreation and connect with family members and existing supports.

4. The process and protocols that would be put in place regarding referrals including strategies put in place to ensure young people with the highest needs have access to the service.

5. A description of how the service will work with young people from a strengths based focus to build on their skills and abilities and increase their self esteem so that their overall level of risk and anti-social behaviour is reduced.

6. A description of how the service will assure the safety of young people, including those below secondary school age, accessing the service.

7. Details of the proposed staffing complement, roles, responsibilities, levels and awards they will be employed under; and, the qualifications and experience required of them including job descriptions if available.

8. The hours of operation including how the service will operate a flexible hours service to ensure the service can support young people at the times when the community is particularly volatile.

9. A description of how the service will manage crisis situations.

10. The major challenges for this service and strategies to address these challenges.
11. A plan to implement the service including anticipated timelines.

12. A description of how the services and outcomes for clients will be measured and evaluated on a day to day basis.
B 4. Demonstrated Links and Networks

1. Demonstrate a knowledge of other services and organisations working with ‘at risk’ young people in Onslow and how the organisation’s existing and proposed links and networks will assist or support your organisation to effectively deliver and add value to this service.

2. Describe strategies to work with and ensure collaboration between agencies working with the at risk young people in Onslow eg local Shire, State and Commonwealth Departments, Indigenous and non-Indigenous community based organisations, community elders, inter-agency committees and community groups such as the Onslow Women and Men’s groups, CDEP organisations and other relevant agencies to achieve effective coordination for the best interests of the target group.

3. Discuss communication between agencies and how confidentiality issues will be managed.

B 5. Organisational Governance and Management

1. Demonstrate the competency of the organisation to deliver the service and meet and manage financial and other accountability requirements including providing progress and financial reports in a timely manner.

2. Outline the policies, procedures, and systems that would support the management of the service (eg governance policies, human resource policies, financial management and administrative policies and procedures, quality improvement mechanisms, protocols, business plan, strategic plan etc).

3. Describe the policies and procedures that ensure a safe working environment and will enable young people to safely participate in service activities including reference to Criminal Record Screening and relevant legislation (eg Working with Children, Equal Opportunity, Occupational Safety and Health and Disability Services Acts).

4. Describe the management committee and operational management structure of the organisation, including organisational charts for the service and show how the new service would be incorporated into the existing structure.

5. Describe the policies and systems of staff and volunteer selection, performance development, training and support and supervision that will assist the provision of this service.

B 6. Proposed Budget

1. Provide a detailed annual budget for the service within the funding level of $65,370 per year. Include all sources of income and expenditure. Extend the budget over the life of the agreement (2 years). Purely as a guide the following expenditure proportion is considered appropriate for many community services:
   - Salaries and employment costs including supervision and admin support 70%
- Management costs including rent and other admin 15%
- Vehicle and travel 10%
- Brokerage and client costs 5%

2. Provide notes explaining line items including the basis for staffing salary levels and a breakdown of management charges if included.

3. Discuss and clearly demonstrate how the proposed budget will enable the delivery of the proposed model of service.

PART C: OTHER CONSIDERATIONS IN THE EVALUATION PROCESS

Please address the following in addition to the addressing the eligibility and qualitative criteria.

C 1. Buy Local Policy

The intent of the Buy Local Policy will be considered when evaluating proposals. The Buy Local Policy confirms the Western Australian Government's commitment to buying locally, and aims to maximise the participation of local organisations in the supply of goods and services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To enable the intent of this policy to be considered please outline the extent of the organisation's presence in and provision of services in Western Australia.</th>
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### 3.3 DECLARATION BY RESPONDENT

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL: RFP 0098/05**

The Respondent hereby offers to supply the services proposed subject to the conditions set forth herein and in the Service Agreement.

The Respondent acknowledges and accepts that all statements and information provided will be subject to verification.

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<td>(ie: Chairperson, President etc)</td>
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**Duly authorised to sign Legal documents for and on Behalf of:**
(State full name of Incorporated Organisation)

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**Address for service of notices:**

**Refer Enquiries To:** (Name in Block Letters)

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**Your Reference:**

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Registered for GST: Yes □

No □
Local Government Authorities should affix their common seal here:
4. GENERAL CONDITIONS OF RESPONDING

These general conditions of responding have been developed in collaboration with the State Supply Commission to comply with the State Supply Act. The respondent must also comply with the conditions of the Department for Community Development’s Service Agreement. Note: Schedules 1 and 2 of the Service Agreement are completed at the negotiation phase of the Agreement.

4.1 Delivery Method

RFP offers may be delivered by:

Mail
Signed original to be RECEIVED IN FULL by 4.30pm at:
Department for Community Development
Purchasing and Asset Services
Level 1, 189 royal street
East Perth WA 6004

Hand:
Signed original to be RECEIVED IN FULL by 4.30pm at
Department for Community Development
Purchasing and Asset Services
Level 1, 189 royal street
East Perth WA 6004

*Facsimile: to be RECEIVED IN FULL by 4.30pm on Fax: (08) 9222 2627

*E-mail: to be RECEIVED IN FULL by 4.30pm to RFPDL@dcd.wa.gov.au

*SIGNED ORIGINALS FOR FACSIMILE AND E-MAIL METHODS MUST ALSO BE PROVIDED WITHIN TWO BUSINESS DAYS AFTER THE DEADLINE.

RFP offers lodged on computer disk will not be accepted

Faxed RFP Offers

Faxed RFP offers must be received in full prior to the closing time ie. before 4:30 pm. They must include all details essential for establishing a bona fide offer capable of meaningful comparison with other RFP offers.

Faxed RFP offers should be confirmed in writing marked ‘Confirming Request for Proposal’ to the address stipulated in the RFP documentation within two (2) working days of the closing date.

Where there is any discrepancy between the contents of the facsimile and the written confirmation, the contents of the faxed RFP offer shall prevail unless the respondent can show that an error occurred in fax transmission.
All reasonable care is taken to ensure the security and confidentiality of RFP offers, but:

- faxing is not a reliable method of RFP lodgement because of possible delays and equipment breakdown; and
- the confidentiality of faxed RFP offers cannot be assured to the same extent as those lodged by hand or through the mail.

### 4.2 Late Request for Proposal (RFP)

The latest time for receipt of proposals is 4.30pm on Wednesday 21 September 2005. Any RFP offer lodged after then will be considered late.

Late RFP offers will not be considered unless the respondent provides explicit and conclusive evidence of mishandling (see below) by the Department for Community Development or by the official postal or telecommunications service. Late RFP offers sent by other means will not be considered.

### 4.3 Mishandling

A mishandled RFP offer is one that was not lodged in the RFP box by the deadline, yet:

- was received and endorsed before the RFP deadline at the office’s registry or fax machine; or
- was accepted by the official postal or telecommunications service by the times specified below:
  - postal deliveries from Australia: at least 48 hours before the deadline;
  - postal deliveries from overseas, including New Zealand: at least 96 hours before the deadline;
  - fax: in full before the deadline.

### 4.4 Evidence of Mishandling

In deciding if an RFP offer has been mishandled, the Department for Community Development will rely only on the following evidence:

- *Faxed or hand delivered:* The date and time impressed on the RFP documents by the receiving fax, or the personal endorsement of the receiving officer.
- *Mailed:* The official stamps or marks affixed to or impressed on the RFP documents or the envelope or container enclosing them, or receipts or certifications issued by the official post or telecommunications service and provided by the respondent.

No other marks or documents will be accepted as evidence. Where an RFP offer fails the criteria of mishandling detailed above, it will not be considered.

### 4.5 Whole, Part or Alternative Offers

Unless otherwise stated in this Request for Proposal, RFP offers may be for all or part of the requirement and may be accepted by the Department for Community
Development either wholly or in part. The department may reject any or all RFP offers submitted.

RFP offers submitted as alternative offers, or made subject to conditions other than the General and Special Conditions of Agreement, must be clearly marked ‘ALTERNATIVE RFP’. The Department for Community Development may in its absolute discretion reject any such RFP offer as invalid. Any printed ‘Conditions of Agreement’ shown on the reverse of a respondent’s letter or quotation form will not be binding on the department if an Agreement is awarded, unless the offer is marked as an alternative RFP offer.

All RFP offers shall remain valid for a minimum period of three (3) months from the closing date of RFP. The respondent cannot withdraw an RFP offer without the prior written consent of the Department for Community Development.

4.6 Respondent’s Responsibility to Stay Informed

It is the responsibility of the respondent to stay informed about all matters relevant to the RFP, including documents about the delivery of the service, service specifications, and requirements of the Service Agreement.

The respondent must ensure that the RFP offer is correct, complies with all conditions and can effectively deliver the service.

4.7 Quality Assurance Requirement

The minimum quality requirement for this procurement is:

The successful respondent shall provide the service in accordance with the specified requirement detailed in this RFP. The following requirement applies to the Department for Community Development’s service agreement: assurance based on annual review and regular reporting.

4.8 No Masquerades

If the respondent is acting as agent or trustee for or jointly with another person, persons, corporation or corporations, this must be fully disclosed in the RFP offer. If the respondent fails to fully disclose the identity of all participants and the nature of the respondent’s relationship to them, the RFP shall be null and void at the option of the Department for Community Development. No claims by undisclosed participants will be recognised by the Department for Community Development in the Agreement or as having any right, title or interest under the RFP whatsoever.

4.9 Ownership of Proposal Responses

All information and material submitted by the respondent as part of, or in support of, the offer shall become the absolute property of the Crown in right of the State of Western Australia and will not be returned to the respondent at the conclusion of the RFP process PROVIDED that the respondent shall be entitled to retain copyright and other intellectual property rights therein, unless otherwise provided in the Agreement.

4.10 Publicity
Organisations should withhold public announcements about the successful respondent to this RFP until the Minister has publicly announced the outcome of the RFP and subsequent funding to the service provider.

4.11 State Supply Commission Guidelines

The following are guidelines, conditions and policies prescribed by the State Supply Commission. They apply to any agreement arising from the Request for Proposal.
Buy Local Policy

- The Government’s Buy Local Policy applies to all quotations and tenders called. When purchasing social welfare services, the Department for Community Development will apply the intent of the Buy Local Policy.

The Buy Local Policy may be viewed on the State Supply Commission website at: http://www.ssc.wa.gov.au.

Helpline
Country Callers 1800 806 599
City Callers 9222 5700

Value For Money Policy

The Department for Community Development has endorsed a Value for Money approach to purchasing services. This achieves the best possible return from Government expenditure.

The Value for Money principle embraces the total cost of the service over the life of its requirement, fitness for purpose, timely delivery and local support. It also involves an assessment of the wider benefits it may contribute to Government objectives in areas such as business and industry development, environmental protection, energy conservation, etc.

RFP evaluation criteria in respect of Value for Money procurement include:
- more convenient communications for Service Agreement management;
- benefit to the State from the transactions occurring within the local area and the employment created as a consequence; and
- greater benefit to the State from on-going government support given to local manufacturing construction and service industries.

Bids From Local Government Bodies

Bids from Local Government Bodies will not be accepted unless they have been calculated on a full commercial basis and without any form of subsidy.

Confirmation shall be in the form of a letter from the relevant Chief Executive Officer advising that the offer has been calculated on a full commercial cost basis. If this confirmation is not received the Department for Community Development may decline the offer on the grounds of equity.

Contract Award Information

The Department for Community Development is required to disclose and make public, contract award information for all service agreements which have a total contract value of over $10,000. The total contract value is the total dollar amount over the life of the contract.

Information to be made public is:
• a general description of the service;
• the successful respondent’s name;
• the total contract value.

Contract award information will be publicly available and published on the Western Australian Government’s Contracting Information Bulletin Board (www.gem.wa.gov.au).

Documents and other information relevant to the service agreement may be disclosed when required by law or under the Freedom of Information Act 1992. Additionally the powers and responsibilities of the Auditor General for the State of Western Australia under the Financial Administration and Audit Act 1985 (WA) are not limited or affected by the terms of the service agreement.

In lodging your contractual offer to the department, you are also acknowledging your understanding of and agreement with the following:

*Our organisation shall not have, make or bring any action, suit, claim, demand or proceeding against the Department for Community Development for any loss, injury, damage, liability, cost or expense resulting from public disclosure of service agreement information.*

**Application of Due Diligence and Formal Negotiation**

As part of its evaluation process the Department will apply due diligence to verify claims made by the preferred respondent in its proposal and to further assess the capacity of the respondent to deliver the service.

Referees should be nominated to assist in this process (refer 3.1 page 10).

Negotiation may occur to achieve operational refinement of the service specifications.

**State Supply Commission Policies and Guidelines**


5. **GRIEVANCE HANDLING PROCEDURE**

To promote equity and probity in the tendering process as part of the Procurement of Social Services model, and to meet the requirements of the Government Purchasing Charter, the Department for Community Development has established a procedure to deal with service provider grievances during the RFP process.

Grievances must be lodged by the duly authorised person of the incorporated organisation, not-for-profit organisation or local government authority (ie. those persons duly authorised to sign legal documents for and on behalf of the respondent).

In the first instance all grievances are to be directed to the Manager, Non-Government Funding and Agreements, telephone contact (08) 9222 2709. The Department will handle all grievances quickly.
**Two week period for appeals when outcome of RFP is notified**

All organisations submitting a proposal in this RFP will be notified of the successful respondent. Following that notice respondents have two weeks to lodge an appeal and request a review if it is believed there has been a breach in the RFP process.

**State Supply Commission Investigations**

Under the Government Purchasing Charter, service providers have the right to lodge a formal complaint with the State Supply Commission. The Commission is an independent body. Officers of the Department for Community Development involved in a Commission enquiry will provide complete support and assistance, coordinated through the Director, Non Government Policy and Funding.

Other avenues for addressing grievances include the Parliamentary Commission for Administrative Investigation (Ombudsman) and the Office of the Auditor General. More serious concerns may be directed to the Corruption and Crime Commission or the Police.
SECTION 6
SERVICE AGREEMENT
(EXAMPLE)

ONSLOW YOUTH SERVICE

RFP Number 0098/05
Appendix 9: ‘At Risk’ as defined by the WA Department for Community Development

ADDENDUM NUMBER 2

The definition of at-risk referred to in Footnote 2 on page 5 of the Information Package is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Risk</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>‘At risk’</td>
<td>Displaying any of the following indicators: Educational indicators; under achievers, can not cope with secondary school classroom situations, poor literacy and numeracy skills, suspended from school, excluded. Behavioural indicators; truanting, emotionally disturbed, disruptive behaviour, self harm, antisocial behaviour, violent behaviour, social isolation, juvenile offending, vandalism, drug abuse, rejecting parental support, low self esteem, lack of social skills, poor communication skills and . Situational indicators; unemployed, homeless, socially disadvantaged, family breakdown, transient families, poorer socio-economic families, abused children.</td>
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Appendix 10: The Conceptual Mapping Process

Conceptual mapping provides the participant and the researcher with the opportunity to gain insight into the participant's current understanding of a given topic at the time of developing the Conceptual Map. It is "intended to reveal the thoughts and beliefs of the author rather than a reproduction of memorised facts. The structure of a map is, therefore, unique to the author, reflecting his/her experiences, beliefs and biases as well as understanding" (Kinchin, 1998, p. 2).

Through identification and ordering of concepts, the participant provides a map (like a mind map) of how they see these various concepts might link together. Through this process the participant makes sense of a particular concept. The connections that are made are not always valid or appropriate, but make sense to the participant at that time. By exploring their own understanding, they are better able to identify any inconsistencies in their thought processes, the concepts and linkages they are aware of and the gaps in their own knowledge. From here they are able to build on that existing knowledge and explore more appropriate forms of practice or develop a better knowledge base from which to order their practice and understanding. "(K)nowledge is created (therefore) rather than discovered" (Kinchin, 1998, p. 2).

According to Novak and Gowin (1984) concept maps "are intended to represent meaningful relationships between concepts in the form of propositions. Propositions are two or more concept labels linked by words in a semantic unit" (p. 15). It is a technique for "externalizing concepts and propositions" (p. 17) - a process through which the learner frequently identifies "meanings they did not consciously hold before" (p. 17). An important point made by Novak and Gowin is that although we, for the most part, speak the same language, the words used often have different meanings for different people. Kinchin (1998, p. 3) also identifies "conflicts in the use of language... (together with) preconceptions from prior experiences and inadequate prerequisite knowledge of the topic under investigation" as being barriers to shared understanding of meaning. Using the process of developing concept maps allows both the researched and the researcher to identify what particular words or concepts mean to participants individually. More than this "(b)ecause concept maps are an explicit, overt representation of the concepts and propositions a person holds, they allow teachers and learners to exchange views on why a particular propositional linkage is good and valid, or to recognize missing linkages between concepts..." (Novak, 1984, p. 19-20). A false proposition can, according to Novak & Gowin (p. 20), suggest misconceptions on the part
of the author of the map. A map which contains linkages missing “the key idea relating two or more concepts” (p. 20) is also indicative of misconceptions on the part of the author. In order to prepare for further learning, Kinchin (1998) maintains that, it is important to identify any misconceptions held within naïve theories. Concept maps can do this by helping to “make the overall framework of the concept explicit” (Kinchin, 1998, p. 4).

One aim of this study is to assist youth workers in developing shared meanings relating to ‘family violence’ and its effect on young women who have lived with it. Novak & Gowin (1984) maintain that recognition of what one sees, touches, or smells “is in part dependent on the concepts... (one) has in their minds” (p. 24). Kinchin (1998) maintains that “science (and therefore knowledge) is a creative human endeavour which is historically and culturally conditioned and that its knowledge claims are not absolute” (p. 2). In order, therefore, to enable workers to move past any preconceived notions they may hold and to develop shared meaning compatible to that of the young women it is necessary for them to understand what it is they currently believe. Kinchin (p. 2) further claims that the “development of such constructed and reconstructed knowledge can be represented graphically using concept maps”. Concept mapping, therefore, is the tool that will be used to accomplish this. It is also the tool that will be used to help workers, and the researcher, see how their own understanding changes over the course of the study.

REFERENCES:
Appendix 11: The use of ‘Narrative’ as a helping tool

Background
Narrative Therapy is a tool developed by Michael White to assist individuals (generally in ‘therapy’) to identify why they believe certain things about themselves, or why they behave in particular ways, or continue to have similar difficult relationships. Through narrative - or the telling of the story - people are encouraged to see past the obvious and gain a clearer understanding of what is happening, or has happened, in their lives and to separate out who they are as people from these experiences.

When we listen to the stories of women or children who have been abused (whether physically, sexually, emotionally, socially or psychologically) we often hear stories of self-blame. If we watch the young person acting in an aggressive or anti-social manner we will often feel ‘que’-ed to respond in an authoritarian or disciplinary manner to their behaviour. This is often what they are expecting - there is a sense of needing to have their behaviour controlled by others because they often believe that they are “out of control”. A common theme here is lack of self worth and a sense of responsibility for the bad things that happen to them. One way of taking control of what is happening to them is to provoke it through behaviour which is almost guaranteed to promote some form of retaliation - through discipline in this case.

A good example used by Morgan (2000) is that of a young man whose family sought help because of his ‘attention seeking’ behaviour. As a child he had lacked attention from his mother due to her prolonged illness. The ‘story’ that had been written for him throughout his life, as a result behaviour considered unacceptable and difficult by his family, is a story of ‘attention seeking’. This young man had been labelled “an attention seeker”. His most recent and problematic behaviour, according to his family, that of ‘stealing’, was also labelled ‘attention seeking’.

By using narrative therapy to separate the problem from the boy, himself, it soon became clear that there are many other stories that could be written:

Just as various thin descriptions and conclusions can support and sustain problems, alternative stories can reduce the influence of problems and create new possibilities for living.
For Sean, for example, an exploration of the alternative stories of his life might create space for change. These would not be stories of being an attention seeker or a problem child. Instead, they might
consist of stories of determination throughout his history, or stories of how he overcame troubles in earlier times in his life, or ways in which he gives attention as well as seeks it. All of these might be alternative stories of Sean's life. Or, alternative stories might be found in other realms entirely - realms of imaginary friends, histories of connectedness with his mother or father, or with special knowledges that Sean might possess through his relationship with his beloved pet dog Rusty. In any of these territories of life, through therapeutic conversations, alternative stories might be unearthed that could assist in addressing the problems Sean is currently struggling with. (Morgan, 2000, p. 14).

The process
A primary aim in using 'narrative' is to get the individual to provide a 'rich description' of THEIR story. That is, for them to tell a story which is about how they see their lives and their relationships with others. The individual is separated from the 'problem'. For Sean, the problem is probably not 'attention seeking'. It might be 'inability to control his life' or 'self doubt', for example. The problem is named by the person telling the story and then reframed to 'externalise' the problem from the person. It is necessary to listen sensitively to the young person and to use intuition when interpreting their story and helping them to name the 'problem' in order to externalise it - separate it from who the person is.

Once the problem has been identified (and there might be many) then it is possible to help the young person work through alternative narratives for their own lives.

Some suggestions for externalising the problem:

**Feelings**
Feelings such as anxiety, worry, fear, guilt, depression may be the focus of externalising conversations. In these situations, therapists might phrase their questions like:

- *So what has the Guilt tried to talk you into about yourself?*
- *So how has the Fear tried to convince you that it is unsafe (to) go out of your own house?*
- *How long has the Jealousy been trying to get between you and your friends?*

**Problems between people**
Aspects of interpersonal relationships may also be externalised, e.g., the Bickering, the Blame, the Criticism, the Fighting, the
Hoplessness, the Mistrust, the Jealousy. Questions in these situations sound like:

- *What have the Fights talked you into about yourself as a partner?*
- *What does the Blame have you doing with each other?*
- *What is the Conflict talking you into about each other?*
- *How much does the Bickering get in the way of your conversations?*

**Cultural and social practices**
Cultural and social practices may also be situated away from the person. Mother-blaming, parent-blaming, heterosexual dominance, racism, economic rationalism may be named as practices that have assisted the problem to increase in a person’s life.

**Other metaphors**
Sometimes people may talk about the problem metaphorically. For example, they may speak of a ‘wall of resentment’, ‘the block’, ‘the dream’, or ‘the tidal wave of despair’. Metaphors like these can also be externalised. (Morgan, 2000, p. 20-21).

It is important when identifying ‘the problem’ and naming it to make sure the wider social context is taken into consideration, as was described for Sean earlier.
Appendix 12: Vignettes

1. Michelle

- 26 years old. Lived independently for several years. 10 years experience in youth work, initially in accommodation. Has a psych degree.
- 1 brother, 3 years older.
- Parents split up when she was in her early teens.
- Sexually abused by her Grandfather as a small child
- Her mother deserted her when she was 14 - “she disappeared off the face of the earth”.
- Her father was constantly drunk, as was her brother. Neither of them knew, or appeared to care, where she was or what she was doing.
- In high school she started a career of ‘house-sitting’, which kept her going throughout Uni.
- Michelle was heavily involved in a church community to whom she turned for support. She told them snippets of information - “just enough to get their sympathy” - and they ensured her safety, but didn’t offer support in dealing with the experience. They “told” her what to do, and when she followed their advice to tell her father, he collapsed in a heap of self-pity and anger.
- Michelle claims that her family presented a façade of happiness, which her mother used to hide her father’s heavy drinking. Her mother also used this façade to pretend that her own family was ‘happy’ when, in fact, Michelle later learned that her mother had been sexually abused by the man who sexually abused Michelle - her grandfather.
- Michelle’s parent’s failed to protect her as a small child from sexual abuse. She remembers her childhood being spent predominantly in the company of her mother and her grandfather. She also remembers her brother being jealous of the attention the grandfather afforded her. No-one appeared to know what was happening.
- Michelle remembers laying in bed at night listening to her parents fighting and being too scared to move. She loved her father very much and was confused by his violence at night.
- Michelle learned to control her own environment by staying away from home (house-sitting) and by developing bulimia.
2. Phoebe

- 17½, still at high school; had only recently left home and was living with an aunt.

- The second of 4 girls, all very close in age - the eldest 20 and the youngest 15.
- Both parents have been married twice, the oldest daughter is Phoebe’s half-sister.
- Phoebe says that neither of her parents are happy, but considers that, until recently, her father was the mainstay of the family - working hard to keep things together.
- Phoebe is emotionally strong, intelligent and sensitive.
- She has grown up believing that she is THE PROBLEM, and feels the need to prove herself. Consequently she excels at most things – she is generally a high achiever at school.
- Phoebe has always felt that when things went wrong it was her fault, that she was a bad person who deserved to be punished.
- What she remembers most about her childhood is a feeling of despair and unhappiness. For most of her adolescent life she has felt deeply depressed and has contemplated suicide on many occasions. Phoebe’s saviour has been her boyfriend who has extended his family experience of balance and support to support her.
- Phoebe was both emotionally and physically neglected by her mother and suffered physical and emotional abuse as well. She lived in constant fear of her mother and never knew when or what would “set her off”. Phoebe’s mother was charged with assault when she violently attacked Phoebe’s great grandmother and left her unconscious on the floor of her home.
- In later years, Phoebe’s father also became unpredictable and potentially violent.
- Phoebe and her sister’s were isolated from the rest of the family and from their peers. They considered their punishment to be ‘unfair’ but ‘deserved’.
- When Phoebe’s sister ran away from home, the family came to the attention of Dept for Community Services (now F&CS) and were sent to counselling. Phoebe’s parents told her not to say anything, and she felt it was just a waste of time anyway – her parents had every right to behave the way they did, she thought.
- Phoebe was hit with a chair, had crockery and other things thrown at her, was locked in her room, left in the care of her sister (18 months older) when only 5 or 6, locked in a car in the heat of
summer, left to run around a car park with no shoes and no top in the heat of summer, emotionally and physically neglected as a baby. She doesn’t ever remember being cuddled by her mother or father. When her mother told her she was having a nap and not to disturb her, Phoebe almost burned the house down – because she was too frightened to wake her mother up to tell her the kitchen had caught fire.

- Phoebe grew up feeling angry at everything and everyone. She became withdrawn, drank heavily and smoked. She also shop lifted as part of her demonstration of “hate” for the world.
- She has difficulty trusting adults, and reacted to a minor criticism by her aunt with an emotional breaking down – she sobbed uncontrollably and was not able to tell her aunt why.

3. Joy

- 20 and studying Social Work at Curtin.
- Joy moved out of home (in the country) to come to Perth for uni.
- Eldest of two, Joy has a brother 2 years younger. (She also has 2 step-brothers and a step-sister who live with her father and step-mother).
- She doesn’t remember a time when her natural father was not physically abusing her mother.
- He first hit Joy when she was around 2 - she believes he started to hit her because she tried to protect her mother. Joy’s father would push her out of the way, so violently that she was thrown across the room.
- At 4 she remembers thinking her mother was dead - killed by her father, after a violent beating.
- Joy’s father would punch her or slap her across the face, around the head, on the bottom or the tops of her legs. Sometimes he punched her in the stomach. Later he hit her with fencing wire or threw rocks at her when she upset him.
- When Joy was around 5 her parents split up. At this time Joy’s maternal grandparents stopped contact with the family as well - they thought Joy’s mother should stay with her husband. Joy continued to be beaten during access visits.
- Joy later discovered that her mother was hit by her father-in-law as well as her husband.
- At around 7 Joy tried to tell a teacher that her father was beating her. The teacher dismissed the violence as ‘normal’ discipline.
- Joy’s mother is emotionally unstable and has attempted suicide on many occasions. Joy feels responsible for her mother’s mental
health and is really scared that one day her mother will be successful and kill herself.

- Joy kept silent because she was scared of what people would think of her and her mother, and of her mother's response.
- Her role in the family is "PROTECTOR" - she protected her mother from others and protected her brother from her father. She also protected her step-brothers and sister whilst she was at their house. Joy would be beaten (systematically - not in anger) if any of the children did something their father didn't like.
- When Joy visited her father (on an isolated farm) she was isolated from her peers and from her mother. She wasn't allowed phone calls or contact with the outside world. She was also worked from dawn to dusk (and beyond sometimes) and underfed. She was constantly told she was fat and was given only small helpings of food, because she was so fat.
- Joy was the class clown and everybody's friend. She was extroverted and loud and played the part of a very happy and intelligent class member. This is how she controlled her environment. At home, she controlled her environment through anorexia and bulimia.
- Joy never cried, particularly she didn't cry when her father hit her.

4. Caroline

- 19 years old and living at home. She has repeated year 12 and wants to do art at university.
- Quiet and non-assuming, she could almost be described as invisible. She is capable, however, of performing and assuming whatever character suits the particular situation.
- Caroline is the middle child of three - an older brother and younger sister. She has several step-sisters and brothers, none of whom live at home.
- Caroline has been sexually assaulted by three different people, two of whom have been family members - her father and a step-brother, as well as her grandmother's next door neighbour.
- She feels unsupported by a mother who is quite controlling and self absorbed.
- Caroline's mother refuses to discuss the past and says that it must be forgotten. Her mother doesn't know that she has also been abused by her step-brother and accuses Caroline of 'selfishness' when she refuses to have contact with him.
• Caroline doesn’t have many friends but those she does she relies on very heavily to do things for her. She has no confidence in her own ability and feels unable to do the most basic things (which are not everyday things) without the help of one of these friends (e.g. she needed a friend to go with her and sit in during her university interview).

• She claims to feel emotionally imprisoned by her lack of confidence and self-worth. She blames herself for the fact that her grandmother doesn’t like her and that her mother fails to support her – if she were a better person things would be different.

• She feels as though she invites the abuse she has suffered.

• She is an extremely unhappy young woman desperately seeking the nurturance and acceptance she has not received from her mother. At an intellectual level she is aware that her mother is too wrapped up in her own needs to ever be able to provide the support Caroline wants.