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Let's do it better: A look at how the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services works with adolescent girls with problem behaviour.

The experiences of adolescent girls who have been the clients of The Department of Child, Youth and Family Services because of identified or perceived problem behaviour. This research report explores what has worked for them and their families and what has not worked, in terms of the involvement of this service.

A Research Report presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Philosophy School of Social Policy and Social Work
Massey University.

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2000

Abstract

This study was a small, retrospective, qualitative exploration of the experiences of adolescent girls and their families where the young women were referred to the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services for problem behaviour. The focus of this research was the perspective of the young women and their families. Three adolescent girls and four families who had been referred to a large urban office of the then New Zealand Children and Young Person's Service during the years 1993 to 1995 were interviewed in a mainly narrative style. Literature was reviewed covering a broad range of related topics including adolescence, adolescence for girls, problem behaviour, families and family situations, the New Zealand Children and Young Person's Service, the rights of clients, children and young people and research perspectives and methodology. The importance of the rights of children and of participants is a strong thread running through much of the literature. The data is presented and discussed under themes in an effort to preserve the confidentiality of the participants. These themes are: First contact; the problem; what happened; communication; effectiveness and comments and ideas. Generally the comments from the participants were negative about the service they had been given particularly with regard to the homes where the young women were placed, issues around communication with both the parents and the young women and the following up of plans. The research participants were impressive in their ability to relate traumatic incidents, to appreciate assistance given and in the manner in which they made reflective comments and proposals for change. The findings highlight issues such as the importance of the clients' perspective and the need to be able to assess this, adolescent and family problems, resources, the media, the difficult position of the social worker and the need for evaluation of the outcomes for young people and their families. These issues are the basis for the recommendations that relate to evaluation from the client's perspective, the rights of children, using the experience of clients, the need to share information and theory, the collation of resources and the use of the media. The participants were all interested in taking part in what they saw as an opportunity to have input into creating a better service for young people and their families who were going through situations similar to those they had experienced.

Preface and Acknowledgements

As a social worker I have for many years found it time consuming and frustrating trying to obtain successful outcomes for adolescent girls who have had problems with relationships and with behaviour. There have been times when their parents seemed as confused as I have been. I know other social workers have felt similarly when trying to work with two different stories that are both true while lacking the resources to assist in maintaining positive family relationships and with reconciliation. It is often the case that the only outcome we know about is when it has all gone wrong. I have constantly wondered: What has worked? How do we know if we have helped?

When I had the chance to do a research paper I wanted to see if I could get a better understanding of how it was from the other side, from the perspective of the young women and their families. The literature I read in preparing for and working through this research has left me in awe of the valuable work being done by those wanting to make a difference for young people and their families and of those wanting to improve the procedures and processes of what is now the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services.

My thanks to God and to the many people who have supported me in doing this research.

Most importantly I would like to thank the young women and their families who so generously trusted me with their traumatic memories and gave willingly of their time and their ideas because they wanted to help make it better for others in similar situations.

I would also especially like to thank my husband and family who have given me unfailing moral support while having a very part-time wife, mother and grandmother over the time I have been working on this research paper. Their help in putting up with books and papers covering every available surface throughout our home, Nicola's painstaking editing and advice and Sarah's technical expertise has been invaluable.

My supervisor and Lisa and my managers at work and the management and personnel of the area office where I carried out my research have been understanding and very supportive.

The staff at the Massey University Library and at the Information Centre of the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services has provided a marvelous service, thank you.

I have especially appreciated the assistance given by my Massey University Supervisors, Mike Garland and Gwen Ellis. They have reorganised and rescheduled ad infinitum and have managed to maintain my spirits through some very difficult times. Their patience and positive support have been crucial to me throughout this whole exercise.

Thank you all, I hope that between us we have put together something that will improve services to troubled youth and their families.

The views expressed in this report unless otherwise attributed are mine and do not represent or reflect those of any other individual or organisation.

I would like to dedicate this to my grandchildren. May God bless them and may they travel safely through their adolescence secure within their family and their community.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

“The future of our nation is the understanding of our young people”

(Mason Report, 1992).

The problem behaviour of teenagers is a crucial and topical issue in this country. In Aotearoa/New Zealand around 200 families each week face problems considered severe enough, either by themselves or by others, to bring them into contact with the statutory agency now called The Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, hereafter referred to as the Service. The most common causes for this contact are behavioural problems in children and young people and breakdowns in the relationship between parents and their children. Statistics for 1998 show that nationally, these behaviour/relationship problems accounted for 36% of the referrals to the Service (Tauranga, 1999:A9; Diaz, 1999:A6).

The Service combines problem behaviour and family relationship difficulties or breakdowns into one category of assessment, that of behavioural/relationship difficulties. My research focuses on a specific group within this category namely, adolescent girls who were given the assessment of behaviour/relationship difficulties by the Service during the period from 1 January 1993 to 30 June 1995. (Throughout this paper I use the term problem behaviour to cover this assessment category).

My interest in researching this topic was born out of my frustrations as a social worker in the Service trying to achieve positive outcomes in cases of problem behaviour, particularly in relation to teenage girls. There is a large body of research that highlights the reality that for girls, adolescence is a time of generally poor emotional well-being (Rutter, 1986; Harris, Blum and Resnick, 1991; Stern, 1991; Gilligan, 1991; Gilligan, Rogers and Tolman, 1991; Pipher, 1996; Andrews, Merry and Van Altvorst, 1998; Coggin, Dickinson, Rimm and Cherrington, 1999). There was also consistent comment in papers reviewing the Service during the 1990s about the ability, or lack of ability of the Service to effectively assist teenagers with problem behaviour (Renouf, Robb and

Wells, 1990; Wood, 1991; Mason, 1992; Child Protection Trust, 1994; O'Reilly, 1996; O'Reilly, 1998).

My research paper is a limited and preliminary investigation into how involvement with the Service has been experienced by adolescent girls and their families when they have needed, or requested, help from the Service for problem behaviour. Information for my research was gained from four parents and three young women who had been clients of a large urban office of the Service. I interviewed them retrospectively about their experiences with the Service during the above timeframe. My main aim was to obtain an indication of whether there are any improvements the Service can make in working with adolescent girls with problem behaviour. Secondary aims were to provide a forum for the participants to express their views, and to gain insights to improve my practice as a social worker. This meant that I needed to listen to the stories of how the young women and their families saw their interactions with the Service, and how they experienced the interventions of the Service. Within the limitations of my research then I needed to:

- identify what they considered had worked for them, and what they considered had not worked for them;
- make positive proposals/suggestions for improvements in the service provided based on my findings; and
- see what areas of future study are likely to serve as a basis for further improvements in the service provided.

Social science demands a readiness to wonder about certain conditions and assumptions and to examine practice with a view to improvement. This means that research into social work practice conducted by a social worker has positive aspects such as first hand experience and knowledge (Goodnow, 1985; Stanley, 1990). I was interested in exploring clients' perspectives of the social workers' difficulties in finding safe places for teenage girls who are unable to live with their families, and of trying to work on the tightrope of representing the best interests of the young women, their parents and their families (Renouf et al, 1990; Wood, 1991; Mason, 1992; O'Reilly, 1996; Hunter, 1997; Ainsworth and Maluccio, 1998; Andrews et al, 1998). Time and resource constraints did

not allow me to access the experiences or opinions of the social workers involved in the cases studied. This would have provided another dimension to the research findings.

As well as there being a need for insiders to be doing social research (Stanley, 1990:113), the identity of the researcher is considered relevant in feminist-based research (Harding, 1986; Stanley and Wise, 1990; Jayaratne and Stewart, 1991). The philosophy and methodology I employed in this research was based on a feminist perspective. This involved providing a forum for both the families and for the adolescents to share their experiences of their interactions with the Service. I wanted their stories. I wanted them as users of the Service to have their say, to feel better for having told their story and to know that I was committed to bringing about positive change (Goodnow, 1985; Lather, 1986; Stanley and Wise, 1990; Jayaratne and Stewart, 1991; Polson, 1998). I considered it very important to give significance to the opinions and views of both the young people and their families as separate and equal participants (Oakley, 1994; Maxwell, Robertson, Thom and Walker, 1995; Smith, 1995; O'Reilly, 1998; Tapp, 1998; Mason and Falloon, 1999). Confidentiality for participants was also a central concern in an exercise of this size and scope. To assist in maintaining confidentiality for the participants I have presented the research findings around themes rather than as case studies (Finch, 1984).

Theoretical background was provided for my study by relevant literature and this is discussed in the next chapter. Literature on the research perspective is discussed in the chapter on methodology.

I found three Aotearoa/New Zealand studies of particular interest to both my perspective and my choice of methodology. The first of these was an in-depth proposal to measure the outcomes of the interventions of the Service by accessing the views of the families and the children involved taking account of their age and maturity. The data collection proposed in this paper was to provide the basis for a longitudinal study of the outcomes and effectiveness the Service and the Children, Young Persons' and their Families Act (1989), hereafter referred to as the Act (Maxwell, et al., 1995). The second of these focused on family members' experiences of the care and protection process

with a stated objective being “to learn what aspects of the Act were working well for family members and why, and what aspects could be improved and how?” (Gilling, Patterson and Walker, 1995:10). The third was an investigation of children’s perspectives of violence in New Zealand (Maxwell and Carroll-Lind, 1996). These three papers along with others focussing on the importance of the children’s perspectives and views provided depth to the background of my research.

The participants in my research expressed the hope that the knowledge of their experiences would lead to improvements in the service offered to others. In keeping with this, I have concluded this report by making some recommendations.

Chapter 2

Literature review

My research covers the specific experiences of adolescents and their families with a statutory agency. The literature that I considered relevant is discussed under the main headings of: adolescence; adolescence for girls; family issues; societal issues; the Service; problem behaviour; communication and the importance of recognising differing perspectives; and a brief look at some resources/therapies that may be used by, or for, adolescents and their families. Much of the literature studied is relevant across many of these topics.

Adolescence

In age terms there is no general consensus on when adolescence begins or ends. For example, some consider it starts at around eleven years of age (Middleton, 1993; Pipher, 1996), while others argue that it begins more around the age of thirteen years (Berger, 1989; Bjerregaard and Smith, 1993; Crespi and Sabatelli, 1993;) or at different ages for boys and girls (Smith, 1998:20). Montemayor, Adams and Gullotta (1990:9) discuss the difficulty in establishing a specific age as a signal that adolescence has begun and warn that the hormonal and biological changes associated with puberty may occur as early as three years before these are observable in physical changes.

There are also difficulties in overlapping definitions in terms of the age of child/children and young people. Two Aotearoa/New Zealand publications *Adolescent Health* (Department of Health, 1992) and *Feeling Stink* (McDowell and Zignskas, 1994) place young people between the ages of 10 and 20 years. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989:2) ratified by the New Zealand Government on 13 March 1993 defines a child as “every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”. The Act defines children as aged under 14 years, and young people as aged between 14 and 17 years. Given these varying definitions, I use the terms adolescent, child/children and young people interchangeably unless otherwise specified.

“... age and chronology both need social contexts to be meaningful. Social age is different from chronological age: in certain societies a twelve-year old is an adolescent; in others he is already and adult” (Hareven, 1977:59). Many non-western or traditional societies have specific initiation ceremonies for age and gender groups where the status and definition of these groups and their future roles in that society are clearly defined. The roles and progress from one role to another are culturally and socially constructed.

In western societies adolescence is the term used for the interval between childhood and adulthood, wherein very important transitions occur and for which unlike those traditional societies mentioned above there are very few guidelines (Erikson, 1968; Cosse, 1992; Pryor, 1997; Jaffe, 1998; Rice, 1999). These transitions involve many changes, both psychological and physiological (McDowell and Ziginskas, 1994; Smith, 1998; Jaffe, 1998; Rice, 1999). These changes include the physical changes, changes to do with the formation of identity, the challenge of gaining some autonomy from the family, the transition between and from school, and the development of intimate relationships. Added to these there is also a confusing mix of freedoms, restrictions, and responsibilities (Pryor, 1997:1).

Two recent publications gave me a comprehensive background on adolescent theory. Jaffe (1998) explores the theories of adolescent development throughout history starting in the 17th century and including the cognitive, behavioural, Freudian, psychosocial, humanistic, learning and interactional-contextual theories. These latter theories will be discussed later in this chapter. Rice (1999) also discusses the different theories of adolescence and explores these in relation to aspects of physical growth and the wider environment, and the issues of gender and family alienation. These are particularly relevant for my research, as for a significant period of time the adolescent girls interviewed were not able to live with their families.

The four important developmental tasks for adolescents are seen as “emancipation from parents, psychosexual differentiation, acquiring the skills necessary for future economic independence and establishing career goals and identity exploration and achievement” (Noller and Callan, 1991:24). Acquiring skills for employment is considered an

important task for adolescents (Noller and Callan, 1991; Department of Health, 1992; Jaffe, 1998; Rice, 1999). I was interested in this aspect considering the number of adolescents with poor school records.

Adolescence for girls

Whatever age is allotted to it, “...that adolescence is a watershed in development is undisputed” (Cosse, 1992:7). My interest in this study was centred on adolescent girls and it is clear that many authors and researchers consider that the pressures and stresses of adolescence are different for girls. Cosse (1992) discusses a number of researchers’ perspectives of gender issues in adolescence and concludes that, “The essence of the debate about adolescent development is to account for and give meaning to the differences found in the development of adolescent males and females” (Cosse, 1992:6).

Gilligan, et al. (1991:1) confirm this view as they collate papers on adolescent girls. These writers also comment on “... the silence about adolescent girls in the literature of developmental psychology”. However they do note both a significant number of writers from Freud at the beginning of the 20th century who do comment on the specific difficulties faced by adolescent girls plus a large body of more recent research supporting the view that in general women are more susceptible to strain and distress from interpersonal problems than are men, and are more especially vulnerable during adolescence (Gilligan et al. 1991:88-89).

A number of other studies have also found that girls are more likely than boys to think they have health problems, to be depressed, to be emotionally distressed, to feel at a disadvantage and lonely, to express anxiety and to have suicidal thoughts (Rutter, 1986; Harris et al., 1991; Stern, 1991; Steinhause, 1995; Casper, Balanoff and Offer, 1996; Pipher, 1996; Gaoni, Black and Baldwin, 1998). For example, “girls cries for help may be harder to hear, and easier to ignore than boys” (Harris et al., 1991:119) and “... adolescence is a time of great psychological dangers for girls” (Stern, 1991:105). The knowledge that there is recognition of issues specific to adolescent girls is relevant to my research particularly in exploring whether any of these ideas were communicated to,

or used to assist either, the adolescents or their parents during the time of their interaction with the Service.

The adolescent girls who participated in this research had all run away from home. Because of this I was interested in research about relationships with family and with peers and the significance of these in adolescence. Agnew and Brezina (1997: 84–86) discuss research that shows relational goals and the quality of relationships are more important for females than they are for males. Savin-Williams (1995:348) notes the increasing importance of peers for all adolescents at around the beginning of puberty. Harris (1998) emphasises the importance of the group for children and adolescents. “Children identify with a group of others like themselves and take on the norms of the group. They don’t identify with their parents because parents are not people like themselves – parents are grown-ups” (Harris,1998:358). However, despite the importance of peers to adolescents, many researchers find that the basis for their relationships at least starts within their family.

Family issues

Above I have reviewed a selection of literature related to adolescents, their development, and the importance of gender at this stage of their lives. In this research adolescents are one group of participants. In this subsection and in the next I cover a selection of literature about the other participant group, the parents or caregivers, their interactions with their children, and the importance of the wider environment for both adolescents and their families.

“Family life shapes and encourages children’s social nature. Regardless of their family configuration or economic circumstances, adolescents benefit from a stable and supportive family climate” (Jaffe, 1998:219).

In 1989 the Act changed the focus of child welfare work in Aotearoa/New Zealand by emphasising the importance of maintaining the family as the primary supporter and caregiver of children and young people. This is reinforced by the stated vision of the Service since 1995 as being that “all families are meeting their care, control and

support responsibilities" (Social Services Strategic Policy Group, 1995:46). Much of the literature studied emphasises the crucial nature of family relationships for adolescents with or without problem behaviours. It is important to remember that the majority of adolescents function well within their family environment, and that troubled teenagers make up only approximately 20% of the adolescent population (Collins, 1990:89; Casper et al., 1996:500). The young women in this study were not able to relate well with their families for a time thus making information about family relationships, communication and conflict in adolescence very pertinent.

Family relationships

"Readiness for adulthood comes about two years later than the adolescent claims, and about two years before the parents will admit" (Noller and Callan, 1991:1).

The background of the family plays a crucial part in the development of new roles for both the adolescent and the family (Collins and Russell, 1991:127). Healthy adolescent development is most likely to occur where there is encouragement for some autonomy, some flexibility of control, clear expectations, a sense of belonging and support from parents and families (Erikson, 1968; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Collins, 1990; Noller and Callan, 1991; Paikoff and Brooks-Gunn, 1991; Casper et al., 1996; Jaffe, 1998; Rice, 1999). Conversely, relational problems in the family can lead to: escape behaviours like running away; aggressive behaviours directed against the source of relational problems; property offences, including theft of items thought to enhance popularity or image; and drug use to help cope with the negative emotions generated (Morris, 1987; Chesney-Lind, 1989; Agnew, 1992).

In the early and middle years of adolescence peer pressure appears to be very strong. It is during this time that the experience of puberty for the young adolescent adds to other changes such as the transition from primary to secondary school. As a correspondent in the Listener (1999) wrote, "the big step from being a kid to being a teenager is a long one; puberty isn't fun; all the ups and downs aren't fun. Then there's getting a period..." ('Hollie', Listener, 1999:93).

In later adolescence there is more acceptance of parental values (Collins, 1990:89; Collins and Russell, 1991:127). This is particularly interesting for this research as the perceived problems with the young women interviewed mainly started when they were around the age of thirteen when they were running away and wanting to be with their friends all the time. At the time of data collection around four years later all were maintaining contact with their families. Noller and Callan (1991) suggest that adolescents who become autonomous from their parents at too early an age may be most at risk from peer pressure to engage in deviant behaviour.

Communication and conflict

Good family communication is found to be associated with satisfaction with the family and to have a positive effect on adolescent self-esteem and coping strategies (Jackson, Bijistra, Oostra and Bosma, 1998; Jaffe, 1998; Rice, 1999). The importance of communication in families, particularly during adolescence is also emphasised by Noller and Callan (1991). Studies they explored show that mothers are seen as more open and approachable than fathers by both girls and boys and that as a result, adolescents will often limit their communication with their fathers. However, possibly because of this, adolescents report more conflict with mothers (Noller and Callan, 1991:46; Tatar, 1998). In my research mothers appeared to be the significant parent, they were certainly the parent who had the main role in the interaction with the Service.

The degree of conflict between adolescents and their parents and whether it develops is affected by several factors such as family structure, parent/adolescent gender, ethnicity, social cognition, biology, self-definition and psychodynamics. All these factors influence the likelihood of conflict emerging. Multiple changes that include puberty and changes in parents' circumstances and relationships for example, divorce and loss of employment, in combination are considered to make conflict more likely (Collins, 1990:89; Paikoff and Brooks-Gunn, 1991:60; Paikoff and Collins, 1991; Collins and Russell, 1991:127; Collins and Laursen, 1992:228; Goossens and Marcoen, 1999).

Goossens and Marcoen (1999:65,66) explore this further and conclude that it is only “a minority of teens who have to deal with more than one issue of relational adjustment at a time who experience serious problems during adolescence”. Others note that, “...family disruption is seen as having a negative association with children’s behaviour and educational attainment at 16 years of age and parental divorce has a greater effect than the death of a parent” (Richards and Ely,1998:13).

Gilligan (1991:13) notes that when families are under stress, whether it be marital conflict, economic hardship, or war, the children most psychologically at risk in childhood are boys, and in adolescence, girls. Pryor (1997:1) found that forty per cent of marriages in this country break up after fifteen years. This is at a time when there are likely to be adolescent children in the home and when family stress is very psychologically disturbing for the adolescent girls in the family.

Two separate studies explore the effects of separation and divorce in Aotearoa/New Zealand. One of the issues highlighted is the drop in income for the separated/divorced parent who is also the child minder, and the effect of this drop in income on factors such as education for the children (Richards and Ely, 1998; Smith, Gollop, Taylor, Gaffney, Gold and Henaghan, 1998). One of the parents interviewed for my research was recently separated from her husband, and the information above about the possible causes of stress within families could provide a valuable insight for social workers intervening with adolescents and their families.

Conflict between parents and adolescents is also seen as arising from differing perspectives regarding control and day to day living arrangements, and these same causes were noted by researchers in the 1920s (Noller and Callan, 1991). Montemayor and Hanson’s (1985) study found that conflict arose around interpersonal issues rather than rules, that it mainly involved the same sex parent and that conflict with parents was equalled by conflict with siblings.

Collins and Laursen (1992:233) consider that “The developmental impact of conflict largely depends on the quality of the relationship in which the disagreement arises.” They stress that conflict can be beneficial, it can promote growth and insight, especially

if it is non-threatening, and that there is a need to provide opportunities for reconstitution and reconciliation. This view of conflict needs emphasis. It is relevant to family relations and also to processes within the Service such as the Family Group Conference where matters creating conflict arise and also within the Service itself where conflict can be used to create discussion, change and improvement.

Other studies investigated the differing perceptions of adolescents and their parents. Paikoff and Collins (1991) focused especially on the differing perceptions of factors such as risk and Brown (1999) highlights the need for caution if using solely either parental or adolescent reports. Smetana (1991:79) found that mothers assessed their communication and relationships more positively than did their daughters, and that adolescents rated conflicts as both more frequent and more serious than did their mothers. This noted difference in perceptions influenced my decision to ensure that both the young women and their parents participated in this research.

Societal issues

“Although families have the primary responsibility for their children’s well-being, they rely on the conditions provided by the wider society for the fulfillment of that responsibility” (Hassall, 1991:1).

As well as the effects of what is happening within themselves and within their family of origin, adolescents also have their community and their cultural and societal environment to contend with. Many researchers emphasise the importance of the environment for children’s development. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Hassall, 1991; Reid, 1993; Pipher, 1996; Pryor, 1997; Andrews et al., 1998; Harris, 1998). The economic situation for many families is a source of pressure and stress. This is often influenced by issues in the wider society, such as the prevalence of unemployment or inflation over which the family has no control.

Shirley, Koopman-Boyden, Pool and St. John, (1997) discuss the impact of economic policy on families, the loss of what was the family wage and the decline of resources for families with children in Aotearoa/New Zealand. They claim that “changes made to the delivery of family social services place increasing demands on the family at a time

when both household income and state support are in decline" (Shirley et al., 1997:301). There has been a decline in income of the majority of the working population of Aotearoa/New Zealand since the early 1980s (Welch, 1999; Children's Agenda, 1999). For families of adolescent girls with low incomes, the pressures of the values promoted by the media and media saturation create further conflict because their resources are so limited (Pipher, 1996: 12; Agnew and Brezina, 1997:84; McCabe and Cummins, 1998:771).

It is important to view adolescents in the context of both their family patterns and traditions, and the values and belief system of the wider society in which they live. Harris (1998) stresses the importance of youth culture as having the greatest impact on the young person's development. Bronfenbrenner (1979:274) stresses the importance of the interaction of the person and their whole environment. He considers that the events and conditions outside the immediate setting containing the person, that is events in the exo-system, can have a profound influence on behaviour and development within the individual's system. He cites the alienation of schools, with their isolation from communities, and with classrooms having little connection with each other, and criticises what he sees as the 'deficit' model that looks first at the individual, then at the parents and then at the ethnic or social group in the seeming belief that "there must be something wrong with somebody, and that somebody usually turns out to be the person or group having the problem in the first place" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:290). He sees the alternative as research policy and practice committed to creating new systems that better meet the needs of human beings. Frank (1996) outlines positive changes he was able to make in schools in the United States of America and Israel by taking a more personal approach to students.

Several Aotearoa/New Zealand and international studies utilise the ecological perspective. For example, Reid (1993: 55) and Andrews et al. (1998:45) emphasise the importance of the wider culture in viewing the experiences of adolescents in the 1990s, and the adolescent's vulnerability to peer and media pressure. Stirling (1999) in Aotearoa/New Zealand and Pipher (1996) in the United States of America support this, looking at media pressure and the risks and sexual freedom of teenagers, especially girls

in “today’s hyper-sexualised culture” (Stirling, 1999:17). McCabe and Cummins (1998:771) in Australia, and Kelly (1990) in Aotearoa/New Zealand confirm the preoccupation of young people with self and body image finding that this seems more of a problem for girls than for boys.

The Service

The literature reviewed in this subsection is discussed under seven headings: History of the Service; Reviews of the Service; The Family Group Conference; Evaluations of the Service; Social Workers and the Service; Annual Reports of the Service and the Future of the Service.

History of the Service:

A detailed history of the development of social services in this country is not directly relevant to my research. What is relevant is that the Act was an innovative and sweeping change aimed at ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children, by assisting families to take responsibility for their children. This emphasis on the involvement and responsibility of parents and other family members, was, and is, a very important part of the 1989 legislation. “One of the principles of the Act is that families, whanau, hapu, iwi and family groups have the primary role in caring for and protecting their own children” (Maxwell et al., 1995:54).

Two recent Aotearoa/New Zealand studies investigate the implications of this focus on family responsibility. McPherson (1999) notes that the lack of alternative options provided by the state can lead to a number of adverse effects on the family. Munford and Sanders (1999) discuss the current debate on the level of support needed for families. They state

What is required in policy terms is clear recognition that the successful development of any generation of children into adulthood requires collective effort at the individual, local, community, national and international levels as well as a recognition that families are diverse and have differing needs (Munford and Sanders, 1999:38)

Reviews of the Service:

After its introduction there were a number of reviews on the impact of the Act on the delivery of services to children, young people and their families. The main relevance of these reviews to my research was that they raised residential placements, and concerns for young people as contentious issues. For example:

- Renouf et al. (1990:20) were concerned that the present residential centres “... are insufficient for youngsters in the 12-15 age group, who will not return home and whose ‘disturbed’ behaviour (often including substance abuse or self-mutilation), makes extended family placement untenable”.
- Wood (1991) noted anecdotal evidence that the Service was not providing for the needs of emotionally acting out children and young people and that it would only be a matter of months “before the Department would see a marked increase in admissions to state operated residences” (Wood, 1990:6).
- Social Services Strategy (1995) identified that “...as at 1 February 1995, there were 367 children and young people with serious behavioural problems who were unable to be placed in a safe environment, or for whom limited constructive work could be done” (Social Services Strategic Policy Group, 1995: Appendix F.11).
- The Mason Report (1992) saw the need for more extensive permanent placements and residences and commented on the group studied in this research.

We are concerned that young people aged 14 and 15 years with care and protection issues are often ignored by the Department of Social Welfare and these are people who at that age and when they are a little older very often commit serious charges which they may not have committed had they had more support and assistance at an earlier stage (Mason Report, 1992:45).

The Family Group Conference

A major initiative and result of the Act and the focus on family responsibility is the Family Group Conference, (FGC), where family members come together to make decisions about the care and wellbeing of their children. The FGC is one of the major processes in the Service, and one that all the participants experienced. Paterson and

Harvey (1991) looked at the organisation and operation of care and protection Family Group Conferences. They studied the conferences over the first eighteen months of their implementation. These researchers interviewed departmental staff, members of Care and Protection Resource Panels, workers from other agencies, and persons giving information. Family participants were not interviewed. This strengthened my resolve to access the perspectives of the young people and their families. One of the pertinent comments in this detailed report was;

Some agencies were concerned that some children were not involved as much as they should have been in decision-making at the FGC, while others were of the view that it was inappropriate that the FGC should need the young person to agree with its decisions because some young people misused the power so that the FGC was unable to reach an agreement (Paterson and Harvey, 1991:67).

In a later study Gilling et al.(1995) did look at family members experiences of the Care and Protection FGC process. Their research discussed the negative and positive aspects of the experiences of the participants, and then looked at the family members' experiences in relation to the principles and objects of the Act. These researchers noted their disappointment at how few children and young people they were able to interview. Their outline of four points where things had gone well and nine points where things had not gone well for family members is attached for interest and comparison as Appendix H.

Evaluations of the Service

Robertson & Maxwell (1996) studied notifications for care and protection to the Service. Their study is based on a sample of 918 notifications to 12 selected offices of the Service over the time period of 1990 to 1994. They looked at reasons for notifications and the outcomes, and commented on how difficult it was to accurately interpret the data due to inconsistencies in recording practice. Maxwell et al. (1995) put forward a proposal for studying the outcomes of interventions under the Act. In a detailed paper they outlined a commitment to finding what the outcomes are for children, and derived these from the principles and objectives of the Act. They provided

a philosophical basis for their proposed methodology and analysis, with an outline of the information to be collected from the practice records and from clients and families. My research paper is partly based on their recommendations.

The Commissioner for Children in a 1996 briefing paper supported the need for evaluation of client satisfaction with the outcomes of intervention of the Service (O'Reilly, 1996:9). His paper looked at the Mason Report (1992), current issues in care and protection, the stress of funding insufficiency on service delivery and the difficulty in maintaining the fine balance between the safety of the child and the minimum intervention that the Act prescribes. The commissioner talked of the danger of an increasing focus on the 'welfare' of the child, rather than the 'rights and interests' of the child (O'Reilly, 1996:15).

I was interested in the current literature on evaluations of care services for children. Leahy, Little, Mondy and Nixon (1999) in Australia, describe the development of methods designed to provide optimum outcomes for foster children. In this country Smith, Gollop and Taylor (1998) examine how children see the intervention of the service in their lives once they have been placed in foster care, and the extent to which their views are heard.

Social Workers and the Service

A number of reports illustrate the difficulties faced by social workers. For example:

- The Mason Report (1992) states that "The stresses of frontline social work are immense... Many [social workers] are burnt out with worry and stress. They endure far more than we can reasonably expect of them" (Mason Report, 1992:189).
- Hunter (1997) echoed these concerns in her thesis about work as a feminist social worker in the Service in what she describes as a 'job full of conflicts'.
- The Commissioner for Children stated "The Service was now largely an assessment and referral service with a crisis intervention approach... we should resource and empower social workers to work with children and families to effect change" (O'Reilly, 1998:216). He also commented on the Service's "inappropriate" raising of the thresholds before intervention occurs and services are provided.

In 1994, the Child Protection Trust Advocacy Committee provided a negative evaluation of the Service by professionals working in the field of child protection.

The overall view of NZCYPS given by these respondents is that of an understaffed, under-funded, generally under-resourced and unevenly skilled organisation. There is a clear gulf between the role it is expected to perform and the level of resources available (Child Protection Trust Advocacy Committee, 1994:30).

This quote was particularly significant as two of the parents advised me that at the time they were having so much trouble contacting the Service there were advertisements promoting the Service in the media. It also provides a perspective of how professional colleagues saw the Service during my research period. In a more recent comment on the effects of the media on the Service Smith (1998) notes how increased public awareness creates an increased demand for services.

Annual Reports of the Service:

The Annual Reports of the Department of Social Welfare (1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1994) provided tables of notifications, foci and information about the Service for those years. They also noted the demand for residential placements. "The number of admissions to Care and Protection residences increased 9% in the 12 months to 30 June 1994. The demand for Care and Protection residential placements has remained high, with all residences operating at near capacity" (Department of Social Welfare Annual Report, 1994:13). It was also noted by Robin Wilson (1993) then General Manager of the Service that "Social work staff had been hard-pressed to cope with this volume [of referrals] and on occasion there was public criticism over perceived delays in responding to cases" (Department of Social Welfare Annual Report 1993:35).

The Future of the Service

From the early 1990s there has been a strong thread of concern about how the Service needed to react to young people with problems. This was further highlighted in the *Social Services Strategy 1995-2005* (Social Services Strategic Policy Group, 1995).

In recent years there has been an increase in the numbers of children and young people referred to NZCYPS because their behaviour is very difficult to manage for reasons of:

- Substance abuse and addictions;
- Conduct/personality disorders;
- Sexual offending;
- Disabilities;
- Truancy and lack of opportunities for gainful occupation and employment;
- Their families being in a state of chaos; or
- Persistent and serious offending.” (Social Services Strategic Policy Group, 1995:26).

The Service has recognised these concerns and there have been four major initiatives in practice and/or in co-ordination with other services over the past few years. Firstly, the ‘Manitoba Risk Estimation System’ provides a format for the assessment of risk, once abuse is substantiated (Reid, Sigurdson, Christianson, Wood and Wright, 1995; Reid and Sigurdson, 1996; Smith, 1995; Smith, 1998). Secondly, and more pertinent to my research report the ‘Strengthening Families’ initiative promotes interagency co-operation. This is particularly relevant for this study in the liaison it promotes with other agencies such as schools (Henderson, 1998, Ministry of Health, Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Education, 1999). Thirdly, the ‘Youth Services Strategy’ provides assessment frameworks for youth at risk that are constantly being reviewed and a programme of new residences and training for caregivers (Hema, 1999). The fourth initiative is the co-ordination of the ‘Social Worker in Schools Programme’ (Hunter, 1996) that in 1999 saw an increase in the number of pilot placements of social workers in schools.

Another development that has been gaining momentum over the past decade is the growth of agencies approved to provide support services for children. The importance of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of these community organisations is discussed and demonstrated in *Demonstrating the effectiveness of Family and Whanau Resource Development services* (1996) and by Munford and Sanders (1999) and Briggs, Shelley and Hawkins (1999).

Problem Behaviour

“As a society we have reason to worry about our young people. Adolescents are at risk for accidental injury, violence, and the initiation of lifestyles and habits which present long-term health risks” (Cousins and Rubovits, 1993:277).

There is a plethora of studies covering different problem behaviours in children and adolescents. I found it difficult to find how problem behaviours were defined. Marcus (1999) investigated the pattern of antisocial behaviour in early adolescent males and females and noted that there is little acceptance of a classification of antisocial behaviour. He suggested three reasons for this. Firstly, antisocial behaviours cover a wide range from relatively mild to severe. Secondly, some researchers have focussed on the behaviour, while others have focussed on the person. Thirdly, very diverse methods have been used, for example self-reporting as against the rating of others. Moffitt (1993) did identify two kinds of antisocial individuals: life course persistent offenders and adolescent-limited offenders. Life-course persistent offenders begin engaging in antisocial acts before adolescence. In contrast, adolescent-limited offenders start during adolescence and generally engage in vandalism, substance abuse, status offences (such as running away from home) and theft (Marcus, 1999:34).

Other research supports Moffitt’s (1993) two categories. Gaoni et al. (1998) note that behaviour problems are usually first noticed by the time a child has commenced primary school, and are likely to peak between the ages of eight to fifteen. Overton (1995:52) in an Aotearoa/New Zealand study of primary school records found that three quarters of the students who were suspended for behaviour problems had “engaged repeatedly in a

number of unacceptable behaviours during their Standard 4 year". *The Christchurch Health and Development Study*, a longitudinal study of 1265 children born in 1977, discovered that problem behaviour is a factor for the same group of children through the ages of eight to fourteen (Fergusson, Horwood and Lynskey, 1994). These concepts are relevant to my research because one young woman had been what her parents called a 'problem' from an early age, the other three reportedly only started to misbehave in their early adolescence.

As to the causes of problem behaviour, Goff and Goddard (1999) studied a sample of 544 high school students and state that it is possible that problem behaviour is the result of a deviant self-image, which arises from values that have been adopted as "guiding principles" (Goff and Goddard, 1999:47). For instance it may be that the need for peer approval is paramount which means that attaining peer approval by antisocial acts may be a rational choice for individuals whose goals are frustrated within the conventional scene. Goff and Goddard (1999) relate this to strain theory (Agnew and Brezina, 1997:84) where strain is produced when there is a gap between needs and the means to fulfill those needs. Delinquent behaviour can be seen as an illegal or unapproved means of fulfilling desired ends, for example theft to obtain desired goods. When so-called delinquent teenagers behave well for a period this can mean that they have found alternative means of fulfilling their needs.

I did not explore the behaviours of the young women in depth as I was more interested in their perspectives and perceptions. I required a brief background in the general theories of problem behaviour and also of what could be seen as its opposite, resilience. Resilience is briefly overviewed later in this chapter. Below I concentrate on those specific behaviours admitted by the young women interviewed. These were attempted suicide, non-attendance at school, either through truancy or suspension and constant running away.

Suicide

Two of the young women in this study had attempted suicide at least once. Aotearoa/New Zealand has the highest rate of suicide for females between the ages of 15 and 24

years in the OECD (Andrews et al., 1998:23). Statistics for 1996 show that around twice as many females (417) than males (214) attempted suicide in the 15 to 19 year old age group and the figures in the 0 to 14 years age group are more than three times as many suicide attempts by females (95) as compared to males (24) (Coggan et al, 1999:58). McDowell and Zuginskas (1994) and Silva (1997) confirm that young women are more at risk of attempting suicide than young men.

Marttunen, Henrikson, Isometsa, Heikkinen, Aro and Lonnqvist (1998) look at the reasons for completed suicides for adolescents with no history of mental health disorder. They conclude that adolescents with no mental health history, communicated suicidal thoughts for the first time just before their suicide, and that difficulties with the law were, for this group, a more common precipitant than for the group with a recognised psychiatric problem.

Non-attendance at school

Non-attendance at school, either through truancy or expulsion, is seen as a problem of major proportions with serious social and emotional consequences both in New Zealand (Kelly, 1990; Consumer Magazine, May 1994) and overseas (Thompson, 1995; Blyth and Milner, 1993; Cohen, 1994; Rickford, 1995 and 1996; Campbell, 1996 and Reid 1997). Therefore I was interested in exploring school attendance with the young women interviewed for this research.

Bjerregaard and Smith (1993) report that lack of school success is a factor in gang participation, particularly with girls. Conversely a study discussed by Gilligan (1991) notes that female school dropouts, at the time of dropping out, are among the brightest and the least depressed. "Lively intelligent and willful girls at both ends of the century and the social class spectrum thus find themselves in trouble at adolescence." Gilligan (1991:13).

Bennathan and Tiotto (1994) question whether education is sufficiently prioritised by social workers with so many children who are in care not attending school. Similarly, reports from White (1996), Hirst (1996) and Campbell (1996) claim that 40 to 50% of

children in the care of authorities in England do not attend school. It would be interesting to have an Aotearoa/New Zealand comparison, but I was unable to find this.

The New Zealand School Trustees Association Report from the Taskforce on Truancy Suspensions and Expulsions (1994) does look for ‘at risk’ factors, and emphasises the need to work with young people in the context of their family, their school and their community. The importance of environmental factors is stressed.

The Youth Law Project (1997) researched the effects of school suspension on young people in New Zealand. The perspective of this study was very interesting as it had the objective of hearing the views of the young people involved to record any suggestions they had and to look at the effects of school suspensions on their lives. One of the comprehensive list of suggestions for change arising from this study was that the hearing with the Board of Trustees should be run more on the lines of the Family Group Conference process. A similar proposal to have a School Community Conference to deal with suspensions is put forward by McElrea (1996). Marks (1995) and Blyth and Milner (1993) note that children’s views are not included in school procedures. I was interested to hear whether the young women thought their views were listened to within the processes of the Service.

I found a study by Reid (1997) topical in the light of both the ‘Social Workers In Schools and the ‘Strengthening Families’ initiatives mentioned earlier. Reid (1997) looks at truancy and exclusion in Norwich. He promotes the benefits of agencies working together and having more school counsellors and social workers in schools.

Running away

All of the young women participants interviewed in this study had run away from home several times. Crespi and Sabatelli (1993) talk of the individuation and differentiation constructs as providing a framework to view runaway behaviour “as a reaction to poor distance regulation and support dynamics within the family system” (Crespi and Sabatelli, 1993:876). They consider that young people need a family system that supports individuality while at the same time providing a base of intimacy and

connection if they are to successfully individualise and be able to act in a self-differentiated way. Coco and Courtney (1998) perceive runaway behaviour as evidence that there are problems with adaptability and cohesion within the family. Schaffner (1998) notes that at least 12% of American youths run away at least once before the age of eighteen. He performed a qualitative study of 26 runaways. He discusses what he terms 'running to' behaviour in younger girls and 'running from' behaviour in older girls. Schaffer (1998:626) states that 'runaways do not want to leave home' they want to find ways to love their parents. He says that most do not run far from home and most have a plan of action that includes " finding needed love and protection somewhere else" (Schaffer, 1998:620). Schaffer sees running away as a search for connection with others outside the family who will provide nurture and protection and says that runaways often seek reconciliation with family members. He stresses the importance of having this reconciliation facilitated. He argues that it is a 'fixable' problem provided there has not been serious abuse and that reconciliation can and does take place. I was interested in exploring the participants' views on counselling and assistance with reconciliation.

Communication and perspective

In my research I wanted the participants to tell their stories. There is a large and growing body of research that emphasises the importance of listening to the voices of children and of affected parties in general. This includes the suggestions in the Maxwell et al. (1995) proposal, the papers by O'Reilly (1996 and 1998), the studies by Smith et al. (1998) and Tapp (1998). O'Reilly (1998) in an address to the Family Courts Association discusses advocacy for children, the rights of children, allowing children and young people to have a say in decisions that are likely to affect them and "ensuring appropriate systems exist to recognise the rights and needs of all children and young people and respond to them accordingly"(O'Reilly, 1998:214). In this paper he also talks of the ecological theory of human development, the impact of environmental trauma, and the need to see the child in the context of the family and the family in the context of its wider surroundings.

Of particular interest to me were a group of Aotearoa/New Zealand writers who looked at the importance of the perspective of the child, and the importance of interviewing and listening to children (Smith, 1995; Pryor, 1997; Borg, 1998 Ledger, 1998; Gold, 1998; Gollop, 1998; Tapp, 1998). This importance is well demonstrated in the paper investigating foster and kinship care by Smith et al. (1998). Other papers addressing this area in a more general manner, have been mentioned earlier (Marks, 1995; Blyth and Milner, 1993; Youth Law Project, 1997).

The rights and participation of children in matters that affect them has a legal basis in the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) Article 12, which gives the child the "right to express an opinion, and have that opinion taken into account, in any matter or procedure affecting the child" (UNCROC, 1989:4). Professionals working with children now have an obligation to seek the perspectives of children and not to rely on adult centred explanations of incidents (Mason and Falloon, 1999:9).

In care and protection the importance of two-way communication with both families and young people needs emphasis. This is significant in relation to accessing accurate information so that discussion, investigation and identification of the problem can be facilitated (Paikoff and Collins, 1991; Smetana, 1991; Tatar, 1998; Brown, 1999). Established communication will then provide a basis for looking at options for positive outcomes for adolescents and their families. The literature surveyed highlights the vital importance of the children and their families each having a voice and perspective that is listened to and given weight.

Therapy/Resources

In my research I was curious to see what ideas for change were offered to the young women and their families in order to inform my own practice. How does a social worker know what theoretically based, sound, therapeutic interventions will work for young people with problems? *Demonstrating the effectiveness of Whanau and Family Resource Development services* (1996), Briggs et al. (1999) and Laxon (1999) comment on the need for services to be monitoring and evaluated. Below I have sketched a very

brief outline of possible therapies/ resources and perspectives relevant to working with adolescents and their families.

Resilience

A number of authors look at factors of resilience. Hirst (1999) explores the theory of resilience while Johnson, Howard, and Dryden (1998) discuss Bronfenbrenner's (1979), ecological systems theory as a basis for research seeking to promote resilience, rather than focussing on risk factors. Johnson et al. (1998) propose a research perspective aimed at identifying external protective factors that "views the child as developing within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment" (Johnson et al., 1998:169). They state their belief that programmes for change need a sound research base, a belief echoed by Calhoun, Jurgens and Chen (1993), Howard and Johnson (1999) and the new Minister of Justice, Phil Goff (Laxon, 1999: A7).

Atwool (1998) lists three factors that she thinks are responsible in making some children resilient in the face of adversity. These are:

- individual characteristics, especially competence and self-esteem;
- supportive family;
- availability of support in the wider environment, especially the availability of positive role models (Atwool, 1997:156).

Agnew and Brezina (1997) note several studies that suggest that while the presence of multiple risk factors markedly increase the chance of behaviour disorder, these can be balanced by protective factors such as high self efficacy and social competence.

Sport is seen as a factor able to enhance resilience and self-esteem while providing enjoyment. Pinel (1998) looks at the enjoyment factor in youth sport. He identifies seven sources of enjoyment for young people in sport. His goal is to provide an intervention that will enhance the enjoyment of sport for youth participants. Patterson and Pegg (1999) also support the provision of positive leisure activities as sources of strength and motivation for adolescents.

Therapy/counselling options.

I was interested in the therapy options to see what had been offered to the young women and their families who were the subject of my research. I was impressed by the focus of many of the writers which is now on strengths rather than problems (Cohen, 1999). A few are listed below.

- Minuchin (1993) talks of the need to change the family's organisation in a way that makes movement possible.
- Selekman (1993) looks at the 'Solution-Oriented Brief Therapy' model for adolescents and their families. He provides guidelines for therapists and promotes creativity, fun and initiative in therapy.
- Worden (1991) uses an 'assessment tree' as an aid which offers a framework of questions to provide a brief summary of the issues for the adolescent and their family.
- White (1990) discusses the issues of power in family therapy. He gives illustrative accounts of the importance of 'externalising' problems, and the use of narrative therapy.
- Ainsworth and Maluccio (1998) provide a valuable article on the reunification of the family, after an out of home placement.

I have attached Appendix I with a list of further Aotearoa/New Zealand references for interest.

In this chapter I have sketched a broad outline of what is a mushrooming body of research literature about adolescents, their families, their problems and how these may be addressed. I found the literature almost addictive as each study prompted my interest in searching for further opinions and I was fascinated at how the perspective of research has evolved over time as the focus on client rights and on strengths-based practice has developed. These perspectives have also influenced my approach to research methodology as discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Methodology

To choose to do research involves choices which are based on what we think the world is like, and moral choices because we do what we do because we think this is the way things ought to be done. The choice of method for attacking the problem and the prior choice of the problem to attack, also necessarily supports a particular point of view against other points of view, and therefore involves a power dimension. One group of people's interests, causes and viewpoints are necessarily furthered at the expense of those of other individuals and groups

(Bryson, 1979:88).

The above quote is particularly relevant to research questions which like mine relate to children and young people when it is important that the researcher continually asks “whose interests are being served?” (Goodnow, 1985:29).

The previous section has explored a selection of relevant literature. This section looks at the theoretical perspectives, methodology and research methods that I used in this study. In designing this research, my focus was not so much that there is a particular way that things ought to be, but rather, that there is a better way to do things. This has necessitated my analysing my personal beliefs, perspectives and methods of research and of social work.

Theoretical perspective

My general approach to this research was from a feminist theoretical perspective. By this I mean the broad view of society that believes that women's voices and the position of women have been, and are, mainly subordinate to men's voices and position in what is a male-dominated society (Lewis, 1981; McRobbie, 1982; Harding, 1986; Lather, 1986; Stanley and Wise, 1990)

Feminism

The feminist research tradition is a living and exciting process and, as such, encompasses internal debates and different methodologies. The philosophical base of the feminist research tradition is the recognition of the need to have an understanding of oppression, and of the separate and yet shared multiplicities in the roles of women. It is committed to challenge, to openness and to advocacy for those researched (Oakley, 1981:58). This is the basis for my research philosophy.

Millman and Kanter (1975) talk of the startling impact the women's movement has had in the previous decade in enabling women to see and speak about things that were always there, yet were unacknowledged. This is directly relevant to my research. There is a co-relation between the position of women as it was when the feminist research tradition was in its infancy and that of children and young people today (Oakley, 1994; Smith, 1995). The perspectives of children and young people as individuals and as a group have been as invisible in social science research as were the perspectives of women a few decades ago. McRobbie (1978:96) talks in particular about the missing dimension of adolescent girls.

Smith (1995:5) discusses how children, even since the feminist revolution, have been hidden within the family so that the families, not the children are treated as objects of analysis. She says that, "children need to be re-conceptualised in their own right as contributors, moral interpreters of the world, participants in shared decisions." Maxwell et al. (1995) in their proposals for the improvement of, and research into the Service, highlight the importance of the perspectives of both the children and their families.

I needed a research method therefore that allowed the young people to be interviewed as individuals separately from their parents or caregivers. My belief was further reinforced by Bray and Pugh's (1998:153) comment on the need to listen to the voices of children with their concern that after social services intervention children reportedly often blame themselves.

Feminist epistemology

Feminist epistemology, like feminism, is broad-based and covers a broad range of beliefs. It was founded in the 1970s in a time of increasing challenges to the positivist assumptions of scientific neutrality in the social sciences that had contributed to the omission of women's experiences of research (Millman and Kanter, 1975; Bell and Newby, 1976:27; Lather, 1986:440; Smith and Noble-Spruell, 1986:135; Jayaratne and Stewart, 1991).

The feminist research tradition develops a process of knowledge gathering that seeks to accurately represent the social world of women, and with that representation, aims to provide a valid basis for the improvement of women's conditions in the world. It considers that the situation of women and other oppressed groups has a social base and therefore can be changed. (Graham, 1984; Finch, 1986; Jayaratne and Stewart, 1991). Harding (1986:162) sees feminist empiricism as challenging firstly, the assumption that the social identity of the observer is irrelevant; secondly, the potency of science's methodology and sociological norms; and thirdly, the belief that science must be protected from politics.

These challenges are particularly relevant in this research as I am a social worker for the Service. In the choice of my research topic my personal interest in children, young people, and women's concerns has been a determining and motivating factor. These interests are also relevant to the way I have written up and analysed the data.

Feminist epistemological principles

This research has been guided by the five feminist epistemological principles of Stanley and Wise (1990:23), the seven guidelines for qualitative research outlined by Meis (1983:122), the general principles stressed by Lindbloom (1987) and the proposals of Maxwell et al. (1995). Throughout all of these there is a strong emphasis on the importance of the perspective of those being researched.

Stanley and Wise's (1990:23) principles stress the importance of:

- the relationship between the researcher and the researched;
 - using emotion as a research experience;
 - the intellectual autobiography of the researchers;
 - the method of understanding the differing realities of the researched and the researcher;
- and
- the question of power in the data collection and writing.

I applied these principles to my research in combination with the seven guidelines of Meis (1983) as discussed below.

Meis (1983:122) seven guidelines gave me a framework against which to check my process. Firstly, the quantitative concepts of 'value-free' and objectivity are replaced by a 'conscious partiality'. Feminist research writers (Oakley, 1981; Finch, 1986; Lather, 1986; Dominelli, 1991) contend that objectivity is not possible and the acknowledgement of subjectivity gives an essential honesty to the process. I was open with the participants about my role as a social worker and the purpose of my research, and found that my consciousness and appreciation of their perspective was widened.

Secondly, research is seen as having a commitment to those who are vulnerable and needs to serve the interests of the dominated, exploited groups, and not legitimise the interests of the powerful, dominant groups (Graham, 1984:123; Jayaratne and Stewart, 1991). The interview process I used although partly structured allowed the participants to provide me with the information they considered important. Park (1991:14) discusses the importance of having a partnership between the researcher and the researched and the need for consultation to ensure accuracy of recording. I did this by sending the participants copies of the material that I would be using in writing up the research and by making any changes that they requested.

Thirdly, the researcher takes on an active participatory role and attempts to bring about change. I was open in my acknowledgement of interest and about my position within

the Service. Jourard (1971) discusses the need for researchers to be open about their role and their objectives. He warns that lack of trust on the part of the participants can see them misrepresenting their experiences and promotes the importance of mutual disclosure as a means of building trust.

Fourthly, it is openly implied that the aim of the research is to bring about change to the present situation. I was very conscious of my responsibility to promote change as requested by the participants, and my stated aim was to look for means to improve the service provided to the research group.

Fifthly, the research process must assist with the development of a new consciousness about the situation being researched, so that those being researched have the opportunity to plan action to improve their situation. All the participants were interested in talking over their experiences and in reflecting on what had happened and why. My responsibility has been to promote their views by writing this report.

Sixthly, the raising of collective consciousness needs a study of individual and social history and experience. The aim of this research is to highlight another perspective, that of the client, in the hope of raising the level of understanding of those working with young people and their families.

The seventh guideline considers the need to collect the experiences of oppressed groups, and advocates the shift from individual to group discussions. The limitations of time and travel meant that I was not able to organise group discussions with the participants.

Lindblom (1987) postulates that research tends to be based around three principles of: being non-partisan in its pursuit of public interest; having a practical concern for workable policies; and having a requirement to meet the needs of public officials. He then argues that what is really needed is the opposite of this. That research: needs to be partisan; has a duty to free the mind of the public from constraints; and instead of serving public officials, it needs to help the 'ordinary' citizen. I agree with and was influenced by his latter argument. My approach was personal, I wanted to be able to

write about the experiences of those researched and the topic was born out of my frustrations of trying to find effective means to work within the Service with troubled teenagers and their families. As previously mentioned I was also heavily influenced by the proposals for measuring the effectiveness of the Service put forward by Maxwell et al. (1995).

Methodology

Within the social sciences over the past century or more, two major frameworks for research have developed. These broad frameworks encompass many ideologies.

The first of the major broad methodologies is the deductive, modern, quantitative, or positivist perspective (Smith and Noble-Spruell, 1986:134; Babbie, 1989:39). It is designed to give a numerical, scientific result that can be tabulated. The second approach is the interpretist, post-positive or postmodern approach (Rein, 1983:81; Finch, 1986:1996; Rosenau, 1991:109). I have chosen the second approach for my research mainly as it has a concern to understand the world from the point of view of the participant, has a commitment to improving that world and is consistent with the feminist framework.

Research method

This section covers the research proposal, ethical issues, selection of the population, the selection of the sample, the initial contact, the setting up of the personal interviews, the interview procedures and the later contact with the participants.

The research proposal

My proposal involved researching the experiences of adolescent girls who have been clients of the Service as previously described. Their experiences were to be researched by having personal interviews with the young women and also with the parent who had been their main caregiver at the time of their involvement with the Service.

The participants for this study were to be selected randomly using data from several years earlier that is from between 1993 and 1995 from a large urban office of the

Service. I chose this time frame so that the young women concerned would now be at least 17 or 18 years of age and may be able to look back on their experiences with less trauma and some insight.

Ethical issues

My research was subject to Massey University's *Code of Ethical Conduct for Research and Teaching Involving Human Subjects*, and required approval by the University's Human Ethics Committee prior to commencement of the field work. The major principles of the code are informed consent (of the participants), confidentiality (of the data and the individuals providing it), minimizing of harm (to participants and researcher), truthfulness (the avoidance of unnecessary deception), and social sensitivity (to the age, social class, gender, culture, and religion of the participants). The proposal to this committee included all the information to be given to the participants and the processes, such as the Interview Schedule and the Consent Form, to be used in the research process. These are discussed in more detail later in this section.

I also needed permission from the National Office Research Access Committee of the Service. A condition of their approval was that I abide by the ASSR Code of Ethics and sign a Deed of Confidentiality. My proposal to this committee and the Deed of Confidentiality are attached as Appendices A and B.

Ethical issues have been the subjects of extensive debate by feminist researchers, notably Finch (1986:203). Finch sees the important ethical issues for qualitative research as confidentiality of data and protection of the participants. This is for two main reasons, the first being the position of trust that is built in talking woman to woman. Finch (1984:74) outlines the special characteristics that help women researchers for example the way that women are likely to welcome a chance to talk to other women. The second issue is that, in research on a small scale, the participants are more readily identifiable.

The view of Wise (1990) is that ethical guidelines are not complete in themselves. They serve only to alert researchers to areas such as the imbalance of power and the potential

for exploitation of data. There is a need for a commitment to give careful thought and questioning of one's own power base. She argues that the only justification for research is that it provides an opportunity for the participants to be heard. To do this the information given by the participants must be reported in a manner that promotes their objectives, in this case, improvements in the service given to young women and their families. Once the proposal was approved I contacted the office concerned and arranged to access the database.

The population

The population from which the sample was drawn for this study included all those adolescent girls who had been identified in the category of Behaviour/Relationship Difficulties by the Service within a specified period (1 January 1993 to 30 June 1995) in one large urban office of the Service. The period was chosen so that the adolescent girls would now be at least 17 or 18 years old. This was in the hope that both the parents and young women would be able to look at their activities of a few years earlier with some reflection, and less trauma about issues that could still have a significant degree of hurt for them (Marks, 1995:97). The idea of the delayed timeframe was to minimise this risk of trauma, but three to four years is not long, especially if there are serious and ongoing differences within families. The vulnerability of the participants needed to be considered. Participants were advised of counselling services that were available to them.

The categorisation system had changed in the Service during the selected period. Up until 30 June 1994 notifications to the Service were categorised when the referral to the service was made. There were three broad categories could relate to problem behaviour. These were Problem Behaviour, Leaving Home, and Relationship Difficulties. The categorisation relied on assessment by the duty social worker, or the supervising social worker at point of entry to the Service. In 1993 the number of referrals to the Service nationwide for these three categories combined was 9,622. Out of a total of 28,756 notifications to the Service that year the percentage for this combination of categories was 33% (Annual Report, 1993:37).

From 1 July 1994, the procedures in the Service changed. From then categorisation took place following case allocation and assessment by a social worker. The Service's database thereafter combined all the cases (both pre and post 1 July 1994) under what is the present categorisation of "Behavioural/Relationship Difficulties". This was the categorisation used for this study.

The time frame for the participant population was first set from 1 January 1993 to 30 June 1994. For the office of the Service in question this timeframe produced less than 12 names as potential participants. The time parameters were subsequently extended to the period from 1 January 1993 to 30 June 1995. This produced a list of 56 names. This list became the population from which the sample was drawn.

The sample

In discussion with my research supervisors it had been decided that I needed to interview three or four young women and their caregivers for my research. The sample was chosen randomly with regards to selection for contact. Determining factors for eventual selection were:

- still residing in the same area;
- being contactable by phone;
- expressing a willingness to take part, and,
- being available in the period of time set aside for the interviews.

The ethnicity of the initial population of 56 was:

NZ/European	27 (49%);
NZ/Maori	9 (16%);
NZ/European/NZ/Maori	6 (11%);
Pacific peoples	6 (11%);
Not Recorded	7 (12%); and
Maori/Pacific peoples	1 (1%)

All the eventual respondents were New Zealanders of European descent. The respondent group was deliberately kept very small. Patton (1990) says that there are no

rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. “Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility and what can be done with available time and resources” (Patton,1990:184). Patton (1990) goes on to say that the validity, insights and meaning generated from qualitative research, have more to do with the richness of the information gained, and the capabilities of the researcher than with sample size.

Spicker (1995:197) addresses the issue of who to study to represent a population. The smallness of this sample means that it cannot be considered as representative. Patton (1990) says that because a sample size is very small, this does not mean that the sampling strategy should not be random. “A small purposeful random sample aims to reduce suspicion about why certain cases were selected for study, but such a sample still does not permit statistical generalisation” (Patton,1990:179).

I chose a random sample of eight names from the above population by taking every seventh name (Bouma, 1996:124). From this initial group of eight names, only one was able to take part in the study. Of the other seven:

- two could not be contacted (valid details were not obtainable from either the current local phone book, or from the details provided for any of the relations on the Service data base);
- one refused to take part and showed no interest in the study;
- others had either moved out of the area, or were also classified, within the Service’s data base, as being victims of “Abuse (In Family)”;
- one parent wanted to take part, but, was very dissatisfied with the Service, and considered that the experience would be detrimental for the young woman concerned;
- two of the caregivers who were contacted, including the one mentioned above, wanted to have their comments recorded. These two caregivers were spoken with by phone, and their comments will be part of the discussion section;
- one caregiver was now deceased.

The population list was then amended. My initial experience had highlighted further issues like age, and the need to check regarding possible intra-familial abuse. Excluded from the original fifty six names therefore were:

- those eight already tried;
- a further four who cross-referenced with the list of notifications/assessments for “Abuse (In Family)”;
- ten who were under 13 years of age in 1995;
- one who had a comment on the data base that she needed an interpreter;
- one who was from the area of the researcher (part of the ethical agreement with the Service was that no participants were previously known to the researcher), and
- one who had aspects indicating previous abuse in the family, even though there was no actual cross reference.

A total of twenty-five names were thereby excluded from the original population list of fifty -six names.

The second list had thirty-one names as potential participants. I chose eight names randomly from this list by choosing every fourth name. From this list also, only one family of those contacted was able to take part in the study. However, all those contacted, whether parents or relations showed a real interest in the exercise. Several of the families had moved to Australia. One young woman would have really liked to take part, but she was going to be away during the data gathering period.

From the amended population list of thirty-one names, the adjacent name, that is the fifth or third name, was chosen, until in total there were four caregivers and four daughters prepared to take part. In this sample all the caregivers were parents.

As can be seen it was extremely difficult to establish contact with the participants. Only one of the families or the young women were at the addresses provided by the database. The contact phone numbers of two of the prospective participants were the same as recorded on the data base, while for others there were relatives who had listed phone numbers and who were able to give further contact details.

Of all the parents actually contacted throughout the sample selection process, there was only one parent who was not at all interested. The reasons for others not taking part were to do with availability that is being out of the area, or out of the country. However, there was one parent who was very concerned that talking over the past interaction with the Service would be very traumatic for his daughter. This particular parent was very scathing about the Service and about all social workers in general.

First contact with the participants

I initially contacted all the participants by phone. In each case I contacted the parent who had been listed as the main caregiver at the time of referral to the Service. In each case, contact with the young woman concerned was arranged by or through contact with her parent.

At this first contact I explained the reason for the research and gave an estimated time commitment. The format I used was that of the Letter of Introduction set out in Appendix C. All the parents contacted at this stage sounded interested in the project and expressed a wish to participate.

Of the four parents who were able to be part of the research exercise, the parent then contacted the daughter in two of these cases. This was because there was no certain way that they could give me to make this contact directly. In the other two cases, the daughters arrived during the parent's interview, and arrangements were made to interview later.

All the participants in the research agreed to take part, hoping that the sharing of their experiences may help improve the service given to others going through similar traumatic times. These reasons for participating were similar to those found by Opie (1992) "nearly every participant in my caregiving study agreed to take part because of their desire to help others through making their experience available and through their critique of the health system" (Opie, 1992:64).

The personal interviews

The personal interviews were conducted over approximately a four week period during October/November 1998. Three young women and four parent groups were interviewed in person (sometimes with other family members present at their request). They were given a choice of, either a neutral venue, or the Service's office, or their home as the place to conduct the interviews. One mother and daughter chose the Service's office. The other interviews took place in the participants' homes. The personal interviews (each taking approximately one hour) were taped with the consent of the participants.

The interviews were then transcribed. A copy of that part of the material for use in the final report was then sent to each participant, with a stamped addressed envelope and a letter. I also arranged to make a follow-up phone call to each participant about a week later to check on whether they were happy with the material.

The participants were talking about events that had happened between 1993 and 1997 and as a result some of the events were forgotten or hazy (Marks, 1995:81; Marttunen et al., 1998). Participants had been involved with the Service for varying lengths of time ranging from just over a year, to just under four years during the timeframe of 1993 to 1997. Five of the interviews were with either the parent on their own or the daughter on her own. In the other two cases there were other family members who wanted to be part of the interviews. Two young people were interviewed on their own, and one chose to have her parents, sister and cousin present. One young woman changed her mind about being part of the study after an interview time had been set for her and her parents had been interviewed. This young woman could not be contacted except through her parent/s who did want her to take part, but once she had changed her mind (although I checked again with her parents about a month later) she declined to be part of the research. Her parents' views are incorporated into my research as they had expressed great disappointment at the possibility of not being included.

Interview procedure

Each interview began with a brief introduction of the research project and also an acknowledgement of my role in the Service and in this exercise. I emphasised that my researcher role was paramount for the purposes of the interview and writing up of the material gathered. I also explained that this research contributed to my gaining a Masters degree at Massey University. (This was also made clear to all participants in the introductory telephone conversation, as was my occupation as a social worker for the Service). Participants were given time to read over the Information Sheet (Appendix D), the information on Confidentiality (Appendix E) and to study and sign the Consent Form (Appendix F). In hindsight it would have been better to send the Information Sheet to participants prior to meeting for the interview. My reasons for not doing this were mainly to do with the time frames and that once contact was made the participants seemed to want the interviews to happen quite soon. The participants were given time to read the Information Sheet, and were not pressed to sign the Consent Form. I stressed that their participation was voluntary.

Graham (1984:110) discusses the use of an interview guide to introduce issues and themes on which participants are encouraged to reflect, and states that semi-structured interviews encourage participants to take an active part in the interview. I therefore did structure the interviews to some degree. Polson (1998:9) emphasises the importance of mixing easy and hard questions when interviewing children and young people, and notes that the researcher has the responsibility to avoid leaving a feeling of failure with the researched. Participants have the right to be left feeling better for having shared their story. The interview questions had been drawn up with the help of my research supervisors and had been part of the material sent for approval to the Ethics Committees of both the Service and the University. I had some concern that my role as a social worker would detract from my ability to carry out this research. Stanley's (1990:113) view that there is a need for social research to be done by insiders reassured me, as did Patton's (1990) tongue in cheek list of characteristics of qualitative research projects (Appendix J).

Lather (1986:446) sees the goal of emancipatory research as being to encourage self-reflection and deeper understanding on the part of the persons being researched, as least as much as it is to generate empirical knowledge. She gives a set of procedures as a framework. These are interviews conducted in an interactive dialogue manner; sequential interviews, if possible individually and in small groups; open negotiation of meaning; and discussions of false consciousness to encourage critique of ideologies. I made a conscious effort to fulfill at least the first three of her procedures. These seem to fit well with the principles of Meis (1983) discussed earlier. Oakley (1981:50) found that three-quarters of the women interviewed in one of her research projects said that being interviewed had led them to reflect on their experiences and given them a valuable outlet for verbalisation of their feelings.

The focus of the interview themes was to elicit information from the participants about their experiences with the Service. The themes and questions broadly followed the areas suggested by Maxwell et al. (1995:1 and 2). The experiences of the parents and daughters were explored in the six broad areas as set out in the Interview Schedule Appendix G.

The interviews were kept relatively informal as despite the format of questions within each area and theme, my intention was to encourage and allow the participants to share their experiences and tell their story freely in their own words (Solas, 1995:3). Patton (1990:196) says that the qualitative design needs to remain sufficiently flexible and open to allow exploration of the matter under study. My approach was broadly constructivist, in that it was very important to me that I heard the participants' reality (Greene, Jensen, Jones, 1996) as this was the principal objective of the research exercise.

I had set out the interview schedule as questions within a set of themes. The purpose of this was explained to the participants. Each interview followed the same format. I would have liked to have done just straight narrative style interviews without a schedule of structured questions, but felt that I did not have the experience as a researcher to be able to collate data gathered solely in this manner.

Later contact with participants

Approximately six weeks after the personal interviews, I contacted the three young women and the four parents. I contacted each separately and consulted with them by telephone regarding the content of the interview reports that I had sent to them. Each had a copy of the report from their interview, with the selected material to be used in writing up the report. None of the participants returned the report with or without comments. However, each participant had the chance at that stage to add to, delete, or change the material to be used. With two of the young women in particular there was considerable discussion about the material, and three of the parents had additions and/or alterations they wanted to make. They were also provided with my address and a contact phone number, should they later wish to amend or add anything. The data gathered is set out in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

The findings

Because individuals may evoke and experience environments in unique ways we need to know about people's individual perceptions, beliefs and understandings relating to what they are doing and what is happening to them (Ballard 1986:50).

This section focuses on the individual experiences and perceptions of the sample participants as communicated to me during the interviews. It covers the profile of the participants, the first contact with the Service, the problem/reason for requesting help, what happened (including the Family Group Conference), communication, effectiveness and comments and ideas.

Profile of the participants

The information in the profiles was obtained from the Service records and from additional material gathered during the interviews. The findings relating to and gathered from the young women and from their parents are recorded separately.

The parents

Of the four parents, two were couples, and two were single mothers (one of whom had separated at around the time of first contact with the Service and the other had separated a number of years earlier). All the participants were of New Zealand European ethnicity.

All of the parents initially expressed very negative opinions of the Service, for example “... *you won't like what you hear.*” Three of the parents were employed at the time of the interviews for this report, and one was actively seeking employment. Three of the parents had close contact with and support from their parent/s, the young women’s grandparents.

All of the parents reported having made significant attempts to improve the situation by using other resources, for example family, counselling/therapy and the health services, before contacting the Service. They had all at some time been in contact with the Community or Youth Aid Constable. Two had tried extensive therapies with specialists, one also with health and drug and alcohol units and the school counsellors. One mother had enrolled her daughter at an alternative school across the other side of the city. One family had sent their daughter to live with relatives for a period of months. In all instances, whether there were one or two parents (and in the families where there were two parents, the fathers were significantly involved with their daughters) the person who had had most involvement with the Service, and who was reportedly most obviously stressed, was the mother. The parents in the four groups interviewed presented as caring, resourceful and prepared to reflect on their experiences with the Service.

The young women

The three young women who participated in the research, and the one who declined to take part, are of New Zealand European ethnicity and are now aged 18 or 19. Although they had been referred to the Service between 1993 and 1995 some of their cases remained open with the Service until 1997. None of the young women had been involved with the Youth Justice section of the Service, although all had some involvement with the Youth Aid or Community Constable section of the Police Service.

At the time of their first contact with the Service the three young women interviewed were officially considered to be living with their parent/s. One of the young women was living with both parents, and two lived with their mother. One was the oldest sibling in her family, and two were the youngest. All of the young women had one problem in common in that at some stage they had run away from home. None of the young women attended a 'normal' secondary school during the time of her involvement with the Service. One was suspended, one had already enrolled in an alternative-type school, and one did not attend school. At some stage they were all enrolled with the Correspondence School. Two of the young women had attempted suicide at least once either prior to, or

during, their involvement with the Service. Both had been hospitalised as a result. Neither was referred to the Service as a direct result of their suicide attempts.

The placements of two of the young women had resulted in adverse media attention for the Service at the time. These placements had been considered totally unsuitable by the young women's parents who had then complained to a higher authority. I knew nothing of these issues until advised by the parents during the interviews.

All of the young women currently have contact with the parent or parents interviewed. In two cases this contact is rather irregular, in that days may go by without contact. In one case, this was the pattern even when the daughter was living at home. At the time of the interviews, the young women were not employed, but the three interviewed were actively seeking employment. Of the three, one now lived with her parent but that was on a very casual basis, as explained above.

The three young women interviewed presented as articulate and reflective and ready to offer thoughtful insights into their experiences.

The individual participants are not identified below in any way. This is to maintain confidentiality given the small sample size. I have used Italics to highlight the words used by the participants.

Throughout this report, it is noticeable that much of the interview material is characterised by breaks in sentences, change of direction, and emotions. The use of quotations, even when the sentences were not complete helps to emphasise the generosity of the participants in reliving their past personal trauma in the interests of improving the system for others. Opie (1992) discusses 'recursive' speech patterns. These patterns are evident in many of the quotations used, where the sentences are not finished. "Conversational speech is marked by redundancy, repetitiveness and incompleteness and depends extensively on the listener's ability to interpret a range of nonverbal communicative features" (Opie, 1992:61).

The first contact with the Service

The parents

The road to the first contact with the Service had been a long one for all of the parents. All had experienced problems with their daughter for some time before the contact with the Service was made. In only one instance did the parent actually make the first contact. In the other three cases, the Community Constable, or the General Practitioner, or other family members, made the contact because of concern for the parent/s and the young woman. In the case of the parent who did make the referral, other agencies had recommended this because “... *they could no longer handle the situation.*”

Only one of the parent/s was in any way satisfied with the first contact. That parent was pleased that the Service agreed to place her daughter even though she found it very hard having to let her daughter go. She was very stressed, physically ill, felt close to breakdown, and had told the social worker that if something did not happen, she would either kill herself or her daughter, so she agreed for the Service to take her “...so that *they could help her and help me.*”

Others were disappointed with the response they received from the Service. Two had long waits before they were contacted, even though they considered the matter very urgent, and all felt in some way that they were not supported. One mother waited five weeks for a visit from the social worker, and even then there was no action until her daughter went missing. Another waited three weeks before there was any contact back from the Service.

I asked for Respite Care then, that took a long, long time to initiate. It took weeks and weeks of me phoning constantly... I got the police youth aid, the schools, everybody involved. [To phone in support]... I think my daughter had two suicide attempts at that stage...she was just skin and bone.

Three of the parent/s reported that in the first face to face meeting with the social worker they felt that their problem was minimised because there was no apparent abuse. “*I felt I was very much on trial... I remember feeling very frustrated and angry,*

... kind of bewildered, that this was the place for children and parents to go to and it just wasn't happening."

Another thought that the focus of the social worker was on abuse, and when this did not seem to be the case, the social worker lost interest and nothing was done. "*She said 'Oh, well' ... she didn't sort of think there was much they could do at that stage... But I said but she's being violent towards me. There are gaps in my memory, it was such a stressful time.*"

Another parent told me:

I was quite in the dark (about the role of the Service), but I sort of opened up to the lady, and I told her that her behaviour was a bit out of control, and she started to think 'poor my daughter' poor her, rather than us trying to do the right thing. She was only thirteen and she just wanted to do what she wanted to do... she would just walk out of the house, and it would be pitch dark ... she was running away, not attending school, and being violent to her younger sibling.

All the parent/s noted that at the time of first contact with the Service, they were very concerned for their daughter's safety and at the same time they were themselves very stressed by what had been happening with their daughters.

The young women

In the following subsection I have made liberal use of quotations from the interviews with the young women, as these demonstrate clearly how they felt at the time.

For one, the first contact was when the social worker came to her home, and talked to her and her mother. "*I didn't know what they did ... I didn't know what to expect... I expected more than I got... for me it was pretty urgent, but they didn't sort of tend to agree with that.*"

Another's first contact was when the police phoned her mother, and her mother advised the police to phone the Service. The Police then took her to a 'Girls Home'. "*I saw the social worker on the first day that I was in the house...and then the next day I ran away.*"

Another was picked up by a social worker from a place that her mother considered unsafe. She was taken to a Police Station where

I was sitting there for hours and hours and hours in this room where I couldn't get out... I sat there for hours, wondering what was going to happen and I think for all this time, he'd been looking for somewhere to take me or somewhere for me to stay, and he couldn't so he took me back ... to the place he'd picked me up from.

The problem

The parents

As mentioned above, one problem common to all the young women was that they were running away from home. Two also had attempted suicide, and had at some stage been hospitalised. None of the young women was attending a 'normal' secondary school, though one did keep attending the special-type school where her mother had enrolled her. Three of the parents were concerned that their daughters were starting to get involved in criminal activity such as drugs and stealing. Two of the parents complained about violent activity in their homes from their daughters, either towards a younger sibling, or to themselves. One mother advised that she felt particularly put down on an occasion when she refused to take her daughter back home. She recounted her recollection of the statement made to her by the Social Worker. "*I just don't know what you're going on about, all teenagers go through these problems, and I got off the phone, and I felt about this (1cm) big, the way she spoke to me.*"

Aside from this statement, none of the caregivers reported receiving any feedback about an assessment of the problem, or advice about how this may be treated.

The main over-riding issue for the parent/s was one of safety, and stress over the possibility that their daughter/s would be hurt, get involved in drugs or be raped. One mother said that she was terrified because it was the time when there were a lot of rapes in the city, and there was also a public relations exercise from the Service about safety for children. She could remember seeing publicity on the television during that time.

The young women

Two of the young women said it was clear to them that they had been the problem. They recognised that they had wanted to do as they pleased. “*The main problem was definitely me ... running away, completely disobeying...*” and “*I was being a bit naughty, and running away, and you know just out of control really...*”

The other young woman was not clear on what the problem really was.

What happened

The parents

All the parents responded very negatively to this question. For example:

Nothing, there was eventually respite care but that took weeks and 0 weeks to organise. And there was a Family Group Conference... because this was considered an emergency this took fifteen weeks to organise.

“*They took her and put her in a halfway house.*”

“*It took five weeks before anyone came to see me, but there was no real help at that stage.*” (The action in this case was taken after the young woman had run away, and her mother had reported where she was).

“*I had no options at all ... they took her away.*”

One mother reported feeling “*like somebody had ripped my heart out...*” when they took her daughter away.

The parent/s all reported that the Service had eventually placed the young women, either with caregivers or in homes. From their reports, the young women all continued to run away. Each young woman ran away from her placement at least once. None of the parent/s approved of the placements offered to their daughters.

Two placements resulted in media criticism of the Service. One of these was "*A place where there were two guys, hardly any furniture, and drugs, and my daughter was only 14.*"

In the other case the parent reported as follows.

He was a single male, who had a recent conviction for violence against two women, and he had a gun in the house, and there was an armed offenders callout, and my daughter was going to commit suicide, because of the conditions she was living in.

This parent also did not think it was appropriate to place her daughter in a house with a lot of young people with similar problems.

According to the parent/s, two of the young women found their own placements after running away from the homes they were placed in by the Service. One of these young women was first placed in a home where "*They gave her everything, they gave her freedom, they gave her whatever clothes she wanted... because we were living on one wage at the time, and we didn't have a lot of money, so it was a bit of a struggle.*" This young woman eventually found a place she wanted with a large family, where "*she was allowed to do what she liked.*"

The other one found a place with a thirty year old single man, who said he "*could see a young confused girl who needed help ... better she stayed there than on the streets.*"

All were, at some stage, referred for a Family Group Conference. Again the consensus on this type of intervention was not positive. In one case there were five or six conferences that "*I just thought were a waste of time.*" In two of the conferences the

parent/s felt totally unsupported. “*I think these Family Group Conferences in some respects are a farce. I mean you are so stressed and depressed, and my daughter had her social worker and counsellor there ...*”

For another, the mother had asked for people who had been working with her daughter to be invited. She said that she had to force this issue, and that these people were not made to feel welcome.

The reports of the process during the Family Group Conferences were quite mixed. Two parents said they felt totally unsupported, and that the social workers made the decisions. The other two parents felt that there was no input from the social workers, and they were left to try to work things out without even being presented with options.

Counselling was offered as an outcome of the conferences to three of the young women. The parent/s considered that it was offered mainly to their daughters, and even when it was planned for them to be included, this did not happen. No real effort was made for the parent/s to attend counselling, so they considered that there was no real attempt to achieve some sort of mediation or reconciliation. One of the caregivers who I had contacted by phone but who was unable to take part in the research also commented on this. She would have liked more persuasion for the young woman to attend counselling. From the parents’ perspective, help was only offered to their daughters. None of the parents felt that there had been any effective review or follow-up of the Service’s involvement.

The young women

The young women saw the placements as the main option offered to them. “*I got put in a home, and that didn’t work...About three or four times I think, and it never worked any of the times. They put me in a placement, and I ran away from there. It was horrible, it was really horrible.*”

She then returned home, and said that nothing had changed, so she was put in the same place again, and again ran away. “*After that they sort of gave up for a while, they sort of*

didn't do anything, I was just living from here to there, and there was no contact at all the whole time ... not to me personally."

Another was put in a girls' home, and ran away. She moved around a few places and found somewhere for herself. She considered that the only things they did for her was to put her onto an alternative scheme, enroll her at the Correspondence School, and offer her counselling. She thought that nobody reviewed the plan. There was one Family Group Conference, where the family worked out that she could stay at her chosen place, with conditions to do with reconciliation with her family, but nobody has reviewed this.

For the other young woman, the only option given was to go with the social worker "*you have to go here, and you can't go there...*". She also ran away several times, until she felt that one caregiver gave her a choice about staying or running away, and because of the way this was put to her, she decided to stay. Then she was allowed to stay at her special school during the week and gradually returned home.

All the young women were eventually referred for a Family Group Conference. Two young women expressed similar views of the Family Group Conference process. One just walked out, when all the families were "*yelling and screaming*" and she felt it was all her fault. She thought that a second conference may have been a bit better. The other one just felt that everyone was just sitting there talking about her and trying to sort out her life. "*You know do this and do that.*"

The third young woman, whose family had worked out a plan to let her do what she was already doing, was pleased with the Family Group Conference process because she was allowed to stay in the house she had found herself, but she did not think there had been any follow-up.

Communication

The parents

None of the parent/s were happy with the communication between themselves and the social worker. Three had problems in contacting the social worker to actually have any communication.

One parent did not think her view was heard. The role of the Service was not explained to her. There was no communication over the weeks she was waiting for some response from the Service, even though she made constant phone requests. The only communication she got back was that "*she would be contacted by the social worker.*" She felt that she had to make all the effort for any communication to happen.

I was assertive in the sense that I put forward what I needed for both myself and my daughter, but I was rejected every single time, and I was 'dumped on' by the department every time. It was a battle, a nightmare. You wonder how you can go through it and survive.

Another parent was pleased with some of the communication with the first social worker, although she said her daughter kept running away, so there was nothing really to communicate. This mother was very disappointed that she had no communication after the Family Group Conference. Another parent felt that she was sometimes "*made to feel really small.*" Her main concern was about being unable to contact the social worker.

That was another thing that was really bad, you could never get hold of anybody, if you had questions and something had happened. You couldn't get through, and then you'd leave a message on the 'voice box' and then they wouldn't get back to you, and then you'd ring another day, and 'oh they are out at a meeting' and blah blah, and you'd get them to ring you, and this was how it went on a lot of the time. You just couldn't get hold of anybody to have communication with them. I had terrible trouble getting hold of them.

This parent felt she was not listened to when she was unhappy about a placement, and had to enlist outside help to get this changed. She was also unhappy about the Family Group Conference, and felt unable to voice her concerns there. She considered that the social workers were listening more to her daughter, and trying to get her to make decisions that she did not think her daughter was capable of making at that time.

The other parents felt they were informed to a certain point, but that they started to clash with the social worker, when they disagreed.

Well I always made my voice very clear, but it got that way that the social worker and I were clashing. I wasn't going to keep my mouth shut, that's why in the end I used to ring up on the answer-phone 'rara...ra' ... she wouldn't get back to me. I don't think she liked me ...put it that way".

These parents also felt that their daughter was listened to more than they were.

The young women

Interestingly, given the parents' perspective, the three young women felt that they had no say, and that they were not listened to.

They wouldn't listen to me. It was just what they thought... that's what they did. They kept telling me there was nothing I could do about it. My parents had no say any more it was just them...I was just a piece of meat in the middle dragged from side to side. Never asked who I would like to be with... placed with... it was all do this. They made it out I had no choice.

She felt that there was much more communication between the social worker and her parent. For her, communication with the social worker was mainly about something that was going to happen, and that was it. There were no options given, and "no exploring of feelings."

For another, when asked how the communication was from the social worker to her, her response was "*It sucked. I wasn't informed on anything really except for that about the meeting and that was it.*" Was there anything good about the communication? "No." She had told the social worker what she wanted, and she did not feel that her view was heard.

For another, she felt she had no say in any decisions.

It wasn't so good in a way because you felt that you sort of felt like you were just there to be talked about and not talked to. ... and apart from that you know ... she was my social worker but she'd ring up and tell everyone else what was happening and I'd hear from somebody else that 'you're gotta do this' and then it would all get wrong 'cos all of the information would have been handed down wrong.. I don't know, I think it needs to be a bit more organised.

Effectiveness

The parents

Both the parents and the young women were asked what had worked well, and also what had not worked well.

One parent said that “*Absolutely nothing*” had worked well, and that particularly the placements had been “*totally inappropriate.*” However, when going through all the actions, this parent could say that the Service was able to get very quick help for her daughter on one occasion that she felt she could not have accomplished herself. Despite this incident she felt that the overall effect on her family was “*terrible...very damaging, I haven't really found a word for it.*”

For another, the mother had been able to have a break, but then she thought more about how it had been and said that she did not really have a break because she knew that her daughter was still running away, but at least they did not have the “*continual bad behaviour around you.*” When asked what did not work well, the response was. “*Just the system, and there was something missing. With these children there should be somewhere they're taken away so they can't run away, you know out in the bush somewhere... basically she just got her way in the end.*”

The perceived overall effect on the family was that things got worse.

Again, for another parent what was good was "*Taking her away for a while, though this was very hard.*" This parent thought her daughter was headed for the streets and she was very concerned about her safety. Also the placement, that her daughter found for herself, worked out well in the end. This parent did not think that there was any effort to build bridges, or to find out what could have helped the communication between mother and daughter. She would have liked this to happen. She said that there was no communication or follow-up at all after the Family Group Conference.

The other parent did not think anything at all worked really, except that she requested a non-molestation order when someone was "*pestering her daughter*" and she was grateful this was organised. She was particularly upset by, the communication which she described as "*very poor and frustrating...a nightmare,*" and the first placement which she thought was totally inappropriate. However, she did think that some help was better than nothing.

The young women

The young women were in some ways more positive than their parent/s. Looking at the length of time that the process had taken, and the time that has elapsed since, it is not surprising that there are differing views.

In response to a question about whether anything had worked well there were the following replies. "*No.*"

Were the placement's good ideas? "*Yea if they'd been better, and I was sort of pushed into it. I had no time to ask questions no time for anything... I remember one time being taken up there, I got locked in the car by the social worker, it was terrible... I hated it.*"

Overall she felt that any change due to the intervention of the Service was for the worse. However, again "*I don't blame CYPS entirely, but when you are told that people are there to help you and they sort of make it worse, it's a bit hard to say really.*"

This young woman had got on very well with her school counsellor, but once the Service became involved, she was told not to go to her any more but to go somewhere else.

When asked what was not good she replied. “*The placements. We were practically allowed to do what we wanted. It was just not somewhere you would put people who were what I was like... all together.*”

In response to the same questions another said that the Family Group Conference and the family plans worked well. And what did not work well was “*It was just there was no info given to me. I don't know if any info was given to Mum.*” When asked if she would contact the Service again, her response was “*I dunno... probably not.*”

And for the third young woman, when asked what was good. “*It did keep me safe. At that time it was one of the best things for me but I didn't realise it was... it was safer for me because if I had've come home I would've been getting into trouble with my friends.*”

And in discussing what was not good, she felt that it was too much, and she did not have enough spare time. She also did not like having more than one social worker. “*I think kids should only have one social worker, I mean if I had one social worker for the time that I was in care I probably would of you know gained a sort of friendship relationship*”.

She also agreed that it was right that she had been removed from the place she had run away to.

Comments and Ideas

The parents

I asked the parents and the young women if they had any ideas, was there anything they would have liked to have happened, or anything else that they wanted to add. This was a typical response. “*Even if there is a little change it will be worthwhile, too many children take their lives. I want so much for no other child or family to go through what we went through.*”

The parents would have liked immediate one to one involvement and help. They would like to have clearly explained what can and cannot be done, and some improvement in dealing with a lot of agencies. As far as social workers go one parent thought that it was very important that they actually have children of their own before they become social workers. This would mean that they would have had first hand experience with children, and not just knowledge out of books.

One parent would never have called the Service if she knew what it would be like. She would like to have had a secure unit where her daughter could be kept safe. "*If you have to have boxes to keep them safe, then have boxes.*" She considered that the law seems too much for the child's benefit, when the child has to give consent. "*It seemed everywhere I went for help, I was referred somewhere else.*"

Others would like the Service to provide some help for what parents are trying to do themselves in their home, instead of the social worker just going with what the young woman said. A place to go where "*they had to do things, like you either go home and behave, or you stay here and conform here where it is hard and military like.*" She felt that the Service was "*giving a naughty child rewards.*"

One parent in particular would have liked to be able to contact the social worker much more easily. She would like to see this improved. She also would like to have one social worker all the way through. "*Lots of different social workers and lack of consistency doesn't help. I think having the same one would build up understanding and trust.*" It would also be nice to have some communication about what her daughter thought was wrong so that parents have some idea of what needs to be changed/worked on. This parent said that in retrospect she realises now how stressed and overworked the social workers were. She said that she admires people who work with troubled youngsters. They (the social workers) are better than nothing however, at times they do not help.

Another parent echoed what two others had said that she would have liked counselling to re-build the relationship with her daughter.

The young women

The young women were asked the same questions about what they thought would have worked better, and whether they had any ideas for improvement in the service offered.

"Real nice people who care about life and not just about how they want it...more understanding for other people and not high and mighty."

"Definitely need better communication."

When asked what a place to help someone with problems would be like. She replied

"Helpful, helpful people, I know lots of social workers don't have kids themselves, to be able to comment on what parenting is like."

She would also have liked a 'stable' home to go to. Another would really have liked a way to work things out with her family. She liked having her own space, and was not able to have this with her family. She had not been living at home since she was fourteen years old.

The third young woman was very positive about the special school programme she went to, and thought more children should be referred there, as it was "awesome." (She was referred to this place by her mother before the Service became involved.) She would have liked more choices, and thought that having one social worker "*would give you a chance to build up a trust, a relationship.*" She found the changes in social worker confusing, and resented being talked about and not included in the discussions. She said that young people needed to be "*talked to, not just talked about.*"

Throughout the interviews I found that the young women and their parent/s were articulate, forthright and gave the impression of trying to be very fair. In the next chapter I discuss the data in the light of the literature studied.

Chapter 5

Discussion

My disclosure in words and actions is thus a precious gift to those who receive it. When I am in your situation, and let myself be perceived I have truly helped you to awaken and grow (Jourard, 1971:166).

I perceived the disclosures of the participants as a precious gift and hoped that it would help not only me but also the Service to awaken and grow. I was committed to understanding the perspectives of the participants, and to advocacy for that perspective and for change (Oakley, 1981; Stokes, 1985; Lather, 1986; Smith, 1995). I briefly discuss the findings under the headings used in the previous chapter that presents the data gathered in this research.

Profile of participants

During the time of their interactions with the Service the young women were all aged around thirteen or fourteen years, that is in their early adolescence, a time of major physical and psychological change (Middleton, 1993, Bjerregaard and Smith, 1993; Pipher, 1996; Smith, 1998). The literature studied demonstrates the significance of developmental issues (Erikson, 1968; Noller and Callan, 1991; Cosse, 1992; Pryor, 1997; Jaffe, 1998; Rice, 1998) and of gender issues for young women at this stage of their lives (Stern, 1991; Gilligan et al., 1991; Cosse, 1992; Pipher, 1996; Casper et al., 1996). The young women themselves seemed oblivious to these issues which I saw more as part of the background understanding needed by those working with adolescents and as explanatory material for discussion with their families.

The parents of these young women reported that they were very stressed by the actions of their daughters. One of these parents was recently separated, two of the parents commented on their tight financial situation and one of the parents was doing shift work. Gilligan et al. (1991) and Richards and Ely (1997) discuss the psychological impact of marital conflict and economic hardship on adolescent girls. Such multiple changes are identified as a factor in problems during adolescence (Goossens and

Marcoen, 1999) and some explanation of this theory may have lessened the parents' feelings of guilt. I did not explore fully what understanding the parents had about adolescent issues in general, or adolescent issues for girls. The parents all stated that they were stressed about safety issues for their daughters. These safety issues related to fears because of their vulnerability as young women and also to concerns that their daughters may become involved in criminal activities.

The trauma associated with the problems they had experienced was still very evident in the interviews with the parent/s and with the young women. The general comments of the parent/s about the intervention of the Service, when I first approached them were very negative. Yet during the interviews all the parents did have something positive to say about the Service. I consider that this demonstrated their good will and wish to be fair in their opinions. The basis of their negativity about the Service has been outlined in the Findings section and was mainly around the issues of delay in response, lack of suitable places for their daughters to stay, feeling they were not listened to and lack of follow up. All of the participants consented to take part in this research in the hope that knowledge of their experiences would lead to change and the improvement in services for young women and their families (Opie, 1992).

The first contact with the Service

All of the parents had sought extensive help from other agencies or family before approaching the Service for assistance with their daughters. Only one parent considered that the urgency of the situation at the time and as she saw it was reflected in the response she received from the Service. Her family made the approach to the service in person because she was threatening to seriously hurt her daughter or herself. The three other parents were very negative about their first response from the Service. They considered that either the urgency of their situation was not reflected in the response from the Service or that their problems were minimised by the social worker. For these three, other professionals were involved in their contacting the Service. The Service at the time was perceived by other professionals as stretched and having a reduced role often limited to crisis intervention (Child Protection Trust Advocacy Committee, 1994; O'Reilly;1996).

This was happening at a time when increased public awareness meant increased notifications to and expectations of the Service (Child Protection Trust Advocacy Committee, 1994; Smith, 1998). Two of the parents did mention that there were advertisements for the Service at the time they were having these problems. Their perception was that what they needed and had expected from media promotions and what they had received from the Service did not match up. They would have liked immediate one to one contact with some explanation of the problem that did not make them feel inadequate or to blame as well as an explanation of what the Service was able to provide.

The issues these parents brought up have been discussed throughout the 1990s. Mason (1992) commented on the stretched nature of the Service and of the social workers. O'Reilly (1996) discussed the diminished public confidence in the Service that he saw as having a crisis intervention approach. Both Mason (1992) and O'Reilly (1996) comment on the stresses placed on social workers when resources are limited.

In recent times, the Care and Protection business unit of the New Zealand Children and Young persons Service has been the focus of public criticism and concern... The intensifying of adverse comment, combined with expanding workloads for social workers and difficulties in meeting them, appears to be impacting severely on morale within the Service (O'Reilly, 1996:9)

The problem

All of the young women including the one who would not be interviewed were runaways, and their parents were very concerned for their safety. Schaffer (1998) states that most runaways do not want to leave home and do want to find ways to love their parents. He sees it as very important that reconciliation with their family is facilitated. The parents and the young women interviewed would agree with his findings.

The young women were in their early adolescence at the time of their interaction with the service. Noller and Callan (1991), Paikoff and Brooks-Gunn (1991) and Collins and

Laursen (1992) particularly discuss that problems with parents are more likely to be acute in early adolescence. This created a situation where the parents were very fearful for their daughters safety as they were running away from home as 13 and 14 year olds.

As noted in much of the literature the parents and the young women had different perceptions of what was happening and the inherent risks involved (Noller and Callan, 1991; Paikoff, 1991; Paikoff and Collins, 1991; Paikoff and Brooks-Gunn, 1991).

Two of the young women had attempted suicide. Research literature shows that adolescence is a time of ‘great psychological danger’ for girls, who compared to boys, show more depression, poorer emotional wellbeing and a higher rate of suicide attempts (Gilligan, 1991; Stern, 1991; Pipher, 1996; Gaoni et al., 1998; Coggan et al., 1999). The concern expressed in the literature was not reflected in the response from the Service. One of the parents noted waiting weeks and weeks before she was able to see a social worker and that her daughter had attempted suicide in that time.

All of the young women had problems with secondary school though the three young women interviewed said they did not have problems at primary school. I did not explore what the specific problems were at secondary school. The young women all said that they were truant much of the time. Two were suspended, and the third thought she would have been suspended had she stayed at that school. Bronfenbrenner (1979) notes the alienating environment of the school system.

The parents’ perception was that if there was any assessment of the problem, they were not included in this. Three of the parents particularly were left feeling they were somehow at fault. This was also the perception of the young women. They did not recall being involved in any assessment of the problem, and they also were left feeling that it was their fault. Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Harris (1998) both stress the importance of looking for reasons for problems outside the immediate environment and how this can reduce feelings of guilt.

Harris (1998) explores the situation of parental blame, and concludes that the belief that parents have the major influence on children has “... put a terrible burden of guilt on

parents unfortunate enough to have a child whose pass through the marvellous machine has for some reason failed to produce a happy, smart, well-adjusted, self-confident person" (Harris, 1998:352).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) talks of the 'deficit' model that seeks to find something wrong in the person needing help. There is an ever increasing body of literature stressing the need to build on strengths (Selekman, 1993; Banks, 1999; Cohen, 1999; Goossens and Marcoen, 1999), look for factors that will increase the resilience of children (Johnson et al., 1998; Hirst 1999), enhance support from the wider community (Agnew and Brezina, 1997) and encourage positive leisure activities (Pinel, 1998; Patterson and Pegg, 1999). From the information given to me these types of remedial programmes were not discussed with the parents, and their perception was that although counselling was offered the focus of this was on the young women and they, the parents, were not encouraged to be part of this.

None of the young women I interviewed were enthusiastic about the counselling initiated by the Service. One young woman thought very highly of her school counsellor who she said did include her parents. She reported that the social worker had referred her to another counsellor with whom she was most unhappy.

What happened

The parents' main concern was how little happened, and how disappointed they were with the response and services given. All the parent/s considered that there needed to be urgent provision of a safe place for their daughters away from home. The quality and availability of placements was a matter of major concern for the parents, and in two instances the reported poor quality of the placements generated negative publicity for, and a change of caregiver by, the Service. This was one aspect where parents and adolescents agreed. The young women reported similar concerns about the placements. One young woman did make favourable comments about a place where she stayed very temporarily, and another place where she was able to stay during the week. What she appreciated was feeling that she was given some choice. In the main the young women after some time and more running away, the young women found their own placements

and the Service reportedly accepted these. Only one of these placements was eventually with family. However, three of the families had tried extensively to find alternative family placements before contacting the Service.

The comments of the young women and their parents reflected a situation that was both predicted, in previous reviews of the Service, and recognised by other professionals at that time. The situation also created major difficulties for social workers, as was noted by one of the young women waiting 'hours and hours' in the Police station. Over the latter years of the 1980s, when the Act was in process of formation and passing through the legislative process and there was a focus on family placements, there had been a gradual decline in the number of residential beds available and comment in several reviews of the Service and in departmental reports about the need to remedy this (Renouf et al., 1990; Wood, 1991; Mason, 1992; Annual Report, 1994; Child Protection Trust Advocacy Committee, 1994). Most notably, Renouf et al (1990) and Mason (1992) commented on the lack of residential placements for adolescents with disturbed behaviour.

As stated earlier, none of the young women were attending secondary school, and all of the young women were at some stage in the care of the Service. Bennathan and Tiotto (1994) and White(1996) discuss the implications for children in care in Britain who do not attend school and the need for interdepartmental co-operation to ensure that children in care do continue with their education. The 'Strengthening Families' initiative was implemented to facilitate this co-working and liaison. The young women interviewed were not staying at home and were not attending school. With the literature stressing the dangers of multiple changes for adolescence and the need to accomplish specific tasks during adolescence, one of which is acquiring the skills necessary for future economic independence (Noller and Callan, 1991; Department of Health, 1992; Jaffe, 1998) these young women were in a very disadvantaged situation.

At least one Family Group Conference was held in each case. The participants differed in their views on this process. One family was happy with the outcome, although they said they arranged the outcome, but they were very disappointed with the follow-up.

The young women did not feel they had any say at the conference. Two parents reported feeling totally unsupported, and that the social workers made all the decisions. The other two parent/s reported that there was no input or help from the professionals and they were not given any options, but were left to make all the decisions themselves (Paterson and Harvey, 1991; Gilling et al., 1995; Maxwell et al., 1995). This was how these parents and young women perceived the process.

Three of the parents and two of the young women reported being disappointed at the outcome of and follow up from the conferences. Where counselling was offered, there was no effort to ensure that parents were included at any stage. The negative and positive comments relating to the Family Group Conference process are consistent with the issues brought up by the families in the research by Gilling et al. (1995) included as Appendix H.

Communication

None of the parents was happy with the communication with the social worker. Communication was seen as a major problem, mainly by three of the parents and two of the young women, but at various times by all the participants. One parent did comment that communication was good with the first social worker but not with the second social worker. She was unsure whether she ever met the second social worker. Two parents had particular problems contacting the social worker. Two of the parents commented on how pleased they were to have a chance to talk to someone when they finally did see the social worker. This pleasure evaporated when they felt they were being blamed for the situation and they felt very disappointed.

None of the young women considered that they were asked their opinion of what was happening, nor were they given any options, and there was no exploring of feelings. Both parents and young women thought the other had better communication with the social worker. Incidents and situations do not affect all family members in the same way. This is another difficulty for a social worker trying to work with differing perspectives differing expectations and differing responses (Eichler, 1988:8). The social worker can be in the very difficult situation of trying to work with young people, parents and the wider family all with their own agendas (Hunter, 1997). Both the young

women and their parents each thinking that the other had more influence on what was happening highlighted this situation.

Smith (1995:5), Goodnow (1985), O'Reilly (1996), Gold (1998) and Tapp (1998) all stress the importance of listening to the voices of the children involved, and the dangers inherent in basing decisions and policy on what others consider, rather than incorporating the child's own view. The young women and their parents in this study certainly noticed and noted that they did not feel that their voice was heard.

The information gathered showed that while the young women and their parents did not feel that their voices were heard they also did not feel that they were in receipt of much information. They felt the communication was lacking both ways. With regard to the Family Group Conferences some parents felt they had no say while others felt that all the decision making was left to them without enough information or guidelines.

Effectiveness

Participants were asked for positive comments. They appeared to genuinely want to do this and did come up with specific actions that they considered had helped. One parent commented on how busy social workers were that some help was probably better than no help at all. Her daughter commented that the Service's involvement had helped get her safely through a difficult period. This was even though she was one of the young women whose placement had generated media coverage because of its unsuitability, an assessment with which she agreed. Full implementation of Maxwell et al.'s (1995) proposal for gauging the effectiveness of the Service's interactions and outcomes would give all family members the chance to express their views as well as giving social workers an opportunity to gauge their performance and the Service an opportunity to implement improvements.

One of the pertinent issues arising from this research is that the parents had all tried very extensively to get assistance before they approached the Service. I did not explore with them their reasons for delaying their approach to the Service. What is known is that during the 1990s there was much comment about the Service only having resources to

cope with crisis calls for intervention (Mason, 1992; Annual Report, 1993; Child Protection Trust, 1994; O'Reilly, 1998). It is possible that intervention only at the point of crisis may result in cases becoming more complex and families' relationships becoming more damaged. It is not known whether earlier intervention would have been any more successful in the cases studied. What is known is that two of the families were very disappointed with the lack of urgency in the response from the Service even though they did consider it was a crisis situation

The parents at the time did have a belief that the Service even as a last resort was the place where they would get help. This belief was at least for some based on the media promotion of the Service. This points to the importance of publicly disseminating an accurate picture of what the actual role of the Service is and what problems or issues the Service has decided it will be addressing directly and what problems or issues will be referred on to other agencies. If referral on is to be the practice, then the questions need to be around ensuring the effectiveness of these other agencies, whether or not they are fulfilling their destined roles and how these are monitored (Demonstrating..., (1996); Briggs, Campbell, Hawkins, 1999; Munford and Sanders, 1999).

Comments and ideas

The parents would have liked one to one involvement immediately with a clear explanation of what could and could not be done. There was comment that social workers need first hand parenting experience and not just knowledge out of books. This comment was quite strongly put also by the parent who refused to let his daughter take part in the research.

Three of the parents thought that the process was tied to the child's wants not necessarily to her safety. The young women said that they thought their parents' opinions were the ones listened to by the social workers. This difference between the perceptions of adolescents and their parents, particularly in the area of risk assessment, is noted and discussed in the literature (Smetana, 1991; Paikoff and Collins, 1991; Brown, 1999).

Both parents and young women commented that they would have liked to be able to contact the social worker when they needed to, and to have one social worker throughout.

All the parents would have liked more follow up and more focus on re-building their relationship with their daughters as is stressed by Schaffer (1998) and Ainsworth and Maluccio (1998). The young women's comments supported this also. They would have liked better communication, '*to be talked to, not just talked about*', a stable place to go and '*real nice people*'.

One young woman, who had been at a special school where there were horses, thought this place needed to be used more often. This comment led me to wonder if there are any programmes for youth that focus on animals. This would seem an alternative to the outdoor experience type of programme and may be more suitable for young women. Her comment about the place her mother had referred her to was that it was 'awesome'. I have not been able to explore this further.

Limitations of my research

This study had limitations in terms of both time and resources. It used retrospective interviews (Marttuenen et al., 1998:678), interviewed a very small number of participants and used only one method of data collection without any attempt at cross matching. Opie (1990:58-61) and Marks (1995:81) discuss the need to accept that any research report is limited in its representation of actuality and that there is selectivity and incompleteness in any account of another's experience. Many of these issues are present in all research exercises. Notwithstanding the above limitations I have put forward a number of recommendations based on the findings, my experience and the literature.

Chapter 6

Recommendations

My recommendations are based on information gained from this research combined with my background in the Service. My aim was to identify:

- what areas of future study are likely to serve as a basis for improvements in the Service; and
- positive proposals/suggestions based on the findings of this introductory research exercise.

Nine recommendations are put forward as follows:

1. That an evaluation process aimed at maintaining social work competency and best practice and keeping the focus of the Service on child, youth and family (in line with the proposals outlined by Maxwell et al. (1995)) be implemented. This could include:
 - (a) the social worker interviewing the children and caregivers as part of the mandatory actions required before closure of a client's involvement with the Service (there would be a set outline for this interview giving weight and space for the clients' perspective on the interaction);
 - (b) initiating random evaluations as in (a) by a third party, for example another social worker, as a type of peer review, in addition to the present Quality Audit process; and
 - (c) collating the data thus collected for use as the basis for longitudinal evaluation of the effectiveness of the Service. Evaluation needs to be ongoing and long term as issues and priorities constantly change.

2. That the Service takes a leading role in advocating for the rights of children:
 - (a) within the Service this could be achieved by establishing a Youth Panel similar to the Care and Protection Resource Panel, or by having youth representatives on the Care and Protection Resource Panel. Young people at 18 are able to vote, drink in public bars, drive cars and participate in the Armed Forces. It does not seem logical that they have no forum to express their views in the agencies whose specific function it is to educate them, care for them and protect them. The young women interviewed in this exercise demonstrated very ably and practically that they could reflect on what had happened to them, recognise what had worked positively, and negatively, for them and offer suggestions for improvement;
 - (b) that the Service promote and provide forums in the community where the voices, ideas and opinions of young people can be canvassed and heard especially in relation to processes and programmes designed for youth. The commitment of such forums would give young people, as consumers/clients representatives, the opportunity to express their views, and for these views to be given due weight. The importance of these views is critically significant in statutory areas whose main focus is working with children and young people, for example schools, support agencies and the Service (United Nations Convention Article 1989, Article 12; Smith, 1995; Polson, 1997; O'Reilly, 1998; Tapp, 1998).
3. That non-abusing parents who have been involved with the Service, and who have valuable insights to offer that may help other families going through similar situations, be offered a roles as representatives on Care and Protection Resource Panels.
4. That within the Family Group Conference process there is a special time and place for the child/ren to make their view known. This opportunity is to be provided with

the child/ren having the full knowledge that they do not make decisions alone, but that their view is valuable, and will be taken into account. Dependent on their age, they may have a further say in agreeing to the outcomes of the Family Group Conference (United Nations Convention 1989, Article 12; O'Reilly, 1998).

5. That in cases involving problem behaviour in adolescence, broader issues such as economic concerns and wider environmental factors that impact on the family, are discussed with parents and adolescents so that neither are left feeling it is all their fault. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Pipher, 1996; Harris, 1998; Cohen, 1999; Hirst, 1999).
6. That the Service initiate a quality satisfaction survey for users of its residences and foster/family homes, and also those foster/family homes provided by outside agencies (Smith et al., 1998). Hopefully, the current proposals for residences and family homes may go a long way towards addressing the issue of the unsatisfactory placements that caused such concern to the parents and young women in this study. It does not seem to include the important element of allowing children to have their say. "Children have the right to say what they think about anything which affects them. What they say must be listened to carefully" (O'Reilly, 1997:214).
7. That the Service create and maintain a central data base and evaluation of available resources for children, young people and their families. This database to be used by social workers as a resource to allow them to make informed choices for children and their families. The outcomes of evaluations such that completed by Briggs et al (1999) would be readily available, and there could be a specific space for user comment, which would be very valuable for social workers seeking placements.
8. That all parties (young people, parents and social workers) have available support for processes such as the Family Group Conference. The type of support would need to be discussed with each party prior to the FGC but participants would need to be made aware that they are expected to have support. The outcomes of FGCs can have long term and very significant effects on those involved. Some of the participants of this research, and some social workers, feel isolated and vulnerable in this process.

9. That the Service seeks to determine the most effective point of entry to the Care and Protection process. The positives for the Service of entering the process early, as a preferred first point of contact, are in being able to:
 - (a) work with parents and young women who have not already exhausted themselves and alternative options and may be more open to suggestions;
 - (b) positively engage other agencies to participate; and
 - (c) offer or arrange alternative care for a short period to allow the young women and their families space to consider options and futures before their relationship is too severely damaged.

While this area is outside the scope of my research topic the material suggests that further evaluation of the benefits of early intervention could be important in lessening stress on young women, families and social workers.

10. That the Service advises the public more specifically about its role and what it can reasonably provide so that the link between public expectation and the provision of service is more realistic. Again this area is well outside the scope of my research topic, however the research does suggest that further work in this arena could be very valuable.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

"In the long-term, investment in the interests of children is sound economics" (O'Reilly, 1996:14)

This research report into the experiences of young women in the care of the Service may be seen as a pilot study paving the way for a potentially more comprehensive piece of research. The size of the respondent population limits generalisations but that does not mean that the findings are not valid (Patton, 1990:152). The issues highlighted by this research are:

- the critical importance of the views, opinions and interests of both the children and their caregivers in all relevant contexts;
- the need for an evaluation process to gauge the satisfaction or otherwise of the outcomes of the procedures of the Service for the children and their families;
- the need for improved two-way communication between the Service personnel and their clients, including assessment of the problem and any possible proposals for solutions, and
- the need for improved placement options for adolescent girls in need of care and protection.

These issues support the findings and proposals of earlier research most notably those of Maxwell et al. (1995), Gilling et al. (1995), O'Reilly (1996) and Tapp (1998) on areas in the Service where improvements are needed. They also fulfill the stated wish of the research participants who wanted to improve the situation for others going through traumatic situations similar to theirs.

Given the magnitude and complexities of the responsibilities of the Service it is easy to focus on what is wrong rather than on the strengths that there are in the Service particularly in frontline staff. There were obvious strengths too in the four families I interviewed and yet they still felt that they had barely coped with their traumatic

situations. Other families with less support and less strength who go through similar or even more traumatic experiences without the assistance they need do not get asked for their opinions. How do we know when or if we are effective unless it is in the tragic circumstances where there is the death of a child?

Girls are very vulnerable during the stage termed adolescence. When there are also problems within their family, at school, in their own relationships or with external factors upsetting the family's stability that vulnerability is compounded. It is crucial that agencies purporting to exist to assist adolescents during this difficult time have policies in place that support and help both the young people and their families in a manner that is positive and child and family focussed.

Statutory social service agencies in the 21st century are the backstop provided by the government to support families who are not coping (Munford and Sanders, 1999; McPherson, 1999). When children and families are having problems, these agencies need to be able to understand the pressures affecting the families through the external environment and regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their interventions. This monitoring and evaluation must incorporate the perspectives of their clients and it must be ongoing.

We hold the future of these children in our hands and the costs are too high both for them, their families and for social services staff when the support and the resources are not available to give them the very best quality of service. Whether that service is by way of supported referral, or by direct assistance, is a separate issue that needs to be clearly communicated. Clients have a need to know what assistance is available, when that assistance will be available and who will provide that assistance.

If the Service is serious about achieving its vision of "All families meeting their care, control and support responsibilities" (Social Services (1995:7) then it must have a system in place that measures how to support families to meet these responsibilities. Recent studies show that changes in the political and economic climate can mean that more families are under stress and in need of support (Shirley et al, 1997; Munford and

Sanders, 1999; McPherson, 1999). The four families interviewed for this research project were trying to meet their care, control and support responsibilities, yet despite their strengths, they were unable to manage. Who gauged the effectiveness of the service given to them? Children should not have to die before there is an evaluation of the service given. This evaluation needs to be ongoing standard practice.

The family members who took part in this research gave valuable insights into how the inefficiencies of the Service affected them and how they saw possibilities for improvement in the service given. There are many such families who need specific help at a specific time so that they can, in the main, manage their responsibilities. The effectiveness and quality of the assistance given to families and family members can only be improved by including those clients' perspectives into the standard monitoring of the interventions and actions of the Service. Evaluation in this manner will empower families and children and provide an opportunity for growth and development in a Service that is genuinely focussed on the needs of children, young people and their families as this country's greatest resource. We can do it better.

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Appendix A

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Name. Eileen Jacoba Puharich.

Contact Address. C/ CYPFS. P O Box 416, Dargaville
Phone 09 4399090. Fax. 09 4399099

Employment. Social Worker, CYPFS, Dargaville.

Reason for Request.

I have a BA Soc Science, from Massey University, and a Post Graduate Diploma in Social Policy and Social Work, also from Massey University. This year, I wish to complete M. Phil, Social Work, also from Massey University. To do this I need to complete a Research Paper, as set out below.

Research Proposal.

The experiences of adolescent girls who have been clients of CYPFS because of identified, or perceived problem behaviour. What has worked for them, and what hasn't, in terms of their involvement with the service.

Purpose of Research.

1. To complete my M. Phil.
2. To look for ways to improve the service given to young people, and their families, by CYPFS in a specific area of practice.
3. This proposed research fits in with recommendations, for improved service, and monitoring of social work practice within the framework of the Children Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989.

Initiator of this research.

I have initiated this topic myself. I work in the area of Care and Protection, and with adolescent girls, and find there are numerous areas of conflict. I would like to see a way to improve my practice in this area.

Appendix A...cont.

Institution/Organisation.

Massey University will oversee the research paper. My Supervisors are Mike Garland, and Gwen Ellis, Lecturers in the School of Social Policy and Social Work at Massey University, Palmerston North.

I have discussed the possibility of using records from CYPFS with the Manager who is supportive of this, pending approval.

Approval from Ethics Committee.

Attached is a copy of my application to the Massey University Ethics Committee. This is due to be heard on 29 May 1998.

Stages and Timeframe of Research.

At present I am doing background reading into policy, researching care and protection issues, and adolescent behaviour.

Dependent on approval from CYPFS, and the Massey Ethics Committee, I hope to initially contact participants and carry out the interviews in late July/August 1998. I hope to complete the Research Report by 30 November 1998.

Methodology.

The overall methodology will be feminist/qualitative, using mainly a narrative style of interviewing.

There will be some quantitative aspects to the selection of participants, and the collation of the data.

I have attached an Interview Schedule, Appendix D of my application to the Massey Ethics Committee, and I have attached that complete Application.

Information required from CYPFS

The information I require from CYPFS, is a selection of names and contact details of young women who were 13 or 14 years of age in 1993/94, and who were the subject of CYPFS intervention because of the 'label' problem behaviour.

Access to staff should be fairly minimal, provided I am able to look through files at CYPFS in a secure place.

Appendix A....cont.

Validity of the study.

The research design is

- to study the relevant literature
- to contact young people, and their families, who have been the subject of intervention by CYPFS for 'problem behaviour'
- to interview these young people and their families, in a narrative style, so that they are comfortable in putting forward their views of what happened, during, and as a result of, their interaction with CYPFS
- to collate the views of these participants, with a view to seeing where practice can be improved, and what further research will be viable.
- the research will be from a qualitative/feminist perspective, that the views of the less powerful are important.

2. I have worked for 9 years as a social worker, and know how time-consuming it is working with adolescent girls, with problem behaviour. The behaviour of these young women, often poses great concern for their safety, and for their family's peace of mind. I would like to see, somewhat independently, how the outcomes for these young people, and their families, can be improved, and how the conflict within the family can be lessened, without placing the young person at risk.

This proposed project is very much an introduction that may help further research.

Researching Care and Protection, (1995), a proposal from the Commissioner for Children, and the Social Policy Agency, recommends large scale research into the area of outcomes for children, young people and their families, who have been subject to CYPFS interventions.

Significance of the study for CYPFS.

This study has potential benefit for CYPFS in that it is an attempt to give voice to clients, with the aim of improving the service.

Adolescence is a very vulnerable age for young women. CYPFS has the mandate to promote safety for children and young people, and to do this in a way that empowers and strengthens families. This study proposes to give some of those young women and families an opportunity to be heard.

Appendix A...cont.

Privacy/Confidentiality.

There will be 3 or 4 young person/family names for the actual study. It is proposed to contact about 8 young people/families.

The names of those taking part will be kept locked away. All the material relating to the interviews will be written using fictitious names.
There will be no identifying characteristics used in the report.

Interview tapes will be destroyed, or given to participants. They will have the choice.

Participants will be sent a transcript of their interview material, that will be used. They will have the opportunity to comment/change/retract/delete, all or any part.

I see no role conflict, as I have not worked, and do not intend to work, in the geographical area of this research.

I will ensure that there is a local counsellor available for the participants, and they will be advised that they are welcome to have a support person/s present during the interview.

See Information Sheet and Consent Forms attached.

Cultural Considerations.

The questions allow for cultural issues to be voiced by the participants if they wish.

I belong to a minority culture, so am very aware of cultural issues, and disempowerment.

Deed of Confidentiality.

Attached is signed Deed of Confidentiality.

Appendix B

DEED OF CONFIDENTIALITY

THIS DEED is made this 11th day of MAY 1998

BY. EILEEN JACOB PULTRACCI

Background

- A The Researcher is undertaking a research project - *Title* -The detail of the Project is contained in the Schedule to this Deed.
- B For the purposes of the Project, the Researcher requires access to Confidential Information held by the Department of Social Welfare ("DSW").
- C For the purposes of the Project the Researcher may also need to observe, question or conduct interviews.
- D DSW is willing to give the Researcher access to Confidential Information it holds subject to the terms of this Deed.

The Terms of this Deed are as follows:

1 Definition

- 1.1 "Confidential Information" means any confidential information held by DSW or obtained through the observation, questioning or interviewing of DSW staff, customers {clients} or other persons dealing with DSW and includes but is not limited to confidential information:
 - (a) relating to the organisation, methods, administration, operation, business affairs, or financial or commercial arrangements of DSW, its customers {clients} or other persons dealing with DSW; and
 - (b) relating to any DSW customers {clients} or other persons dealing with DSW, including name, address, personal, medical or business affairs or any other information; and

Appendix B ...Cont.

- (c) relating to the security arrangements made between DSW and any customer {client} of DSW or other person dealing with DSW; and
 - (d) relating to contracts or arrangements made between DSW and any customer {client} of DSW or other persons dealing with DSW; and
 - (e) of any nature, technical or otherwise, relating to any product or process with which DSW is involved in any capacity that is not information in the public domain.
- 1.2 "Participant"** means any staff member, voluntary worker, DSW customer {client}, or any other person to be observed, questioned or interviewed by the Researcher for the purpose of the Project.
- 2. Use, access and obtaining of Confidential Information**
- 2.1** The Researcher is given access to Confidential Information only for the purpose of the Project and the Confidential Information shall only be used by the Researcher for that purpose.
- 2.2** The Researcher will not remove from the premises of DSW any file, paper, document or other type of record which is the property of DSW, without the consent of the Director-General of DSW {or delegate}.
- 2.3** All Confidential Information disclosed to the Researcher, remains the property of DSW.
- 2.4** Where observation, questioning or interviewing are necessary for the Project, the Researcher must obtain consent from all participants before such observation, questioning or interviewing takes place.
- 2.5** The Researcher will ensure that each Participant:

- (a) is fully informed of the nature and purpose of the Project; and
- (b) gives informed consent to being observed, questioned or interviewed; and
- (c) is able to withdraw that consent at any time; and
- (d) has the opportunity to view and provide feedback on the data collected from the Participant by the Researcher.

Appendix B ...cont.

3. Protection of Confidential Information

- 3.1 The Researcher will not, other than with the written consent of an employee of DSW authorised by the Director-General of DSW {name}, disclose to any person or agency, including a research assistant, any Confidential Information which the Researcher obtains for the Project, except as required by law.
- 3.2 Any disclosure of Confidential Information by any person or agency, in breach of this Deed, shall be deemed to be a disclosure by the Researcher and therefore a breach of this Deed by the Researcher. This applies whether or not that information was obtained with written consent pursuant to clause 3.1.
- 3.3 The Researcher will take all reasonable care to ensure that all Confidential Information in the possession of the Researcher is securely kept.
- 3.4 The Researcher will not make copies (including electronic copies and photographs) of Confidential Information held by DSW except where necessary for the purposes of the Project and with the written consent of an employee of DSW authorised by the Director-General of DSW {name}. At the conclusion of the Project, or on request, the Researcher will return to DSW all copies of any documents, books, records, papers, computer database or other property in the Researcher's possession belonging to DSW.
- 3.5 In any presentation of the results of the Project (by way of a published or unpublished report, thesis, book, academic paper, article, lecture, speech, broadcast, letter, conversation or any other form) the Researcher will not identify individuals or disclose any other Confidential Information.
- 3.6 {Where requested} the Researcher will submit to an employee of DSW authorised by the Director-General of DSW {name} a final draft of any account of the Project. This employee will have the right to require such deletions or alterations as considered necessary to prevent the identification of individuals or to avoid disclosure of any other Confidential Information.

4. General terms

Appendix B...cont.

- 4.1 Where there is a breach of this Deed by the Researcher and action is brought against DSW, the Researcher will fully indemnify DSW for all resulting costs and damages.
- 4.2 This Deed is in addition to, and does not in any way limit or prejudice, the Researcher's obligations at law in respect of Confidential Information, including in particular those under the Privacy Act 1993. Nor does it affect the Researcher's rights under the Official Information Act 1982.
- 4.3 The Researcher's obligations in respect of Confidential Information under this Deed will continue after the completion of the Project.

SIGNED BY.....*John*.....

in the presence of :

Witness : *R. Hause*.....

Address: P.O. Box 47 Dunedin

Occupation : Supervisor NZCIS

Appendix C

Project Title.

The experience of adolescent girls who have been clients of CYPFS, because of identified, or perceived problem behaviour. What has worked for them, and what has not worked in terms of their involvement with the Service.

Letter, of/or Introduction

Hi

My name is Eileen Jacoba Puharich

I am doing some research work to look at whether the Children Young Persons & Their Families Service helps young women, and their families , when there are problems, or whether it doesn't. I am writing to ask you whether you would help me in this work, by talking to me about your experiences with the Children Young Persons and Their Families Service, when ...either.... you were 13/14, ... or when your daughter was 13/14 in 199...

If you do decide that you will talk to me, anything that you say would be confidential. Your name would not be mentioned or used in my report, and I would send you a copy of what you had told me. If you do decide that you will talk to me, you are very welcome to have a friend or support person with you.

If you have any questions about whether you want to be involved, please call me at, Dargaville, (09) 4399090, (collect), during the day, or write to me, using the enclosed envelope, or, if I have not heard from you, I will call you in a weeks time, to ask what you think about helping with this project. Asking questions at this stage, or at any stage, does not mean that you have to agree to be part of this work.

I have attached a more detailed information sheet, about me, and this project that I am doing, and also a Consent Form, that you will need to sign if you are interested, and want to be involved.

I do hope that you will agree to help me with this project. My aim is to try to improve the service that the Children Young persons and Their Families Service, provides.

Regards
Eileen Jacoba Puharich

Appendix D

Project Title.

The experience of adolescent girls who have been clients of CYPFS, because of identified, or perceived problem behaviour. What has worked for them, and what has not worked in term of their involvement with the Service.

INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Eileen Jacoba Puharich. I am doing a research paper from Massey University, in order to complete a Master of Philosophy in Social Science. My research topic is the project stated above.

The reason I am doing this research is to look at ways that social work practice with adolescent girls can be improved, and to complete my qualification. I can be contacted at, Children, Young Persons and Their Families Service, Dargaville, P O Box 47, Dargaville, or Phone 09 439 9090. My Supervisors, are Mike Garland and Gwen Ellis. They can be contacted at Massey University, Palmerston North, Ph (06) 350 5543

I am particularly interested in how young women and their families see their involvement with CYPFS, whether it was helpful, and what could make it better. To get the perspective of the young people and families involved, I would like to interview 3 or 4 young people and their families/parents. These would be people involved with CYPFS in 1993/4, and they would now be 18 or 20, so may have a good insight into what was happening for them back then, and what may have worked better. Hopefully, sharing this, will help make it better for others.

3. I have chosen your name in a random way from the records of CYPFS,

.....

4. I would like an opportunity to meet you, where, and when, to suit you, and discuss how, you (your daughter), became involved with CYPFS, what happened, and particularly any ideas you may have about what you would have liked to happen. I want to just listen to what you have to say, about some of the issues. If you are interested in being part of this project, what would happen is this. I would meet you, and discuss the project more fully, and answer any of your questions. We would go over a Consent Form, and I would assure you that anything you say to me will be treated confidentially. I would outline what will happen as follows. That I would like to meet with you for about an hour, and discuss the

Appendix D ...cont.

issues as outlined. I would make an audio-tape of the interview. I will, then, type out the whole, or part of, the interview from the tape, and send you a copy of

this transcript. This will be the material that I will use in the final report. You will be able to ask me to take out any part, or change what you think I have misunderstood. I will hopefully be doing this with 3 other young people and their families. I will then use the information you have given me, in a generalised way to look at practice and policy for working with adolescents and their families.

There will be no identifying characteristics of any of the people taking part in this project.

6. All the information you give me will be confidential. I will do my own typing, and I will keep the material secure. Real names will not be used on any of the material.

7. Should you decide to take part, you may withdraw at any time, and you may also request that I do not use any particular part of the interviews. There may be things that you wanted to say, but that you do not want to be included in this project, that is your right. The information you give, is your information. There is absolutely no obligation on you to take part, but I would really appreciate it if you do, and you may help others by your ideas and experiences.

Appendix E

Project. The experiences of adolescent girls who have been clients of CYPFS because of identified or perceived problem behaviour. What has worked for them, and what has not worked, in terms of their involvement with the Service.

CONFIDENTIALITY

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

While doing this research project, I will be a researcher, not a social worker. While doing this research, I will be on leave from my job as a social worker so will not be working as an employee of the Department of Social Welfare.

It is important for you to realise that information you give to me, during the interview, should you wish to take part, will be protected by the confidentiality provisions of the ASSR Code of Ethics, and no section of the Department of Social Welfare will have access to that information.

Information set out in the final report, will have no identifying characteristics. The report will be set out in a way that identifies issues, not persons.

You will have the right to withdraw, totally or partially at any time.

You will be sent a typed copy of the material that will be used from your interview, and invited to comment/change/withdraw.

Your real name will not be used in any of the report material, and will be kept secure, away from the offices of the Department of Social Welfare.

My supervisor will not have access to your identity.

Please feel that you can discuss, with my supervisor, or me, any aspects to do with information you give in relation to this exercise.

Appendix F

Project Title. The experiences of adolescent girls who have been clients of CYPFS because of identified, or perceived, problem behaviour. What has worked for them, and what has not worked in terms of their involvement with the Service.

CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the research on the understanding that my name will not be used without my permission.

(The information will be used only for this research and publications arising from this research project.)

I agree/do not agree, to the interview being audio taped.

I also understand that I have the right to ask for the audio tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet

Signed

Name

Date.

Appendix G

Project Title. The experiences of adolescent girls who have been clients of CYPFS because of identified or perceived problem behaviour. What has worked for them, and what has not worked, in terms of their involvement with the Service.

Interview Schedule

Introduction, about the research project

I will re-emphasise that my interest is on improving the system. Explain that my questions are to gain information on how the CYPFS processes work, or don't work, for the young person and their family. Also remind them that they can decline to answer any of my questions and emphasise to them that they are free to ask me any questions during the interview.

Themes and Questions.

Contact with Service

How did you/your child first make contact with CYPFS?
 Who decided to make this contact?
 What other places had been tried ... if any?
 Why was CYPFS seen as an option then? (if applicable)
 Had CYPFS been contacted at any earlier time about this particular young person, about any other young person in the family? (If so would you like to tell me about it?)
 What is your view of your initial contact with CYPFS?
 What were your expectations?

Reason for request for help/Problem area.

What did you see as the main problem?
 What did you think was needed?
 Were you informed of what others thought was needed?
 What was this?
 How did this match up with what you thought?
 What options were you offered?
 What assistance was offered?
 How urgent, in your view, was the need for some help?
 Why?

Appendix G... cont.

What happened.

What actually happened? Please describe this as it happened for you. (Parent and young person).

What did you want to happen?

Was your view heard?

Who made decisions?

What family were involved?

What would you have liked to happen?

4. Communication.

Were you informed of what was happening?

How were you kept informed?

Was your opinion sought before actions were taken?

What was discussed with you about the process that was happening for you/your daughter?

How much say do you think you had?

What was good, not so good, about the communication between you and the social worker?

How did CYPFS actions affect your relationship with your child/family?

5. Effectiveness of CYPFS assistance.

What do you consider worked well? Not well?

In your view, what changes came about for you/your child/your family, as a result of the actions of CYPFS?

Were these good/ not so good?

What was the effect on your family?

What did you like/ not like, about what happened?

In hindsight, how do you feel about the whole process?

Any comments you would like to make, or any questions you would like to ask?

Appendix H

(Family members' experiences of the care and protection Family Group Conference. Gilling et al., 1995:152-154):

Family members' comments on what went well were clustered in four main areas. First, in many instances the conference had helped to improve relationships between family members. Secondly, a number of family members considered that the process had been well managed by the co-ordinator, who had made efforts to ensure that everyone was able to participate in the proceedings. Thirdly, some family members made positive comments about the resources that were provided to help address the care and protection situation, some from within the family group and some from other agencies. And fourthly, some family members commented positively about the assistance and support they had received from the social worker.

In contrast, there were nine areas in the care and protection process where things had not gone well for family members involved in the study. The main conclusions we can draw from the findings on these matters are as follows:

- family members need to be kept fully informed throughout the proceedings. In particular, they need to be well-informed about the circumstances of the care and protection situation, the process to be followed during the care and protection proceedings, the time scale for the process, reasons for any delays in proceedings and what actions were taken to implement the decision of the conference;
- there is a need to ensure that family groups are provided with interim assistance if there is a delay in arranging a family group conference. Some family members found that they had to wait until a family group conference was arranged before

any help could be provided. In some instances, the situation deteriorated in the intervening period;

- family members should be fully involved in discussions about who should be invited to attend the conference. Discussions should cover the likely contribution of different family members and the nature of relationships between family members. These preliminary discussions should help to alert co-ordinators to potential difficulties that may arise in the conference and help them to work out with participants ways of handling these difficulties;
- the relationship between participants in the conference need to be managed carefully, especially relationships between family members where there has been a history of difficulty, distance or violence. Co-ordinators need to be highly skilled in facilitation of conferences and need to identify likely areas of dissension in advance of the conference and develop strategies for dealing with difficulties that are likely to arise;
- conference decisions need to achieve a balance between meeting the needs of the child or young person and addressing other relevant factors in the wider situation;
- officials need to pay close attention to their own part in the decision-making process. It is important the officials should focus on enabling family members to play their part in the decision-making and avoid bringing pressure to bear on them to come to particular decisions. This will require sensitive handling of the situation on the part of officials, especially where statutory requirements need to be considered alongside the family members' wishes. There is a need for officials to ensure that family members are enabled to consider a full range of options and that the final conference decision is one which is fully debated, with all participants having an opportunity to contribute;
- how outcomes might be resourced needs to be fully and openly discussed with family members both before and during the conference. These discussions should

be aimed at both identifying the resources available within the family group to help resolve the situation and providing information to the family group on the types of assistance available to them through the department and in the community;

- attention should be given to ensuring that the conference process runs smoothly, so as to give maximum opportunity for each person to participate fully in the conference proceedings. This is important in each phase of the proceedings. Initially, it is important to ensure that all parties are agreed on the focus of the deliberations and the issues that need to be dealt with. The co-ordinator needs to actively facilitate the proceedings, in order to ensure not only that difficulties which arise are managed effectively, but also that the conditions are created which will enable all participants to make an effective contribution to the proceedings; and
- finally, there is a need for systematic follow-up after the conference to ensure that implementation of decisions is monitored, that family members know what actions they can take if the decision is not implemented as agreed and that action is taken if the plans are not implemented as agreed.

In addition, careful attention should be given to the details of the arrangements for the conference, such as arranging a venue where all participants can comfortably be accommodated, ensuring that the time is suitable for all people and ensuring that the seating arrangements do not marginalise individuals or groups of people.

Appendix I

Below are listed a few of the growing body of Aotearoa/New Zealand publications and studies. These are intended as a sample only.

Bartlett (1997) discusses the legal situation in New Zealand with relation to offering contraception or contraception advice to someone under 16 years of age.

Birch (1996) and Birch and Mafi (1996) outline ideas for parenting in general and for parenting adolescents in particular.

Coggin et al. (1999) provide a practical guide for assistance in cases of suicide, and to aid the prevention of suicide.

Elliott and Lambourn (1999) discuss two Aotearoa/New Zealand peer-led support programmes for adolescents.

Gilbert (1999) provides a clear, graphic presentation looking at the rights of children and young people in their own homes.

Haggie (1995) sets out a detailed programme designed for schools to help teenagers learn about safety in dating and relationships.

The Listener runs a weekly feature *amp* which publishes young people's poems and perspectives and provides a list of phone numbers of help and support groups such as Rainbow Youth, Phobic trust, Youth Law Project, Alateen, Community Drug and Alcohol Centres, Family Planning, Parliament and Youthline.

Appendix I...cont.

The Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand singly and in co-operation with other services offers booklets on many issues for adolescents, such as depression, feeling good and grief.

The Youth Law Office provides up to date books on the rights of young people and ideas

for schools to assist young people.

There are many initiatives and programmes in different areas of New Zealand offering positive programmes/therapies for adolescents and their families. There are so many that there is concern that there needs to be more co-ordination and more assessment of these programmes (Demonstrating the effectiveness of Family and Whanau Resource Development Service, 1996; Laxon,1999:A7).

Appendix J

Qualitative Analysis and Interpretation.

(From *Halcolm's Laws of Evaluation Research a la Murphy*. Patton,1990 :371).

The moment you cease observing, pack your bags, and leave the field you will get a remarkably clear insight about that one critical activity you should have observed... but didn't.

The moment you turn off your tape recorder, say goodbye, and leave the interview, it will become immediately clear to you what perfect question you should have asked to tie the whole thing together... but didn't.

The moment you begin data analysis it will become perfectly clear to you that you're missing the most important pieces of information and that without those pieces of information there is absolutely no hope of making any sense of what you have.

The complete analysis isn't.

Analysis finally makes clear to researchers what would have been most important to study, if only they had known beforehand.

Evaluation reports finally make clear to decision-makers what they had really wanted to know but couldn't articulate at the time.

Analysis brings moments of terror that there's nothing there and times of exhilaration from the clarity of discovering ultimate truth. In between are long periods of hard work, deep thinking, and weight-lifting volumes of material.