

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

Adding Quality to the Quilt

Adolescent Experiences
of Critical Incident Responses
in Secondary Schools
in Aotearoa New Zealand

*A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Social Work
at
Massey University
(Palmerston North Campus)
New Zealand*

Kathryn Janet Stewart
2008

Abstract

The Vision for the Quilt

Critical incidents impact on populations that experience them. Within secondary schools in Aotearoa New Zealand, there is an expectation that a response is made to schools that experience such incidents. There is much conflicting international research as to the efficacy of these responses. The adult experts are making decisions that they believe are in the best possible interests of the young people; they are putting together a quilt that they believe will nurture young people. The expertise and knowledge of a major stakeholder – the young people involved in the critical incident response – has been for the most part, omitted from research. This particular study set out to gather data about young people's experiences of critical incident responses, so that the quilt being provided has input from this group and so is able to better meet their needs.

The study had four major facets. It incorporated reflections on my intrinsic involvement in this field of practice and was, therefore, heuristic. Secondly, qualitative research was utilised to explore with young people their stories about what happened for them at the time of an incident. Thirdly, it incorporated principles of participatory research as an acknowledgement that young people are central stakeholders in secondary schools and that their voice was one that needed to be heard in order that the best responses may be offered. Lastly, it was utilisation focused. It was designed so that the findings were not just written up and filed away but disseminated to those who make decisions at the school level and policy level.

At the analysis stage, two major methods were used. Firstly, inductive analysis was used to identify the themes that emerged from the interviews with the young people. Triangulation was then used to consolidate these themes using the input from Collaborative Groups and a systematic review of the knowledge that I have gained over the time that I have been involved with young people in the critical incident response area.

This analysis of the contribution from the young people resulted in several areas being highlighted. Firstly, participants asked that those responding to critical incidents considered the use of language and the power of words, Secondly, they believed that schools needed to act proactively and to have a plan and, in association with this, that they develop a culture that better cared for the needs of young people. Thirdly, the young people involved requested that the 'right' people responded at the time of an incident: the qualities of the 'right' people and the 'wrong' people were also identified. Next, the young people were well able to identify the positives that could ensue out of negative situations, and lastly, they expressed their wish that there be a place for their involvement at the time of a critical incident response.

Acknowledgements

Dedication

This research is dedicated to my mother and my father, both of whom died during the course of the thesis. It is also dedicated to my brother who nearly died but his quilt, in the form of his daughters who love him, kept him here.

This is an acknowledgement of their input into the quilt that has become my life.

Other Contributors to this Quilt

First and foremost, I wish to thank the young people who have contributed. To those who contributed directly there is a special acknowledgement. To all the young people with whom I have dealt over the years, I am also very grateful. They have taught me that they have great wisdom and give me a lot of optimism for our future.

To my supervisors: my clinical practice supervisor, my peer supervisor, and my academic supervisors. Each of you has added different fabrics and colours to this story. I especially thank Leland Ruwhiu who has stuck by me since 1999. We have shared lots of different adventures way bigger than the thesis and I treasure this. I also thank Robyn Munford for being there when I needed her to be there and for keeping me fed with the much needed positives. Her quiet strength, often in the background, has been hugely appreciated.

To all those who educated me in the art of self care: the holidays, the cafés, the cryptic crosswords, the books, games and movies have all been lifesavers. Thank goodness, social work is all about the well-being of people: the learning worked as I have thoroughly enjoyed the whole process.

To my friends: you are the quirky bits of my quilt, the bits that make my quilt its own unique creation. I treasure you all. A special thank you to Paula, for the invaluable technical advice.

Saving the most important thing to last is deliberate: my family. As a collective and as individuals you are everything to me. Your support, encouragement and

teasing have kept me going. To the person who has specifically asked not to be mentioned, I love you and I thank you.

Contents

ABSTRACT	III
THE VISION FOR THE QUILT	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	V
DEDICATION	V
OTHER CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS QUILT	V
CONTENTS	VII
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
INTRODUCTION: THE BRICOLEUR, THE QUILTMAKER.....	1
The Questions to be Explored: How is this Quilt to be Different?.....	2
Heuristic Research: The Colour I Add to the Quilt	3
An Explanation of Words Used: Using the Appropriate Stitches	11
Structure of the Thesis: The Pattern of this Quilt	11
CHAPTER TWO	15
THE NATURE OF ADOLESCENTS: “TEENAGERS ARE DEFINED BY THEIR LACK OF WANTING TO BE DEFINED”	15
The Theories that Inform Society: The Rules that Accompany the Making of the Quilt	16
Concluding Comments.....	25
CHAPTER THREE	26
THE VOICE OF ADOLESCENTS: ADDING TO THE DESIGN OF THE QUILT	26
Adolescence is Socially Constructed: Adult Scripts and Historic Quilts	26
Emerging Adolescent Scripts: Changing the Quilt’s Design.....	40
Concluding Comments.....	45
CHAPTER FOUR	46
A BRIEF HISTORY: THE EVOLUTION OF THE PATCHWORK	46
The Development of Critical Incident Responses: How the Quilt has Developed	46
Concluding Comments.....	55
CHAPTER FIVE.....	56
THE ISSUES AROUND DEBRIEFING AS A FIELD OF PRACTICE: THE AMAZING TECHNICOLOUR DREAM QUILT	56
Ambivalence in the Research: Problems with the Materials Used in the Quilt	56
Why do We Respond to Critical Incidents: To Quilt or Not to Quilt	59
So What Responses Do We Use?: Tangles and Knots	62
Variable Outcomes: We All Construct the Quilt Differently	69
Concluding Comments.....	75

CHAPTER SIX.....	76
SCHOOLS AS A UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT: WHAT THE QUILT LOOKS LIKE THUS FAR.....	76
The Structure of Schooling in Aotearoa New Zealand	75
The Range of Schooling.....	77
The Development of Responses within Aotearoa New Zealand: The Making of the Country's Individual Quilt.....	79
The Rationale for Providing Response: The Reason for the Quilt's Pattern.....	82
This Need for a Plan: A Pattern is Required Before the Quilt is Started.....	85
Who Should Respond?: The Most Proficient Quiltmakers.....	85
Concluding Comments	87
CHAPTER SEVEN	89
THE DIMENSIONS OF THE RESEARCH: THE COLOURS OF THE QUILT	89
Methodology: The Base of the Quilt	89
Working in a Participatory Way: Working with Creative Quilters	106
Ethics Approval: Getting the Quilt's Pattern Approved	109
Collaborative Groups: Dyeing the Fabric.....	109
Recruitment: Choosing the Colours	111
Practical Issues and Philosophical Discussions: Cotton, Needles, Stitches... ..	113
Interviewing Young People: Sewing at Last	123
The Interview: Collecting the Fabric for the Quilt.....	128
The Individual Narratives: We All Sewed a Different Piece	130
Triangulation: The Threads Make a Whole Quilt	132
The Focus Group: Consulting on the Developing Quilt	138
Concluding Comments	139
CHAPTER EIGHT	141
WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE SAYING: A QUILT ALWAYS HAS A STORY	141
The Critical Incident Response Stories: The Quilting Pieces	142
The Narratives: The Colours! The Textures! The Patterns!.....	143
Concluding Comments	153
CHAPTER NINE.....	154
YOUNG PEOPLE'S VOICES AND THE RESEARCH - STITCHING THE QUILTING PIECES TOGETHER.....	154
Messages from the Adolescents: The Stitching	155
Theme One: What Students Call the Incidents and the Power of Language.....	156
Theme Two: Schools have a Responsibility to Respond Proactively	159
Theme Three: A Culture of Care	178
Theme Four: The People to Help and the People to Hinder.....	183
Theme Five: Longer Term Positives that were Identified	198
Theme Six: Involving Young People in Responses	202
Concluding Comments	210
CHAPTER TEN	213
THE FOCUS GROUPS: CONSULTING ON THE DEVELOPING QUILT	213
Theme One: The Naming of Incidents and the Power of Language.....	216
Theme Two: Schools Need to React Proactively to Incidents and to have a Plan ...	217
Theme Three: Developing a Culture of Care.....	221
Theme Four: The People to Help at the Time of an Incident.....	222
Theme Five: The Longer Term Positives that were Identified	223
Theme Six: Involving Young People in Responses	224

Concluding Comments.....	225
CHAPTER ELEVEN	226
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: THE FINISHED QUILT	226
The Research Questions: The Quilt's Missing Pieces	227
A Suggested Framework: A Guide to Quilting in Aotearoa New Zealand	228
The Research Findings: Changes to the Quilt	233
Reflections: Contemplating the Quilt.....	239
Future Research: The Next Generation of Quilts	245
Final Comments: The Rainbow Colours of Adolescents	247
APPENDICES.....	249
APPENDIX ONE	249
Mental Health Disorders	249
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder	249
Depression in Childhood and Adolescence	251
Anxiety and How to Handle it.....	255
Adjustment Reaction to Adult Life	256
Acute Stress Disorder	257
APPENDIX TWO.....	259
Variables to be Considered when Examining Resilience and Pathology	259
APPENDIX THREE.....	274
Summary of Guidelines.....	274
Considerations for Schools when Planning for Critical Incident Strategies	274
APPENDIX FOUR	279
Guidelines for Developing Critical Incident Plans within Schools in Aotearoa New Zealand.....	279
APPENDIX FIVE	281
Traumatic Incident Management Support for Schools and Early Childhood Education (ECE) Services	281
APPENDIX SIX.....	289
Ethics Application.....	289
APPENDIX SEVEN.....	308
Advertisement.....	308
APPENDIX EIGHT.....	309
Interview Guide	309
APPENDIX NINE.....	311
Information Sheets.....	311
Information Sheet: Collaborative Groups	311
Information Sheet: Focus Groups	315
Information Sheet: Agencies	319
Information Sheet: Research Participants.....	323
APPENDIX TEN.....	327
Consent Forms	327
Consent Form: Adolescent Participants.....	327
Consent Form: Parents/Guardians	328
Consent Form: Participation in Focus Group	329
Consent Form: Participation in Focus Group (Parents/Guardians).....	330
Consent Form: Adolescent Participants (Collaborative Group).....	331
Consent Form: Collaborative Groups (Parents/Guardians)	332
APPENDIX ELEVEN	333
Confidentiality Forms	333
Confidentiality Agreement: Research Interview Group	333
Confidentiality Agreement - Collaborative Group	334

APPENDIX TWELVE	335
Ethics Application: Focus Group	335
APPENDIX THIRTEEN	356
Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers Practice Standards	356
APPENDIX FOURTEEN	362
Qualities Identified as Helpful.....	362
APPENDIX FIFTEEN	364
Information Sheet: Focus Group	364
APPENDIX SIXTEEN.....	368
Consent Form: Focus Group.....	368
REFERENCES	369