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## **A study of participants' experience of Yirra : An adolescent treatment program**

Bethany F. Byatt  
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**A STUDY OF  
PARTICIPANTS' EXPERIENCE OF YIRRA:  
AN ADOLESCENT TREATMENT PROGRAM**

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**This thesis is presented as partial fulfillment of  
requirements for the degree of MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCE  
(HUMAN SERVICES) at the Edith Cowan University.**

**Date of Submission: October 31, 1994.**

## USE OF THESIS

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

## DECLARATION

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## DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

### Abuse [drug]

"Self-administration of any potentially addicting of harmful substance beyond the generally accepted limits of medical therapy or current law [a term not recommended in scientific work because it involves value judgments]" (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1988, P. A9 .1).

### Cones

Smoking of Marijuana [Cannabis].

### Dependence [drug]

"A syndrome in which drug-taking behaviour assumes a much higher priority than other behaviours that once had higher value. Sensory neurone adaption (alias addiction) is a type of dependence in which physical withdrawal symptoms develop once drug-taking has stopped." (Department of Employment, Education and Training, 1988, p. A9. 2)

### Drug Use

"The ingestion of any substance, that when taken into a living organism, may modify one or more of its

functions." (National Centre for Research into the Prevention of Drug Abuse, 1989, p. 5)

### E'ing

Using 'Ecstasy'. A stimulant which is considered to have hallucinogenic effects.

### Mull

Marijuana [Cannabis].

### Toke

An inhalation of Marijuana [Cannabis].

### Volatile Substance

"The inhalation of vapors from aerosols, glues, nitrous oxide, amyl nitrate or petroleum inhaled in order to develop a state of euphoria." (National Centre for Research into the Prevention of Drug Abuse, 1989, p. 7)

**NOTE:** Whilst program documentation of Yirra occasionally applies the term 'Substance Abuse', the most recent practice within the field is to make reference to 'use' rather than 'abuse'. For the purpose of this study the researcher has applied the term 'use'.

## WHEN IS ENOUGH, ENOUGH?

When does one think enough is enough?

For me, I think it was when I found myself 'coming down', sitting on the kitchen floor at my dealer's house, a couple of days after it had been raided. I found myself with no money [although that is not unusual], no home, and with no-one I could turn to.

It's funny looking back when I was little. I used to think a drug addict was someone who stuck needles in their arms. Never would I have thought that one day I would be doing it myself. I never thought that the 'just one taste' and the 'I just want to try it, just once' would be the one thing that kept me going. The one thought that I based my life upon.

- Written by a resident whilst at Yirra.

## Abstract

Yirra is a residential treatment program for young people who are experiencing problems associated with their substance use. The design of this program was influenced both by consultation with other youth services, and by current literature and theories regarding the most effective approaches to delivery of youth substance use services. Yirra has been in operation since February, 1992, and to date has not been formally evaluated.

This research represents the first stage of evaluation of Yirra. The Phenomenological approach to enquiry was aimed at gaining some understanding of the experience of being at Yirra, from the perspective of the young people in the program. Over a three month period, all program participants who had been in the program for a week were invited to take part in taped interviews. Data gathering also included participant observation and program document analysis. As the Yirra program was designed specifically for adolescents, the Phenomenological approach to data analysis also included analysis based on the theories of adolescent development of Piaget and Erikson.

Findings indicate that although the Yirra program appears in a number of ways to be suited to the needs of young people who want to change their substance use behaviour, it does not appear to be suited to those who are not committed to this change.

## CHAPTER ONE:

### BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

#### INTRODUCTION

##### Needs Assessment for Youth Substance Use Program

The rationale for establishing Yirra was the increasing awareness and recognition of both the need for, and dearth of, residential drug rehabilitation specifically for adolescents in Western Australia [WA]. According to Matthews and Sullivan, as a result of this, Perth City Mission [PCM] in association with the Western Australian Alcohol and Drug Authority [WAADA] undertook a needs assessment during October to December 1991 to determine the most appropriate design for a youth substance use program for WA. The aim of the needs assessment was "to devise a service that best meets the needs of the young people requiring this service, as well as, the stated needs of workers in the Youth and Substance Use fields." (1991, p. 1).

The needs assessment involved inquiry of approximately 50 individuals who had a "professional interest in youth substance abuse". It appears from the

'Youth Substance Abuse Service Program Design' [YSASPD] report, that no potential recipients of the service were consulted (Matthews and Sullivan, 1991, Appendix I, p. 1). Questions put to respondents included a focus on the gaps in service provision for the youth substance use area which they [respondents] had identified and concepts they might have for a residential program. They also requested feedback with regard to the program which PCM envisaged including philosophy, program objectives, target population and locality.

According to the YSASPD, the needs assessment provided the basis for the design of a program which was to be residential and specifically for "young people arbitrarily aged between 12 - 18 years who are experiencing behaviorally defined substance use problems" (Matthews & Sullivan, 1991, pp. 1 & 5). The aim of this program was stated as being "To contribute to the minimisation of harm to young people from substance abuse" (Matthews & Sullivan, 1991, p. 2).

### Yirra [Youth Substance Abuse Program]

In January, 1992, a program called 'Yirra', which was influenced by responses to the needs assessment, was established and staff were trained. Service provision began in late February, 1992.

Yirra operates from a house which is located in Beaufort Street, Mt Lawley, Perth. It is on a main road and within close proximity to shops and transport. Yirra is approximately two kilometers from the city centre and from the suburb of Northbridge. With its numerous night clubs that attract people who use illicit drugs, Northbridge is generally considered to be the 'drug centre' of Perth.

The brick and tile house Yirra operates from is possibly seventy years old and characteristic of the type currently being purchased for renovation and resale at considerable profit. The building has been roughly divided into two parts. One part is the 'office area' for the program co-ordinator and staff, the other is 'living quarters' for residents.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Yirra was designed to meet the needs of adolescents who are experiencing problems related to their substance use behaviour. The theoretical basis for the development of Yirra as an adolescent-specific program has been largely influenced by current literature which describes adolescence as being a particular stage of development, one which begins with puberty and ends with adulthood. [Prominent theories and current literature regarding the

nature and needs of adolescents' are discussed in the literature review.]

### Programs Available for Adolescent Substance Users in WA

Yirra continues to be the only residential drug rehabilitation program specifically for adolescents in this state. Although another program called 'Teen Challenge' operates in WA, it has a target population of 13-35 year old people and therefore, is not adolescent-specific. According to a spokesperson from this program, Teen Challenge "Mostly take[s] over-18 year olds, but take[s] some under 18 from time to time....We try to keep the under-18 year olds to a minimum". The rationale for this was stated as being that "most under-18 year olds don't have the commitment to change that adults have" (M. Smith, personal communication, September 12, 1994).

Adolescence incorporates a time of intense physical, cognitive and emotional change; and because of this the needs of young people are different from those of adults who have usually passed through this stage. Although Teen Challenge and other adult drug rehabilitation programs such as those provided by Narcotics Anonymous [NA] and Alcoholics Anonymous [AA] can be used by young people, they are not specifically

adolescent-oriented. A survey conducted by Howard & Kearney designed to identify successful intervention strategies for adolescents is claimed to indicate that their:

Treatment needs differ to adults, due to their particular stage of cognitive, emotional and skills development, they tend not to successfully utilise traditional, adult-orientated services, and they require holistic habilitation, rather than rehabilitation (cited in Miller, 1992, p. 33).

According to O'Halloran:

Young people are asking for services which do not put pressure on them through what they perceive to be unreasonable expectations and conditions. They do not want to be judged or told what to do, but they do want information and someone who will listen to them (1990, p. 1).

It is important therefore, that programs for adolescents take into consideration the needs of adolescents which relate to their stage of development, and that workers have an understanding of, and empathetic tolerance of, the nature of adolescence.

### Evaluation of Yirra

As previously stated, the Yirra program was designed to meet the unique needs of adolescent drug users. It was based both on current research and

theories about the needs of adolescents who have drug related problems, and through consultation with 'experts' in the field.

Since the program's inception, and as the result of working with some of these young people, other intervention strategies which management and workers have perceived to be effective, have also been implemented; so to some extent, the program has continued to evolve experimentally and experientially. In this regard Patton states:

As an innovative program change is implemented, it frequently unfolds in a manner quite different from what was planned or conceptualised in a proposal. Once in operation, innovative programs are often changed as practitioners learn what works and what does not, and as they experiment with, develop, and change their priorities (1990. p. 53).

According to the YSASPD, a formal evaluation of Yirra was planned to be carried out after 12 months of operation (Matthews, et al., 1991, p. 17). Around the time that Yirra had been operating for one year, it was decided through consultation with the Manager of Programs for PCM, the then Program Co-ordinator of Yirra and myself [a volunteer at Yirra at the time], that the initial phase of the first evaluation process would be carried out by me and should be qualitative, and focused on gaining some understanding as to whether Yirra is

meeting the needs of the program participants. According to Patton:

The qualitative-naturalistic-formative approach is especially appropriate for developing, innovative, or changing programs when the focus is on program improvement, facilitating more effective implementation, and exploring a variety of effects on participants (1990, p. 53).

Rossi and Freeman (1989, p. 38) state, "How a program is organised and presented affects whether or not targets are likely to accept the treatment being offered." As a result of further discussion, it was decided that in order to determine whether Yirra was meeting the needs of its target population, an inquiry would be carried out which involved asking residents what their experience was of the program. From this information it was anticipated that some understanding could be gained as to the degree to which the program was meeting the specific needs of adolescents. An inquiry such as this is particularly important when considering that this program, as Rossi and Freeman state, is "still in an emerging or research development phase. That is, there is no evidence that it has an impact as an installed program." (1989, p. 54).

This research is also important as it appears that representatives from the target population were not consulted in the design stage of Yirra. This study, therefore, has provided some young people who have used

the Yirra program the opportunity to pass on to program designers and policy makers their perceptions of a program specifically designed for adolescents; and in turn, for future program policy makers to gain some insight into the experience of program participants of Yirra.

## PURPOSE AND FOCUS OF THE STUDY

### Research Questions

The main research question for this inquiry was "What is the experience of young people who participate in the Yirra program?"

As the result of knowledge which has been generated from this inquiry, the question also arises, as to "What implications does knowledge gained from this inquiry have for future policy making, program design and service delivery of this program?"

### Research Purpose

At the time of writing this thesis, Yirra has been in operation for over two and half years, and this study represents the initial phase of its first formal evaluation. The Manager of Programs has stated that he

intends to use the knowledge gained from this inquiry as a guide for other elements of the evaluation which are planned for 1995.

It is anticipated therefore, that as a result of this research, knowledge gained will be used by policy makers and program designers of Yirra for future planning of program design and implementation for the young people who use the program.

Knowledge gained from this study may also be useful to the policy makers and designers of other adolescent substance rehabilitation programs, by providing them with a description of Yirra from the perspective of the young people who use the program, along with their perceptions of their experience. It is anticipated also, that the knowledge which is generated from this study may be useful to the fields of youth work and addiction studies in general.

## CHAPTER TWO:

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### INTRODUCTION

The aim of this literature review is to explore existing knowledge regarding the nature and needs of adolescents', adolescent substance use and the target population relative to the Yirra program. It also includes discussion of related theories and approaches currently being applied to service provision for adolescent substance users both overseas and within Australia. Finally, it discusses the application of qualitative research where it has been applied to research on a similar target population in WA.

#### Adolescent Physical Development

Adolescence is frequently referred to as a time of "storm and stress" (Miller, 1992, p. 1). Firstly, the physical changes an adolescent experiences are often considered by prominent developmental theorists, and writers in the field of youth work and adolescent substance use, to be stressful for the young person.

Miller states "The physical maturation puberty brings includes the development of the sexual organs and reproductive potential. With this comes sexual desire and orientation, and the development of an adult body" (1993, p. 3). An adolescent may experience difficulties coming to terms with these physical changes, particularly if they are not happy with their body image. "The views which adolescents held of themselves in early childhood no longer fit their new appearance." (Golden and Klein, 1987, p. 37).

With regard to gender, studies of adolescent behaviour indicate that early maturing girls and late maturing boys are more likely than their peers to experience problems related to their academic achievement, sense of personal identity and self-esteem. Early maturing girls are more likely to resist control and to defy authority. They tend to be less popular, and tend not to take on leadership roles among their peers (O'Connell, 1989, p. 50). Late maturing boys tend also to be less self-assured and to be more rebellious than their peers. Peterson discusses a study carried out with boys, by Mussen and Jones, which was aimed at investigating the relationship between maturational status and covert aspects of personality, and states that the findings confirm the "assumption that the 'late maturers' physical retardation, unfavorable reputation with male and female peers and competitive disadvantages

at team sports had all combined to diminish feelings of self-worth" (1989, p. 324).

According to O'Connell:

Due to this psychological stress, this group of adolescents [early maturing girls and late maturing boys] shows a greater vulnerability to alcohol and drug use. For example, alcohol and other drugs may be used to reduce anxiety about body image or to buttress a lagging sense of self-esteem (1989, p. 51).

### Adolescent Cognitive Development

The change in a young person's thinking is considered by many writers on adolescence to be as great as the physical change which an adolescent experiences (Miller, 1993; O'Connell, 1989; Howard & Zibert, 1990).

According to the developmental theorist Erikson:

Adolescence is not an affliction but a normative crisis, i.e. a normal phase of increased conflict characterised by a seeming fluctuation of ego strength and yet also by a high growth potential...the process of growth provides new energy as society offers new and specific opportunities (cited in Peterson, 1989, p. 343).

Erikson theorises that adolescence is usually experienced by a young person aged 12 to 18 years. During this time the central task of an adolescent is to determine their 'identity' as a unique individual. The adolescent is said to be seeking the answer to the

question 'Who am I?'. Based on Erikson's theory, Cavaiola and Kane-Cavaiola have identified five needs of adolescents which are important to the establishment of their identity. These are their needs for:

- . power
- . nonconformity
- . freedom
- . structure, and
- . peer acceptance (1989, pp. 15-16).

In the pursuit of identity, an adolescent will experience intense feelings and emotions, experiment with different lifestyles and break away from the dependencies of childhood. Logan states:

Risk-taking and health experimentation are normal adolescent behaviours consistent with the quest to be independent, to separate from parents, and to explore new roles. However, some risky behaviours can have long-term negative consequences for adolescents, their families and society (1991, p. 25).

If an adolescent does not establish a sense of personal identity, role confusion and identity confusion will result. According to Miller (1993, p. 4), an adolescent experiencing role confusion may turn to drug use "in their search for meaning".

Piaget, another prominent developmental theorist, also identified adolescence as a stage of human

development. He theorised that prior to adolescence, and during the ages of seven to eleven years a child's thoughts tended to be limited to the "rational and consistent understanding of tangible objects" (cited in Peterson, 1989, p. 49). As a result, this age group tended to focus on the 'here and now' rather than consider the consequences of their actions, or to plan for the future. Children at this stage of development were also inclined to be egocentric and tended to lack an understanding of their impact on other people and the world in general. Piaget referred to this stage as the 'concrete-operational stage'.

The following stage of development identified by Piaget is that of the 'formal-operational stage'. This stage, he theorised, occurs after the age of eleven years and represents the peak of logical thought. Once this stage is achieved, an individual's thinking can incorporate rational, hypothetico-deductive reasoning about remote abstractions (Peterson, 1989, p. 49). Adolescence, according to Piaget, is the stage in which a young person's thinking changes from 'concrete operational' to 'formal operational'.

According to Cavaiola and Kane-Cavaiola:

Late adolescence [ages 17-19] is characterised by more settling down. This is where the 'tasks' become more focused upon. At this point, decisions regarding careers, relationships, issues of separations are in the forefront. Those

adolescents who do not progress become Peter Pans, so to speak. They never really grow up. In late adolescence, one begins to realise that life does not hold limitless possibilities. (1989, p. 17)

Another writer on human development, Elkind, theorised that adolescents tend to exhibit the extreme traits of exhibitionism and painful shyness during their transition from concrete operational thinking to formal operational thinking. In comparison with individuals in other age groups, many adolescents frequently appear to be 'outlandish' with regard to their dress, style of hair, language and other behaviour; while at the same time often exhibiting a lack of self-confidence. These types of behaviour, Elkind argued, were the result of what he termed 'the imaginary audience' and 'the personal fable'. (cited in Peterson, 1989, p. 361)

The imaginary audience, Elkind claimed, resulted from an adolescent's assumption that everyone else was as pre-occupied with them [the adolescent] as they were with themselves. This type of thinking, he theorised, was typical of the egocentric nature of an individual who is in the early formal-operational stage. The tendency of adolescents to exhibit attention-getting behaviour, Elkind claimed, was due to the adolescent's feelings of immortality and their evolving sense of themselves as a unique individual, and is what he termed the personal fable. "The fable goes something like this,

'Bad things happen to other people but not to me,' or 'Other people will grow old and die, but not me'." (Caviaola, et al., 1989, .p. 18).

During this transitional time in cognitive development, an adolescent begins to project themselves beyond the here and now, and to think abstractly about complex concepts, such as values. As a result they may reject authority figures including parents, and cultural norms and rules which they have accepted in the past (Cavaiola & Kane-Cavaiola, p. 17).

### Adolescents Who Use Substances

According to some writers in the field of adolescent substance use, the maturation of young people who frequently use substances may be slowed down as a direct result of their use (Golden & Klein, 1987; Cavaiola & Kane-Cavaiola, 1989; Miller, 1992; Miller, 1993). The term which is frequently used by these writers to define this concept is 'developmental lag'. Cavaiola and Kane-Cavaiola (1989, p. 18) hypothesize that substance use interferes with the development of emotional tolerance by "obscuring differences between work and play contexts", it also promotes a "false sense of reality", and gives the young person a feeling of "having limitless possibilities". As a result an adolescent who uses substances will avoid

responsibilities and the "demands of society". Adolescents who frequently use substances are inclined to reject social reality including rules and norms; and while pretending to be moving toward independence and separation from their family, actually remain dependent. This hypothesis may be discounted by theorists such as Erikson, Piaget and Elkind however, who describe this type of behaviour as being typical of adolescence in general.

The use of mood-altering substances is also hypothesised as having a negative impact on the emotional development and maturing process of adolescents. According to Brown (1991, p. III), young people, in Australia and overseas, have stated that they began to use heavy drugs to escape from feelings of "anger, frustration, loneliness, anxiety and depression" which they did not want to experience. Miller states that "drugs give a false sense of control over emotional lability" (1990, p. 8). Golden and Klein describe this concept of 'false sense of control' this way:

When chemical dependency occurs during this stage, the introduction of chemicals anaesthetizes the feelings process. As adolescents begin to anaesthetize their feelings, this interrupts the development of emotional tolerance which is essential in preparing adolescents for the next phase of development. In addition, chemical dependency gives the appearance of a sense of control over emotional

lability, in fact, the dependency intensifies mood and mood swings (1987, pp. 86-87).

From other people and personal experience, young people can learn the different emotional states various drugs can induce. As the result of this, they may choose to use drugs rather than continue to live with emotional pain. By doing this they may be avoiding having to deal with the problems adolescence promotes. According to Cavaiola and Kane-Cavaiola, (1989, p. 21) "the price is emotional stagnation, impaired cognitive development and immaturity."

### Adolescent Substance Use and Crime

The social problems which Yirra has been established to address relate to substance use by adolescents. At the forefront of the related problems is crime. Frequently the manner in which drugs are used by young people is in itself illegal. This is either because a particular drug is generally illicit, or in the case of alcohol, it is illegal if the user is under the age of 18 years, is not in the presence of, and does not have the consent of their guardian (Liquor Act, 1970, S's. 126 & 129). According to one paper by the Health Department of WA the "significant majority of young people do not use drugs. Moreover, the significant

majority of 13 to 17 year olds have attitudes which indicate a resistance to the use of hard or illicit drugs." (Youth Affairs Bureau, 1988, p. 29).

Following research conducted in 1990 however, the Health Department reported that almost 90% of young people aged between 14 and 17 years stated that "most people their age get drunk fairly regularly." (Knowles, 1991, p. 18). The writer perceives these claims to be contradictory as the Health Department of WA appears to recognise alcohol as a drug. For example, in 1988 they also reported that research commissioned by the National Campaign Against Drug Abuse indicates that "alcohol was nominated ahead of heroin as the most serious drug problem" (Health Department of WA, 1988, p. 10).

With regard to other criminal offences, Dobinson and Ward (cited in Howard & Zibert, 1990, p. 241) state that "there is a recognition of the links between drug use and crime". They state that although involvement in criminal activities for some young people may in fact precede drug use, at some point in time, it becomes the manner in which their drug use is financed. Alternatively, for others, drug use becomes an expensive established habit, and crime is later adopted as the means of supporting it.

Research into the causes of some young people becoming involved in drug use and frequently, related criminal behaviour, has been carried out for over two

decades. The antecedents claimed to have been identified include physical factors, such as maturation [early maturation for girls, late maturation for boys]; cognitive/emotional traits including rebelliousness, insecurity, egocentricity, and irresponsibility; and behaviours such as absenteeism and running away (O'Connell, 1989, p. 50. See also Howard and Zibert, 1990, p. 239). The possibility that these traits and behaviours are antecedents to drug use may raise concern for families of adolescents. In fact according to some literature and theories regarding adolescent behaviour [previously discussed], the above may describe the typical teenager!

### The Impact of Family and Peers

A high proportion of available literature also places emphasis on the influence family and peers can have on young people, and the likelihood or not of them becoming involved in substance use as the result of their experiences. Influential factors are claimed to include the role modeling of substance use. Young people who grow up in a household where alcohol and other drugs are used to a significant degree, are seen to be more likely to model this type of behaviour than are those who have lived in an environment where fewer drugs are used (Peele, 1987, p. 64). With regard to the impact of

family and other life experiences, extensive research carried out in the Australian Capital Territory [ACT] by Dembo also states that "there is an established link between sexual and physical abuse and the existence of drug and alcohol problems" (cited in O'Halloran, 1990, p. 40).

More specific to the target population of Yirra, is research carried out in WA by the Youth Affairs Bureau. It states, "Substance abuse and crimes against property are now identified as a 'major problem'. Behind these problems we have major impactors of:

- . family conflict and breakdown
- . increasing poverty
- . high youth unemployment
- . youth homelessness, and
- . educational achievement pressure" (Youth Affairs Bureau, 1988, p. 3. See also Burdekin, 1989).

Finally, when the question of 'Why do you use drugs?' was put to a group of 292 young offenders, the major reasons were stated as being "to feel good, curiosity and boredom" (Howard & Zibert, 1990, p. 238).

### Approaches to Treatment

There is a minimal amount of literature available in Australia with regard to treatment approaches specifically designed to address the needs of young

people who are experiencing drug related problems. This is possibly due to the recency of establishment of treatment programs (Miller, 1993). Much of the literature which does exist emphasises the necessity to take into account the aforementioned antecedents to the drug use, and to look at the problem 'holistically' (Obermeier & Henry, 1989, p. 164).

This holistic philosophical approach to service provision not only appears to be highly promoted within the Australian literature, but along with its promotion there tends to be strong criticism of what is labelled as the 'Medical Model' approach to treatment. With this approach the focus is on the drug use as the problem as it is perceived to be a 'disease' (Miller, 1993, p. 3).

In his discussion on approaches to treatment for adolescents in the USA, Peele (1987, p. 65) is also critical of the medical model approach and states:

The idea that most substance abusers - including those whose cases appear to be quite severe in adolescence - will outgrow these problems, very strongly contradicts the image of alcoholism [or drug dependence] as an irreversible, progressive disease.

Adult programs such as those offered by NA are also generally perceived to be inappropriate for young people for a number of reasons. Firstly, as research carried out by Howard and Zibert, (1990, p. 251) is claimed to

indicate, one of the reasons stated by young people for leaving rehabilitation programs early was because they were "too adult oriented". Secondly, as McKinnon states "They're [the young people] less streetwise and they're likely to be influenced by older users if they try to fit into an adult program" (cited in McLaughlin, 1991, p. 21). Similarly, a Law Reform Commission report in 1988, (cited in Brown, 1991, p. 57) discusses the deleterious effect prison can have on young people. It claims that "a prison term may well enhance the skills an offender needs to commit crimes in the community" (See also Howard & Zibert, 1990, p. 240).

Whether or not a program be residential or non-residential has also been the subject of debate. Research by Freidman, Schwartz and Utada, (1986, p. 49) into the different effects of each approach is claimed to indicate that both have advantages and disadvantages. Residential treatment is claimed to provide the opportunities for rapport to develop between clients and staff. As a consequence, important issues may be identified and dealt with. However, the young people are in an 'unnatural' environment which at some time they will leave and skills they have learned may not be easily transferred into the 'real' world. On the other hand whilst out-client programs provide the opportunities to practice skills learned external to the program, they do not provide the same opportunities for

interaction with staff, and issues important to the client may not be identified.

The appropriateness of residential or non-residential treatment has also been discussed by Cohen & Woerner (1976), and in relation to the research they have conducted they conclude:

The nonresidential therapeutic community-type treatment programs we have studied seem to be most effective with younger clients who have a relatively short-term history of drug abuse and/or addiction and who have not yet become totally involved in an addict subculture (p. 313).

According to Miller (1993, pp. 6-8) the features an adolescent treatment program should possess include their being "adolescent specific" and "easy to access"; they should provide "vocational and educational emphasis" and "recreational activities"; they should provide emotional support and "involvement with family"; they should also use the group of clients as peer support and provision should be made for follow-up support.

### Therapeutic Community Approach

Most of the residential drug treatment programs in Australia are currently being based on the Therapeutic Community [TC] Model (Miller, 1992, p. 41). The aim of

this approach is to focus on the psycho-social problems clients are experiencing by endeavoring to teach and demonstrate to them life skills which may assist them to effectively deal with every day life. This holistic approach includes educational and vocational issues, health issues, life skills development, emotional difficulties including stress management, coping skills and self esteem enhancement (See also Obermeier & Henry, 1989, pp. 164-165).

Improved family relations are also promoted in the current literature, and where possible it is considered to be a desired outcome (Howard & Zibert, 1990, p. 258). However, Miller (1993, p. 7) states "family upheaval or poor parenting are often seen as major contributors to many of the adolescent's problems". Peele (1987, p. 67), in his discussion regarding the advantages of providing out-client treatment, similarly refers to the situation where the family is "destructive" and states "children who are abusing drugs are often least successful at functioning independently of their families, making a therapeutic community appealing as the most readily available haven".

As the result of court referrals including community service orders [CSO'S], probation, conditional release orders [CRO'S], or alternative to custody programs [ACP'S], much of the clientele of treatment programs have been mandated into entering the program.

The potential for programs to have a positive effect for such clients has been the focus of research such as that carried out by Catalano, Hawkins, Wells & Miller (1991, p. 1122). Results are claimed to indicate that:

perceived choice at entry predicts a positive attitude toward treatment, perceived choice about remaining in treatment predicts treatment progress, and voluntary status at entry was predictive of reducing post-treatment drug use.

In general, literature available from both Australia and overseas appears to support the TC approach to service provision for adolescents whilst seeing mandatory entry to such programs as problematic.

### Evaluation of Adolescent Treatment Programs

Yirra is the only residential drug rehabilitation program in WA designed specifically for adolescents. The most recent evaluation of a similar program was carried out in 1992 on Dunsmore House in New South Wales. This program's approach to service delivery is similar to that of Yirra's, in that it is an adaptation of the TC Model (Miller, 1992, p. 90).

The aim of that evaluation was to establish whether that type of program was suited to the needs of adolescents. According to Miller (1992, p. iii), his study was focussed on gaining an understanding of the

program's "appropriateness and efficiency". His method of inquiry involved a survey administered to "Drug and Alcohol Workers", and the "Staff and Clients" of Dunsmore House. Data was analysed by using the Community Oriented Program Environment Scale which was "designed to assess the social climates of hospital-based treatment programs." (Miller, 1992, p. 101).

Findings are claimed to indicate that the program has been appropriate and that clients are satisfied with the type of service they have received (Miller, 1992, pp. 156-172). Recommendations included a focus on the development of a "coherent treatment orientation based upon current research and theory on adolescent drug abuse together with its own clinical experience"; more clearly defined client-centered objectives; and a review of program activities so that they reflect "the treatment orientation of the program." (1992, p. 174).

### Relevant Qualitative Research in WA

There is no available qualitative research data of Australian programs similar in design to Yirra. However, an ethnographic study which included some of the target population of Yirra, has been identified. The approach to inquiry adopted by the researcher, Moore, was similar to that used for this study, as his naturalistic method

involved both tape recorded interviews and participant observation.

Moore states that he "came into contact with approximately thirty drug-using people" and that his "greatest involvement was with a subset of perhaps twenty young men and women, and within this set, a core of six people" (1992, p. 15). "Their ages varied from the late-teens to early thirties" (1992, p. 16).

As a result of his study, Moore has written a number of reports which reflect the use and effectiveness of qualitative, naturalistic research for exploring the cultures and experiences associated with drug use. In one of these, the focus was on the investigation of recreational use of psychostimulant drugs. Moore reports that the group of drug users who participated in the research have within their culture sanctions and rituals which are essentially harm reduction strategies, including sharing knowledge about how to use drugs, and soliciting information from more experienced 'users'. (Moore, 1992, pp. 69-82). He concludes his report by reinforcing a quotation by Reinerman and Levine (cited in Moore, February 1992, p. 84) where they have stated "we must take more seriously the ways in which most users...have developed self-regulating strategies which work to minimise risk of abuse." To this Moore adds:

The voice of drug users is rarely heard in the debate about drug use. Various types of drug experts...all contribute to the formulation of policy and practice but drug users, who are entitled to some say in policy which affects them, do not. (1992, pp. 83-84)

Moore states in his recommendations "Future ethnographic [and qualitative studies in general] have an important role to play in providing contextual data on the social meanings of drug use by:

- . moving away from the clinic,
- . incorporating the perceived benefits of drug use into analysis,
- . presenting the insider view of drug use, and
- . allowing drug users some input into policy which affects them." (Moore, 1992, p. 91).

This study by Moore is valuable in that it provides some useful insights into the cultural experiences of young people who use drugs and who in some cases are a part of the target population of Yirra. The knowledge which has been gained from his study also reinforces the value of this type of inquiry.

## CONCLUSION

This literature review has included discussion regarding the nature and needs of adolescents,

adolescent substance use, and current theories and approaches to service provision. In this chapter I have also included a brief outline of a qualitative study recently carried out included some of the target population of Yirra.

The following chapter describes the theoretical framework for this study. Chapter Four discusses the methodology and method, ethical considerations and limitations to this study. Chapter Five includes both research findings and discussion, and finally, Chapter Six is the conclusion to this thesis.

## CHAPTER THREE:

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Yirra was designed specifically for adolescents. Its initial design was largely based on input from 'experts' in the field plus current theories regarding the unique needs of adolescent substance users.

Due to the recency of establishment of this program and the degree to which program policy, design and implementation have continued to evolve experimentally and experientially, Yirra is what Rossi and Freeman term a "new and innovative program" (1989, p. 52). In describing this type of program they state, "What makes an intervention innovative in our sense is that the particular treatment has never been applied to the population specific." (1989, p. 52). This is the case with regard to the service offered by Yirra.

The stage of development of Yirra also marks this program as innovative in that it:

- . "Is still in an emerging, or research and development phase"
  - . "The delivery system, or part of it, has not been adequately tested", and
  - . "The targets of the program are markedly new"
- (Rossi & Freeman, 1989, pp. 54-55).

With a new and innovative program such as Yirra, it is not only useful, but important to focus the initial evaluation on the question of 'Is this program doing that which it was established to do?' (Rossi & Freeman, 1989, p. 56). In the case of Yirra, its intended function was to provide a residential service which is appropriate for adolescents, and one which assists them to address problems they are having as a result of their substance use.

In an attempt to understand the degree to which Yirra is both suitable for adolescents, and assisting them to address their substance use related problems, this inquiry was focused on gaining an understanding of the experience of this program from the perspective of the young people who were receiving its services. From this inquiry it was anticipated that some understanding could be gained with regard to program participants' perceptions of both the appropriateness of Yirra for them, and the degree to which it is assisting them to deal with the problems they have which are associated with their substance use.

It is the young people at Yirra who best understand their experience of this program. Although it is useful to have some understanding of the experience of residents, reporting this to Yirra's management is not the reason for them being in the program; it is neither

their role nor responsibility. They are also unlikely to analyse or articulate their experience of Yirra without someone else encouraging them to do so. Therefore, my role as researcher was to assist the young people at Yirra to reflect on their experiences of the program, and in turn, to document these as closely as possible.

In order to document the experience of the young people who participate in the Yirra program, I needed to first gain an understanding of it. Although I have worked at Yirra in the capacity of volunteer, and therefore have some experience of this program, I have learned to 'see' Yirra from the perspective of a volunteer. This perspective is likely to be different from that of its program participants, as Lincoln and Guba state: "perspective connotes a view at a distance from a particular focus. Where we look from affects what we see." (1985, p. 55).

According to Morse (1989, p. 23) "Methods of data analysis that fragment the lived experience may distort that which it seeks to describe." He also states "the documentation of that [read 'the'] experience should be done in such a way that it is true to the lives of the people described." (1989, p. 24).

In an attempt to minimise approaching this inquiry with pre-conceived ideas with regard to the experience of young people in the Yirra program, I have applied a Phenomenological approach to the design and analysis of

inquiry. A phenomenological approach to inquiry focuses on the perspective of the people who have a particular experience, rather than on that of others such as policy makers, program implementers or even the researcher. As Patton states "A phenomenological study...is one that focuses on descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience what they experience." (1990, p. 71). By applying a phenomenological approach to this inquiry therefore, pre-conceived ideas of people outside of the experience have not directed the inquiry but rather it has been directed by the perceptions of those who have had the experience.

The qualitative-naturalistic nature of phenomenology is also appropriate for innovative programs such as Yirra, as it provides the opportunity to not only find out whether recipients of the service perceive their experience to be that which the program offered to them, but also to gain some insight into whether it has been as they expected, or different.

Documenting the experience of the young people in the Yirra program is useful as it provides a description of what being in the program was like for them. However, in order to gain some understanding of the meaning of this experience I have also chosen to apply the previously discussed theories of Erikson and Piaget to analysis of the program experience described by residents of Yirra. I have done this based on the

knowledge that the program designers of Yirra intended Yirra to be designed and implemented in a manner which is appropriate for adolescents.

The fore-mentioned developmental theorists [Piaget and Erikson] assume that the adolescent stage of development is unique, and one which is a time of intense physiological and cognitive change. Because of this the behaviour and needs of adolescents are also unique. It is therefore important that the developmental characteristics and often dynamic nature of the young people in the Yirra program be understood and allowed for by program designers and implementers. As O'Halloran (1990, p. 35) states:

The upshot of all this is that workers with youth have to expect, accept and work with behaviour such as preoccupation with self, a rejection of adult company and a corresponding increase in bonds within the adolescent age group, fluctuating and inconsistent displays of foresight and responsibility, etc.

It was anticipated therefore, that by applying these two prominent theories of adolescent development, which have been developed by Erikson and Piaget, to analysis of the experience of residents in the Yirra program, some understanding can be gained with regard to the degree to which Yirra is suitably designed and implemented for adolescents.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

#### INTRODUCTION

Hammersley and Atkinson argue "we must adopt an approach [to inquiry] that respects the nature of the social world, [one] which allows it to reveal its nature to us." (1983, p. 12). With this in mind, and the aim of gaining an understanding of program participant experience, from their perspective, the approach I have chosen to adopt for this study is phenomenological in design.

#### PHENOMENOLOGY

Although Edmund Husserl's name is most frequently associated with phenomenology, Alfred Schultz (1964, 1967, 1973) first coined the term and has become known for his application of this approach to research. Other prominent writers associated with phenomenology include Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1964), Paul Ricoeur (1973), and Richard Zaner (1970) (Morse, 1989, p. 18).

To Husserl, the application of this approach to inquiry involved a study of the ways in which people describe things and how they experienced them. According to Patton, "His [Husserl's] most basic philosophical assumption was that we can only know what we experience by attending to perceptions and meanings that awaken our conscious awareness." (1990, p. 69). The application of a phenomenological approach to inquiry involves seeking and gaining an understanding of both the personal meaning and interpretation of a phenomenon for those who experience it.

Qualitative research such as this study, is often guided by the paradigm of 'social construction of reality' (Moore, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Emery discusses this concept and states that it infers "It [reality] is made up of our interpretation of our perceptions of the way things are and what has happened to us." (cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 73). This paradigm assumes that as individuals we each construct our own view as to our experience.

Essentially phenomenology is aimed at answering the question of "What is the structure and essence of experience of this phenomenon for these people?" (Patton, 1990, p. 68). This research approach attempts to gain knowledge in the form of an understanding of the experience of others.

The phenomenological approach to this study therefore, is based on the assumption that the young people who are at Yirra will each perceive their experience of being there in their own unique way. As a result of this the meanings each young person will attach to their experience, along with their interpretation of it, will also be unique.

In order to gain some understanding of the experience of others, naturalistic inquiry such as phenomenology incorporates the 'constructivist alternativist' theoretical approach by Kelly. It is based on the 'Verstehen' paradigm [meaning 'understanding'], "The central spirit of which is coming to an understanding of the view of the world held by those people involved in a situation" (Pope, cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 77). According to Patton, this approach to understanding assumes that through "empathy and sympathetic introspection derived from personal encounters the observer can fully understand human behaviour." (Patton, 1978, p. 219).

Rather than assume, as does this paradigm, that the perceptions of others can be fully understood, I believe instead, that through naturalistic forms of inquiry such as phenomenology, it is possible and desirable to gain what Pope describes as, "a deeper understanding of individuals, their perceptions, and the meanings they

attach to social life." (cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 76, emphasis added).

Because "context is so heavily implicated in meaning" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 187), phenomenological inquiry is carried out in the natural setting where the phenomenon occurs. "This makes possible description and understanding of both externally observable behaviours and internal states [worldview, opinion, values, attitudes, symbolic constructs, and so on]" (Patton, 1990, p. 47). Phenomenology therefore attempts to look at experience 'holistically', deeming the whole to be more than the sum of the parts (Patton, 1990, p. 49).

Once entry into the field has been negotiated and attained, and in order to be receptive to the experience of the people there [get close to the data], the researcher must also establish and maintain trust and rapport with the people there.

Along with this, the researcher needs also to be adaptive to this environment and "situation[s] that will be encountered." (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 187). As Patton states, "Fieldwork involves getting one's hands dirty, participating where possible in actual program activities, and getting to know program staff and participants on a personal level." (Patton, 1990, p. 47).

Aside from this continuous process of participant observation, data gathering usually focuses on interviews [both formal and informal] with people within the setting. These two main sources of data are analysed inductively throughout the data-gathering phase, in that from them themes, which reflect what is important to informants, are identified and become the focus of future inquiry; thus allowing the data to shape the inquiry.

[Approaches to data gathering and analysis are discussed in more detail in the Method Section.]

## Design

For 18 months prior to undertaking this research, I was a volunteer at Yirra. Much of the time I was at Yirra [around 10 hours per week] was spent in the company of the young people who were residents there. My experiences there were extremely useful when it came to planning the most appropriate design and method for this study.

This inquiry has been designed in the form of a case study. Although during both the planning and data-gathering stages of this research I was in constant contact with residents of Yirra, program implementers and program management, the focus of this inquiry was on residents of the program and their experience of it. It

was anticipated that by conducting an inquiry with residents of Yirra over a three-month period [from mid-April, to mid-July, 1994], that data gathered would represent a 'snapshot in time'; and that the experience of Yirra, for these young people, could be described "in depth and detail, in context and holistically." (Patton, 1990, p. 54).

However, as Lincoln and Guba state, "naturalistic studies are virtually impossible to design in any definitive way before the study is actually undertaken" (1989, p. 187). The inquiry therefore, incorporated an 'emergent design', in that it remained a reflexive process throughout. An emergent design is appropriate for a study such as this, as Patton states: "a qualitative design needs to remain sufficiently open and flexible to permit exploration of what-ever the phenomenon under study offers for inquiry." (1990, p. 196).

Although a proposed framework and method were designed for this study, as is the nature of qualitative research, it was not possible to predict the line inquiry would take, or the type of data I would encounter. Changes in design were also influenced by the availability of informants, the preparedness of informants to participate in the inquiry, and the diminution in interest in participating by some key informants.

## METHOD

### Participants

During my data-gathering period at Yirra, I spent varying degrees of time with the 15 young people who entered the program. Of these young people, 4 were female and 11 male. Their ages ranged from 14 to 17 years, and the length of time spent by each individual in the program varied from one day to just under 3 weeks. Three of these young people told me that they were at Yirra as a result of a court order.

### Interviews with informants

Of the 15 residents of Yirra, 8 stayed in the program for a week or more. Of these, 7 were to take part in tape recorded interviews. Prior to doing this study I had never met any of these young people.

When a new resident entered the program, I would look for a convenient opportunity [usually on the first day of meeting them] to explain this study. Such an opportunity might arise whilst talking with them in the recreation room, or making lunch in the kitchen.

My plan for inviting residents to take part in taped interviews had been to ask them, once they had been at Yirra a week, if they would like to participate.

However, new residents would frequently hear another young person and myself planning an interview. I found therefore, that in order to make them feel welcome to also be involved, I would suggest to them that if they were interested in participating, that a good time would be after they had been at Yirra a week.

My rationale for doing this with new residents, was to allow them the opportunity to experience all of the elements of the program. I found that this approach to identifying informants was useful as it gave them time to decide whether they wanted to be involved, and I believe also helped them to feel that they were not obligated to participate in the study. The comments of new residents regarding why they had come to Yirra, and what they were experiencing there, were recorded in my fieldnotes. Most of the young people seemed interested in the study, and told me that they would be happy to act as an informant.

In order to protect the anonymity of informants, I have used pseudonyms in place of their real names. The seven residents who took part in taped interviews I have called Len, Mark, Shaun, Rachel, Sue, John and Mandy. Although all informants were happy to participate in interviews, five of these informants were considerably more keen to become involved in the research and to act as my 'teacher'. I found however, that once informants had been at Yirra for around four to five weeks, their

enthusiasm to do taped interviews appeared to be waning. At the times that their declining interest became apparent to me, these informants also began to demonstrate disinterest in and discontent with the program. Reference to field notes indicates that there also appeared to be some other major distraction for each of them including the possibility of being sent to adult prison, conflict with other residents and/or the desire to be with friends outside Yirra.

Rachel, who for the first four to five weeks was a particularly enthusiastic and co-operative resident appeared to go through this change, and at this time told me, "The first couple of weeks are pretty hard. Then half way through it you think I'm doing pretty well but what will it be like when I get out? Or, I don't care what it's like, I just want to get out". Until this time Rachel had told me that she enjoyed her role of informant and on occasion asked if we could do another interview.

Those informants who appeared to have lost interest in doing taped interviews did however, continue to talk freely to me about their experiences, problems and expectations. So, rather than press them for a taped interview, and in order to maintain the trust and rapport which had been established, we were more inclined to have 'long', non-tape recorded

conversations. The essence of these would as quickly as possible be recorded in my fieldnotes.

Interviews were carried out mostly on the premises of Yirra and always in the location selected by informants. This ranged from the lounge room to sitting on the pool table in the recreation room. Those interviews which were carried out off the premises were done in the local coffee shop which residents sometimes visited with a worker, or whilst out on recreation, for example sitting on the beach. Interviews were always private in that only myself and the informant were present. Occasionally, someone, either a worker or another resident would interrupt. At these times we would stop the interview until they had left.

Taped interviews usually lasted around 30 minutes and on most occasions we continued to talk for some time afterwards. Many of these further conversations were very informative and on occasions such as this I found myself wishing that I could secretly leave the tape running! Not only would this have been unethical however, but after the first few interviews I became aware that the informants seemed to be more relaxed with this less formal approach to inquiry and as a result talked more freely. Once again, the essence of these conversations would be recorded in my fieldnotes.

Rather than have data reflect 'hearsay', the focus of inquiry was on the informant's own experiences of

Yirra and not their perceptions of experiences of other residents.

Initial interviews with young people were broad and general. For example, questions were asked such as 'What do you do on an average day?' and, 'How would you describe Yirra to someone who had never heard of it?' Most informants responded to this type of question as was anticipated, and proceeded to give a comprehensive response. From their responses, the issues which informants raised became the focus of inquiry thus facilitating a deeper exploration of their experiences as they perceived them to be.

### Participant Observation

The benefit of participant observation, as Moore (1992, p. 14) states, is that it "enables the researcher to take an active role within the group and minimise disruption to the natural flow of social life." It also provides the opportunity for the researcher to "talk with the people about their experiences and perceptions" (Patton, 1990, p. 10).

Data gathering was carried out over a 12-week period. During this time I usually spent 3 or 4 days/evenings per week at Yirra or out with the young people on recreation. Prior to doing this research I had been a volunteer at Yirra for some time and in that role

had frequently been the only adult in the company of residents, often taking them out to do 'business' [ie. to Social Security] or out on recreation. On these occasions I would frequently have to remind residents of the 'rules of Yirra', and to make decisions related to the young people and the program.

Prior to data gathering therefore, I asked the staff to not place me in a position of responsibility or decision making. The rationale for this was to reduce the likelihood of residents seeing me as a 'worker', and instead, as someone external of the program. Although residents knew I had been a volunteer at Yirra in the past, I had hoped that these residents would see me as an 'outsider' to the program, and therefore, someone not obligated to disclose their confidences to staff.

In order to establish rapport with residents and explain to them about the research which I was doing, for the first two weeks of data gathering I did not do any taped interviews. Instead, I began the process of participant observation which was to continue for the entire data-gathering period.

Participant observation involved for example, being with the young people in program planned group discussions, at meal times, going to do the food shopping with them, helping them with their chores, playing pool with residents in the recreation room,

watching TV with them, going out to the beach, movies, go-karting, and so on.

Although I would endeavor to seek frequent opportunities to 'slip away' and discretely write up fieldnotes about my observations, I often found this difficult because one of the young people would find me and begin to talk or ask if I wanted to do something such as walk down to the shops or play a game of pool.

On these occasions I chose to put my notes away and spend time with residents. Fieldnotes were subsequently written up as soon as I could find the opportunity; this was usually once I had arrived home.

### Program Document Analysis

Lincoln and Guba state that program documents are "a rich source of information, contextually grounded in the contexts they represent" (1985, p. 277). In order to focus on gaining an understanding of the perspective of residents of Yirra rather than that of management, program document analysis was kept to material to which residents were exposed. This included material such as the daily plan, rules of Yirra [Appendix I], list of chores, things on the notice board, and so on.

Residents would sometimes also ask me if I wanted to read the journals they are expected to keep whilst at Yirra, or letters, stories, and poetry they had written

whilst there. I found that these personal documents often gave me a greater insight into the young person's experiences, and helped to facilitate both discussion and trust.

## Analysis of Data

### Preliminary Data Analysis

Lincoln and Guba state that prior to inquiry, "the naturalist adopts the posture of 'not knowing what is not known'." (1985, p. 235). Therefore, with phenomenology, rather than deductively testing a pre-determined hypothesis as does the scientific method, inquiry is first focused on gaining a basic understanding about the experiences of a phenomenon. As understanding develops, inquiry becomes more focused and is directed by knowledge which has been gained as the result of the inquiry. For naturalistic forms of inquiry, including phenomenology, the processes of data gathering and data analysis are therefore, to a large degree, interrelated.

Initial inquiry for this study was largely unstructured and broad, and in the form of 'grand-tour questions'. In response to grand-tour questions, informants raised issues important to their experience and these became the focus of further inquiry [mini-tour questions]. For example, in response to the question

"What is an average day like for you?" Informants would talk about elements of the program, describing those which they enjoyed or didn't, those which were difficult or easy, and so on. From this, inquiry would be focused on individual program elements they had talked about and their perceptions of them.

After each interview, the tape would be transcribed verbatim. The transcription would then be read and significant statements highlighted. Where there appeared to be 'recurring regularities' in the data, they would be classified as 'preliminary themes'.

Lincoln and Guba, (cited in Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 145) discuss the problem of having the findings reflect the product of the researcher's bias, values and prejudice. In order to deal with this issue of 'truth value', once preliminary themes were identified, and prior to the next interview, I would verify with the informant that I had correctly interpreted the meaning of the information they had given me. This clarification process was important as on occasion an informant would respond with something like 'It's not really like that', and would continue to explain to me what 'it was like'.

After a number of informants had been interviewed thematic patterns across cases began to emerge. Thematic categories were then numerically coded and labeled ie. Category 1.0, was 'First impressions of Yirra'.

Reference to field notes would also be made as a method of triangulating informant responses and for the purpose of identifying other issues which appeared to be relevant to residents' experiences.

As the inquiry proceeded, experiential themes raised by some informants and not by others would also be included in interviews. For example, I might ask an informant "I have wondered about when 'such and such' happened, can you tell me what you thought about that?" This would leave the informant free to give me their perception without it being influenced by the comments I had received from other informants.

Morse states "Continually working with the data helps us speculate about possible connections and then put our speculations to the test" (1989, p. 296). Over the 3 month data gathering phase, considerable time was spent on the processes of data gathering [both participant observation and interviews], transcription of interviews, analysis of them in the search for themes and designing subsequent interview schedules.

Constantly working with the data along with spending a significant amount of time with informants facilitated, for me, further insight into the experience of residents of Yirra. This 'tacit knowledge' as Douglas and Moustakas state "operates behind the scenes, giving birth to the hunches and vague, formless insights that characterise heuristic discovery." (cited in Patton,

1990, p. 72). So to some extent, I believe that as a result of time spent with the residents of Yirra, and working with the data, my tacit knowledge about the experiences of residents of Yirra also influenced the lines of inquiry.

### Comprehensive Data Analysis

A more comprehensive data analysis was carried out at the conclusion of data gathering. I chose not to use a computer package for analysis but rather to analyse transcripts manually in order to remain close to the data. This approach, I believe, also reduced the likelihood of taking the meanings of experience out of context. In this regard, Lincoln and Guba discuss the usefulness of computers and state "No way yet exists that permits the analyst to utilise the computer in ways that would take context into account - a critical shortcoming from the naturalist's point of view." (1985, p. 353).

This phase of analysis involved reading all transcripts a number of times in order to check that all significant statements made by informants were included in categories. As a result of this in-depth study of all transcripts, categories were re-organised, and sub-

categories and dimensions identified. ie.

. [Category 1.0] 'First impressions of Yirra'

. [Sub-category 1.1] The people

. [Dimension 1.1.1] Other residents

. [Dimension 1.1.2] The workers

Significant statements from transcripts and field notes were then coded numerically to match categories, sub-categories and dimensions.

Each category, sub-category or dimension was then analysed both separately, by listing all significant statements which fitted into it, and also by highlighting them on a complete set of transcriptions. This method of analysis allowed me to identify homogeneity and diversity of experiences of informants, and also to check that I was keeping the significant statement in context.

At this stage, due to informants having left the program, it was not possible to verify the findings of my comprehensive data analysis with them. Instead, the Manager of Programs for PCM, who has both comprehensive knowledge and experience of programs for adolescent substance users, performed the role of 'peer reviewer'. According to Lincoln and Guba, employing a peer reviewer means that "The inquirer's biases are probed, meanings explored...and the basis for interpretations clarified" (1985, p. 308).

The experiences of informants were then analysed in relation to the theories of adolescence which have been developed by Piaget and Erikson.

## Ethical Considerations

### Data Gathering

As previously mentioned [in the sub-section entitled 'Interviews with Informants'], I sought an early opportunity to explain this study to all new residents of Yirra. My explanation included telling them that I was recording my observations of events and interactions between the residents in the program and between residents and other people at Yirra in the form of fieldnotes; and that with their permission, they would be included in this record. I also explained to residents that any reference to individuals in my thesis and the report to PCM would be anonymous. All residents gave me verbal permission to include references to them in my fieldnotes.

Although I had designed a written Disclosure Form about this study, as the young people at Yirra have varying degrees of literacy skills, I chose not to use it. I did this because occasionally in the past at Yirra I had seen a young person whom I had become aware had minimal reading skills, pretend to read something they had been given.

Prior to doing a taped interview with a resident therefore, I explained to them the reasons for doing this study and anticipated benefits. I also explained that I intended to protect their anonymity and confidentiality and how I would do this; and informed them of possible risks to themselves if they were to participate.

Risks which I anticipated included the possibility that as a result of our discussions they may experience raised self-awareness which could cause them distress or grief. I then asked informants to tell me if they were feeling distressed during, or as a result of an interview, and that if this were to happen we could talk to the senior counsellor about it.

It was also possible that an informant might tell me something which I believed would be detrimental to their own safety, or the safety or well-being of another person. I told the resident that if this were to happen, I would pass this information on to the co-ordinator of Yirra. I suggested therefore that in order to avoid this happening, they not tell me anything which might place me in such a position.

Potential informants were also told that they were free to withdraw from participating in taped interviews at any time. I also endeavored to encourage them to ask me any questions about the research which they might

have and told them that I would answer their questions as best I could.

After explaining these issues related to their participation, I would ask the resident if they still wanted to take part in the study. All potential informants told me that they were still happy to participate, and signed a consent form prior to the first interview. [Appendix II].

### Writing the Report

It is important to the maintenance of anonymity of informants that they not be identifiable to readers of this Thesis. Because of this pseudonyms have been used in place of informants' names. Although it might have been useful for readers to have had a brief outline of some of the characteristics of informants, such as age, ethnicity, and so on, I have not done this as it too might result in informants being identifiable. Due to the minimal number of young people who entered the Yirra program during the data-gathering phase, this is particularly relevant to this study.

For the same reason a high proportion of direct quotes cannot be used as workers and others who were at Yirra at the time I was carrying out data gathering, may be able to identify an informant based on their language or a particular incident they talked to me about. In

some instances therefore, an informant may be referred to as 'one of the residents' in order to reduce the possibility that they may be identified.

### Limitations to the Study

The degree to which my presence at Yirra impacted on the experiences of the young people there, is not known. It was however inevitable that there would be some impact, particularly due to the amount of time I spent in the company of residents and the subjective nature of the inquiry.

On numerous occasions I would become aware of my impact on the experience of residents. For example, on occasion an informant would tell me that they enjoyed doing interviews because it helped them to understand themselves better. I would at these times realise that I had 'intruded' into the natural environment of Yirra and reduced the internal validity of the study. However, naturalistic inquiry such as this study, are a reciprocal process, possibly resulting in benefits to the informant [for example, raised self-awareness], and to the researcher [for example, gaining a deeper understanding of the informants experience].

Lincoln and Guba, discuss the inevitable impact of the researcher who is conducting a qualitative study, and state "If this interaction were to be nullified,

say, by some magical methodology that could 'truly' guarantee objectivity, the trade-off would hardly be worth it." (1985, p. 107).

I was also aware that I was impacting on the natural environment of Yirra when a resident would ask me for advice about a problem they had. On these occasions, rather than take on the role of counsellor, I would suggest that the best person they could talk to would be their 'primary counsellor'. Therefore, although I acknowledged that I could not avoid being a part of the program experience of the young people at Yirra, in order to reduce the impact of my presence I would attempt to put boundaries on what I would do and say, whilst at Yirra, and on outings in the company of residents and workers.

With regard to transferability of findings of a study, Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 216-217) state "If there is some question whether the findings may apply even in the same context at some other, later time, it is surely an issue whether they apply in other, somewhat dissimilar contexts." In this regard, it is important to note that during my data-gathering phase at Yirra, although 15 young people entered the program, only 8 remained for a week or more, and of these, only 7 participated in taped interviews. Although the experiences of those young people who did not participate in taped interviews have been, to some

degree, recorded in my fieldnotes, the question this knowledge raises is 'Why did so many young people leave Yirra during their first week there?' The findings from this research therefore [in particular informants' comments], are possibly only transferable to the experiences of young people at Yirra, and to other similar programs, in which program participants have been there for at least one week.

In order for readers of this thesis to make a judgment as to the degree of transferability of the findings, I have endeavored to provide a 'thick description' of informants' responses. This thick description includes, wherever possible, direct quotes from informants. At times quotes from informants may seem prolific. I have done this however, in order to provide a comprehensive description of informants' perceptions of their experience.

Although some readers of this report may also find some of the language of informants offensive, I believe that the main advantage of direct quotes is that they provide informants with a voice which is relatively free from interpretation. Therefore, the words used by informants have not been changed in any way.

In conjunction with the many quotes by informants, I have also, in the discussion chapter, reverted to using terms which are used by the residents of Yirra. For example, rather than say 'recreation', I use the

term 'rec'. I have done this because I believe it is important to use the 'cultural terms' which residents of Yirra use when discussing their experience (Spradley, 1979, pp. 21-24).

## CHAPTER FIVE:

### RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### INTRODUCTION

Issues raised by the young people at Yirra tended to focus on the four primary themes of 'Coming to Yirra', 'What we do at Yirra', 'The people at Yirra', and 'What Yirra does for me'. These topics are discussed in relation to Piaget and Erikson's theories of adolescent development in the following sections of this chapter.

#### COMING TO YIRRA

##### Introduction

Informants and other young people at Yirra frequently talked to me about their experiences prior to entering the program, including people in their lives such as their family and friends. Many of the residents also told me about their reasons for coming to Yirra, what they had expected it to be like for them there, and in what ways it was as they had expected or different.

This section of the discussion is focused on these issues.

### What I Expected Yirra to be Like

Informants talked about what they had expected Yirra to be like prior to their arrival. Some said that they found it to be similar to what they had expected. For example, John told me that he had expected it to be "pretty much like this, only not as strict", and Mandy said, "I just thought it would be more difficult". Others found they had had a picture of Yirra which was far removed from what they experienced. Shaun told me that he had expected "to see people with their eyes popping out of their heads" and said "but it was different. I had a totally wrong view of the place. I had it all wrong".

Len, who had been to Yirra once before, told me that before the first time he came to Yirra he thought "it was like you get locked up". When asked how long before he realised you don't, he said "That same day." This time when he entered Yirra he said "Oh, I felt like shit because I was coming down and that, but I knew all the workers and that. They were all happy and I could talk more".

With regard to Rachel's expectations of Yirra, she told me:

I thought drug rehab. was lots of people, like they give you drugs to come down on. I just thought...like before you meet someone you imagine what they are going to be like and when you get to meet them you find out it's not what you thought anyway....I was scared. Everyone said it's going to be the hardest thing you've done in your life, but it's nowhere as bad as I thought it would be.

Of the residents who talked about their expectations of Yirra, none had found it to be just as they had expected; and most said that Yirra was better than they had envisaged.

Howard and Zibert (1990, p. 256) discuss the findings of four surveys carried out in Sydney which focused on youth and drug use. They state "elaboration during the surveys suggests that drug programs were perceived as being unapproachable, irrelevant, or frightening." Just as many of the young people who have come to Yirra expected that they would be locked up, that it would be like a hospital, and so on, so may other young people who desire assistance with terminating or reducing their drug use. This raises the question of, 'If the residents of Yirra had false impressions about what it would be like for them there, how many other young people do not consider the program because they too have similar impressions with regard to what it would be like for them?'

From the comments made by most residents who had never been to Yirra before, it appears that they had expected this program to be 'medically' or 'correctionally' oriented, rather than designed and implemented to suit the needs and characteristics of young people. According to Brown (1991, p. 39), these types of impressions of drug rehabilitation programs are commonly held by young people, and act as deterrents for those who might otherwise consider participating in a program. He states that many experienced youth workers and "drug agency workers at those drug agencies which did not attract a significant number of young people, ventured that the formal, clinical appearance and character of their agency...were very likely a potent deterrent to young people."

According to Cavaiola and Kane-Cavaiola (1989, p. 16), and based on Erikson's theory of adolescent development, in their search for identity, "All adolescents share a desire and longing to be free". When looking at the above expectations experienced by the young people at Yirra from this perspective, it is understandable that the possibility of being locked up, or restricted within a hospital context are not likely to appeal to them.

In order for drug rehabilitation programs for adolescents, including Yirra, to attract young people, it appears that they need to not only be designed to

suit the needs and characteristics of adolescents, but also to have their 'adolescent-focused program design' known within the community. With regard to the promotion of Yirra for example, brochures and other forms of publicity could include information such as the non-clinical and non-correctional approach to service delivery which informants have experienced. Promotional material could also include communication from other young people such as Rachel who told me that she expected Yirra "to be like a hospital" and describes it this way, "Well it's a house basically, and its got workers there who sort of act as friends but are workers as well....it's got people there to help you because they realise what you are doing isn't easy".

### Why I came to Yirra

With regard to coming to Yirra, Mark told me that he was given the option by a magistrate of going to jail, or to Yirra. When asked why he chose Yirra he responded, "if I didn't, then I would go to jail, so I preferred to come here because I've got more freedom here than jail". Other residents at Yirra as a result of a court order talked about not being "locked up" but also about their desire to change their drug-related behavior. My fieldnotes record for example that on his first day at Yirra, Len told me that although he didn't

want to "breach" his court order [to remain at Yirra for 6 weeks], he also wanted to "do something serious about his drug use" and to "stop doing crime".

On the other hand, residents like John, who although not at Yirra as a result of a court order, talked about pressure from people which influenced their decision. When asked about his decision to come to Yirra he told me he was "sort of voluntarily forced. The place where I'm staying, they said I can stay there. I'm sort of a handful for her and she said 'go to Yirra for six weeks and after that I can come back'." Some residents like Sue talked of what appeared to be a more personal decision to enter the program. Sue told me, "My friend actually hung himself. He'd been trying to get money for speed and that made me think 'Right: time to do something...don't want to end up like that'."

Whilst talking about how they had come to be at Yirra, informants' perceptions, with regard to choice about being there, appeared to fit into four basic categories. Of the residents who were juvenile justice referred, some felt that they had had a choice about being there, while others felt that they had not. Similarly of the residents who were not juvenile justice referred, some also felt that they were at Yirra voluntarily whilst others didn't.

One of the main criteria for entering Yirra is that residents do so on a voluntary basis, and on the surface

it appears that all of the young people who enter the Yirra program have had a choice about being there. They have either come as a result of someone in the court system having given them an option between going to a training centre such as Longmore, or a drug treatment program such as Yirra; and the young person has made this choice. Others, apparently not at Yirra as a result of their criminal behavior, are seen by both residents and staff, to have entered the program 'voluntarily'. For example, a new resident might be asked by residents or others at Yirra, 'Are you here voluntarily?', in order to ascertain whether they are there as the result of juvenile justice referral or not.

Brown (1991, p. 35) states "most young people attending these agencies did so as a result of some form of coercion, whether by friends, family, school, lawyers or the criminal justice system." This comment appears to reflect the experience for most residents of Yirra who, although stating that, at least to some degree, they have had a choice about being at Yirra, question whether in actuality they have. This questioning is done by residents like Mark, who although given a choice between prison and drug rehab., consider the main reason for choosing Yirra to be that they will have "more freedom" there than in prison. Likewise, as in John's case, not all residents who entered the program without a mandatory option of prison or Yirra, felt that they had

had a choice, but rather as John did, felt that they had been "forced".

These residents feel that to a large degree, they have had their decision greatly influenced by someone else; be it from the court system or otherwise. Their choice was not specifically to be at Yirra, but rather between undesirable options of which they chose the most preferable. Whilst discussing the issue of coercion, Brown states "many drug agency workers regarded attendance by young people in response to overt coercion as undesirable, others saw it as an opportunity to offer whatever assistance the agency might be able to provide." (1991, p. 38).

Informants' experiences with regard to perceived choice about coming to Yirra, once again reflect the need of adolescents for 'freedom', particularly "freedom of choice" (Cavaiola & Kane-Cavaiola, 1989, p. 16).

The issue of perception of choice about entering a drug treatment program was the focus of a study by Bastien and Adelman. Their research was aimed at identifying the relationships between "source of placement, client perceptions of choice about being in treatment, attitudes toward treatment, and progress in treatment" for adolescents. One of their findings is that "compulsory referral in itself did not lead to perceived lack of choice at intake" (cited in Catalano, et al., 1990, p. 13).

This appears to relate to the experiences of some residents in the Yirra program. Of those who were "compulsorily referred", that is as a result of a court order or juvenile justice referral, some felt that they had actually had a choice about being in the program, and in fact welcomed the opportunity. Shaun, for example, [who was juvenile justice referred] said "for me it's really the best place to be"; and Len, who had had the options of a training centre or Yirra told me, "I chose here...I thought it might work". He said "I told them that I wanted to give up drugs, doing crime and to get a flat before I leave." When asked how he thought he had done in regard to those things he responded "Well, I'm not using and I'm not doing crime".

Bastien et al. also state that "Perceived choice regarding initial placement was related to positive attitudes toward treatment." (cited in Catalano, et al., 1990, p. 13). Of my seven informants, Len, Shaun and Mark told me that they were at Yirra as a result of a court order. Shaun and Len who both said that they were happy about coming to Yirra, and told me they wanted to be there in order to do something about their drug use, remained in the program for approximately eight weeks. Mark, who said that his choice was largely influenced by the "freedom" Yirra offered compared to his other option of jail, left Yirra just over one week after entering the program. Before he left he told me that he thought

coming to Yirra was "boring", as was most of what he experienced there.

Rachel, Sue, Mandy and John did not have their choice about coming to Yirra influenced by juvenile justice referral. Of these residents, John was the only one who felt that his choice had been "forced" by someone else. John also left Yirra after approximately one week. Just before he left he told me that "it's just like a pain in the arse to be stuck here for six weeks". Of the other residents, Sue remained in the program for around three weeks, left largely due to conflict with another resident and wanted to come back in once that person had left; and Rachel remained for her originally planned stay of six weeks, and in fact asked for and was allowed an extension of two weeks.

Mandy was still in the program when I completed my data-gathering phase [she had been at Yirra for around three weeks at this time]. During our first interview, Mandy talked about the different attitudes of residents toward the program, and asked me "If they don't want their [the workers] help in the first place, why are they here?" Mandy's question, I believe reflects in a few words, the issue of perception of choice. During our last interview, Mandy said "The only thing I'm going to suggest to Yirra, right, is that when they're interviewing people for the residential program they should be more picky." When asked what she meant by

"picky", Mandy responded, "to look for people who actually want the help."

### Settling In

Rachel told me, "The first day was pretty 'Eh, what's going to happen next, because I didn't know'. But once you've done a week you know the format so it's pretty cool." I have used 'Settling in' to refer to the time between when a person enters the program and the time when they feel comfortable and accepted by the other people there [mainly other residents and workers]. All informants referred to this 'settling in' time and although its duration and degree of difficulty varied slightly, generally residents who stayed more than a week, appeared to have settled in by then.

During this settling in time, new people coming into the program usually have to deal with a variety of experiences often including getting to know the routine and new people; the possibility of having to live in the same house as an 'enemy'; separation from friends and family and the sudden cessation of their drug use. Sue who said she wasn't particularly worried about coming to Yirra because she knew her friend Rachel was there, talked about how much she was missing her boyfriend and in particular the effect that not using 'mull' was having on her. Sue told me:

It's like, 'Oh reality' [emphasis]... 'Ah', it hit me full on on Friday, it went like 'bang'. And I looked around me and thought 'no way'. 'I'm not going to stick it out. I can't stick it out for six weeks'.

Frequently new residents are experiencing the effects of 'coming down' which not only affects them physically and emotionally, but also other residents who are exposed to their drug related mood swings and ill health. There seems however to be an understanding about this experience by many of the residents and they tolerate it to some degree. Shaun explained his tolerance this way: "they're probably still coming to terms with their problems and it's just their way of getting rid of tension or pressures".

It appears that the residents who do 'settle in' at Yirra are those who have the ability to manage the above-mentioned challenges, and other problems which being in the program present for them. They also appear to be the people who have made a personal decision to be at Yirra.

Although other factors for informants, such as the desire not to breach a court order and the desire to not let down someone who is important to them, may also motivate them, these factors do not appear to be as influential in maintaining desire to stay in the program

as does the personal desire to do something about their substance use.

When considering that the target population of Yirra ranges from 12 to 18 years, and from the perspective of Piaget's theory of adolescent development, the young people who enter Yirra are likely to be at different stages of cognitive development. According to Peterson (1989, p. 49), Piaget theorised that from around "11 years" of age a young person enters the formal-operational stage of thinking. They begin to think less in the here and now, and to consider the future. As Smart and Smart (1973, p. 72) state, "The child is concerned with what is, the adolescent with what is plus what could be." According to McCandless (1970, p. 246), "The egocentrism of early adolescence...tends to diminish by the age of 15 or 16, the age at which formal operations become firmly established."

Based on this theory, it could be assumed that young people around the ages of 15 or 16 may be more inclined to think about their actions, goals, plans, and in general their future. With regard to the young people at Yirra therefore, it could also be assumed that residents aged from 15 years upwards are more likely to think about their futures, and in turn be motivated toward changing elements of their current lifestyles.

which they believe will negatively impact on their futures.

Cavaiola and Kane-Cavaiola however, state "Maturational development is generally regarded to be impeded or halted when an adolescent becomes chemically dependent." (1989, p. 18). Based on this hypothesis, therefore, the degree to which young people who enter Yirra have developed 'dependence' on substances, may also affect their level of thinking and in turn their motivation to change their substance use lifestyle. This raises the question: 'If a young person who enters Yirra is not 'thinking' about 'wanting' to cease or even reduce their substance use, what other factors might be motivating them to remain in the program?'

Peele (1987, p. 62) states, "an understanding of substance abuse requires an awareness of individual motivation". As motivational influences differ for individual residents, an understanding of each resident's unique motivating forces and their strengths needs to be acquired and promoted, in order to enhance the resident's success.

According to Howard and Zibert (1990, p. 256) motivation may also grow as a result of being in the program; and even if a resident does leave the program prematurely, having been there may have been a part of the learning process of "coming to terms with one's dependency/addiction and finding out what might help."

This may have been something like the experience Len has had. Having been at Yirra on a previous occasion he told me:

The first time here all my urine tests [discussed later] were dirty all the time....But this time I had a dirty urine because of the party I had when I got out of Longmore and that was the only urine I had dirty....I thought it might work this time...this time it's better.

## WHAT WE DO AT YIRRA

### Introduction

Rachel's earlier comment of "what's going to happen next" largely refers to the numerous components of the Yirra program which new residents have to learn. In order to give some idea of the daily routine I have used the following explanations, firstly by Mandy:

You get up at 8.30 in the morning, have breakie, have a shower, get dressed, do your chores, then you have group from 9.30 to 10.30. And then you do all your business, phone calls, then you do recreation and that can vary on all sorts of things from go-karting to a drive up to the bush...come back, have lunch, we have recreation again after lunch and that can be various different things. Then you probably speak to a counsellor during the day, have dinner, have a group after dinner, after you've done your chores. And then you have recreation again. Normally in the evening you do something like getting a video or going to a movie, something like that and then at 10.30 you have relaxation and after relaxation you go to bed. And then you get up and you start all over again [laugh].

Shane's response to my inquiry about what he does on an average day is as follows:

I get up and have a cigarette and some coffee and some toast...[laugh] have a shower, do group, do rec, and come back. Have some lunch. Lunch varies from time to time...Go back out on rec. Watch teli when we're allowed. Eat tea.

Residents appear to accept the daily routine of Yirra. Generally they only comment about it when the workers don't stick to it as they [the residents] are frequently being prompted by the workers to, for example finish breakfast because its time for group. According to Cavaiola and Kane-Cavaiola, and in relation to Piaget's theory of adolescent development, one of the needs of adolescents is the need for "structure" (1989, p. 16).

The daily routine of Yirra appears to give the young people in the program the structure which they need in their day. When the daily routine is disrupted, residents frequently become agitated and complain. For example, Sue told me that one of the changes she would make to the program would be to have "more staff, more admin. Because this morning for instance, we missed out on rec. We had group late because there wasn't enough staff to do the assessment". When asked how that affected her, she responded, "shoved in the corner...we sit around doing nothing and waste our time".

"The weekends are a bit more casual", Rachel told me, "you haven't got as many chores to do. They are a bit more relaxed. You haven't sort of got the routine of the week days." Weekends differ from week days in that residents get to "sleep in" and "stay up later" at night. They don't do group, or business, the office staff aren't working, and there is no relaxation on

Saturday nights. The main shopping is done by residents and workers on Saturdays and extra washing of sheets, towels and so on, are also done by residents. Those who are on higher 'levels' [discussed in detail later] may even go out of the program for a day or even the weekend to spend time with a friend or a member of their family.

The elements of the Yirra program which informants tended to focus on included, 'one on ones', 'levels', 'urine tests', 'group', and 'recreation'. These program elements are therefore the focus of the next five parts of the discussion. As many residents also talked about being 'bored' whilst in the program, the issue of boredom has also been included in this section.

### One on Ones

The private conversations residents have with their primary or secondary counsellor are referred to as 'one on ones'. Rachel told me:

When you're having a one on one they are still professional, they can give you information, but they are still like friends if you know what I mean. They are more like friends but they have the experience to help you. I reckon that's good.

When a new resident enters Yirra they are allocated both a 'primary' and a 'secondary' counsellor who are workers in the program. Residents who have been at Yirra

before usually know at least some of the workers, and may request a particular worker to be their primary or secondary, and often refer to them as 'my worker'. Usually female residents choose to have female counsellors, and male residents choose to have males.

Residents tend to use the term 'one on one', not only to refer to 'counselling' they may have with their primary/secondary, but also to refer to any private conversation between two people; even two workers talking, might be described as "they're having a one on one". Generally, observing or being told that this is happening meant that the people involved should not be disturbed.

Due to the private nature of one on ones I did not experience any between a resident and worker first hand, however Sue chose to give me this insight into a one on one she had had with her worker: "We talked about a lot of things and everything that was mentioned is going to come up again because there's a lot of hassles in there I need to sort out". When asked if she minded telling me what sorts of hassles, Sue responded:

I've got problems with a dealer at the moment I owe him money....And another one is that I've got to say goodbye to Ric because two days before he committed suicide we had an argument and it's like I never really got to say good-bye to him. I'm going up to the spot where his ashes were sprinkled.

Although Sue's counselling with regard to the death of a friend may not appear to some people to be directly related to her substance use, as O'Halloran (1990, p. 8) states:

Interrelatedness...refers to the lifestyle of drug and alcohol affected youth which workers have observed as being characterised by one issue melting into another so that the young person's own perceptions of their situation is a 'melting pot'. To talk to them about their drug use in isolation from other issues is alienating and unrealistic.

Workers are rostered in shifts, either day, evening or night and a resident may not see their primary and/or secondary for a few days. On these occasions most residents say they will talk to the workers who are 'on'. Rachel explains it this way: "I don't know when my worker is on, not that often but often enough....I do it [talk] with other people as well. Like other workers I get on better with". Rachel goes on to describe her interpretation of the roles of primaries and secondaries as:

I think they are there to find the root of your problems, like all the reasons and crap like that, that secondaries don't. Oh, I suppose they do but your primary...they're more betterer [laugh]....They say 'think about this in relation to the problem, keep it in mind. I'm not telling you what to do but it might help', you know, about things you want to achieve.

Mark told me that for him one on ones were "boring" and that he didn't enjoy them. He said "When they say something, ten minutes later they say the same thing they said ten minutes earlier. They keep going on and on". For Mark, the experience of one on one's appears to be the reverse of what some other residents say they experience. He has been placed into the role of the 'listener' rather than the counsellor playing that role. O'Halloran, in her report of a study conducted in the ACT, discussed the importance of allowing the young person to do the talking; of some of the informants she reports:

They were despondent and frustrated on this point saying that workers acted as though they were listening but often contradicted this with their actions....having someone to talk to was the most frequently stated need. It often referred to a situation where the young person could talk freely about what they saw was happening to them, so that they could reflect on their situation and work out a solution for themselves. In other words they needed someone to facilitate them talking about their problems (1990, p. 25).

The young people at Yirra appear to desire communication with the adults there to be on an equal footing, rather than for themselves to be the subordinate and an adult to be the authority figure. They also appear to desire to have choices as to whether they talk, [have a 'one on one'] or not, and with whom.

With regard to an adolescent's search for their identity [theorised by Piaget], Cavaiola and Kane-Cavaiola, state that one of the needs of adolescents is the need for "power....teenagers are acutely aware of their nebulous position in our society. They lack status. They are neither children nor are they adults even though some may be more adult-like than childlike." (1989, p. 15).

The role of primaries and secondaries is not only to assist the young people with working toward their goals, but ideally also to establish trust and rapport with that resident so that the young person feels they have someone they want to go to if they have problems. Someone "to talk to who really cared" (O'Halloran, 1990, p. 48).

On occasion a resident would ask me if we could have a one on one. These conversations rarely appeared to focus on goals or problems but rather seemed to be just private chats we might otherwise have. It appeared to be more the young person's way of saying "lets have a talk". Len was most inclined to do this with me and usually talked about his girlfriend. An account from my fieldnotes records one of these conversations this way:

"Went in the van to Hyde Park for rec. Len asked me to stay in the van with him to have a 'one on one'. He talked about his girlfriend, being beaten up as a kid since he was five and his dad."

One on one's appear to be a vital component of the process of assisting young people at Yirra to work toward solving the problems they believe they have. However, in order to use this valuable approach requires firstly making available the opportunity for residents to talk to workers, secondly, keeping in mind the need to establish a rapport and 'genuine' trusting relationship with them, and also realising that the establishment of rapport and trust requires the worker to be the 'listening friend'.

Rachel appears to have had this experience with one on ones and said:

With one on one's you get to know your worker and it's a lot easier. Most of the people here I've sussed out anyway. [laugh] Like Matthew, like you. I've got you sussed [laugh], I know what you do, it's just easier, not just, 'I'm just someone who's coming here to do research, I know you as a person, if you know what I mean.

### Levels

Sue explains levels as "Just common sense really. Doing your chores, respecting others. Urine tests have to be clean. [explained later]".

Acceptance for entry into Yirra includes the potential resident's apparent preparedness to identify and work toward goals which relate to dealing with their drug-related problems. This focus on goals relates to

the Change Model on which Yirra is based and has a series of stages beginning with 'Thinking About Change' and ending with 'Changing'. [Appendix III] At Yirra these stages are correlated with levels, ie: 'Thinking about Change' is Level One, and when a new resident enters the program they are automatically on level one. Moving up or down levels is not only based on attitude and behaviour toward drug use, but as Sue has explained, conforming to the rules of the program.

Going up levels results in benefits which focus on increased freedom and autonomy. On the lowest level for example, residents can not be off the premises without being in the company of a worker and they can only have one 'short, supervised phone call' until they are on the next level [this may take a week]. On the highest level residents can be away from the program for, say, the weekend to visit friends or family, and they are allowed to make three unsupervised phone calls per day.

To some degree, Yirra is based on the Therapeutic Community [TC] model. This model, according to Miller, entails "creating a structured social environment, a milieu, where all interaction is designed to re-socialise the resident in responsible, pro-social behavior and values." (1992, p. 41). In their discussion of the TC model, Obermeier and Henry state:

An essential element within the community is control, which is first established by the staff....levels of responsibility are established by the staff and progression is based upon the individual (sic) growth in accomplishing his individualised treatment goals. With the earned responsibility, the patient [young person] gains privileges and status within the community (1989, p. 165).

Once again, according to Piaget's theory of the adolescent stage of development, the cognitive level of thinking which a young person at Yirra may be at, is likely to affect their readiness and personal commitment toward changing their substance use lifestyle. In this regard, O'Halloran states:

drug and alcohol affected young people often do not have the developmental capacity to participate in adult-oriented treatment, especially when the treatment emphasises taking responsibility, making choices, setting goals and breaking denial (1990, p. 36).

The Level System at Yirra which is based on a Change Model, may therefore be too 'adult oriented' for many young people who are not yet thinking about 'changing'. Its only possible effect may be to control behaviour by rewarding residents who conform to the rules of the program.

In this regard, levels appeared to act as an incentive for most informants to gain privileges. For example, one resident told me:

I just think in two and a half weeks I should be on the third level and I actually want to go to a 'rave' because a band is coming that I am just dying to see....and it's like I want to go, so I want to get up on that level so I can actually go.

In order for residents to gain benefits therefore, they have to conform to the rules of the program and for most of my informants, levels appear to have this effect. Rachel when describing how she felt levels work as an incentive not to 'use' in the program, said "If you achieve so much and then you 'use' and you go back a level, you've got to make back the time sort of thing". A few weeks after this interview, my field notes record that she had been dropped a number of levels because she had 'used' while out with a friend.

The criteria Sue mentioned for going up, down, or maintaining levels include some of the rules of Yirra, primarily 'showing respect for others' and 'attending to all aspects of the program' [Appendices I & III]. Residents have differing opinions about the rules of Yirra from "They're fucked...all rules suck", to:

There are rules and restrictions but they are the basis for you to have a day to day life. It's to get you back in the habit to set things to do every day which is good. The rules may seem pretty restrictive but they are there to help you.

Although residents who remained in the program for more than one week [as did my informants] to varying

degrees conformed to the rules of the program, frequently even the most conforming of residents would complain about their restricted freedom and autonomy. Brown discusses the issue of restraint, and says that workers in several residential agencies recount "young people themselves rebelled against the restraints required to adapt to the residential setting and wished to return to drugs or to their friends and often left after a relatively brief time." (1991, p. 27).

Although the imposition of rules and restrictions on residents at Yirra may serve the purpose of controlling what may be considered by the workers and others as antisocial behavior and drug use, such control appears also to take away both 'freedom' and 'autonomy' from the residents.

Based on Piaget's theory of identity development, Cavaiola and Kane-Cavaiola state that adolescents need to feel that they have both control and freedom over their own lives. They further state however, that at the same time adolescents also need structure:

It has been a common observation in residential adolescent chemical dependency programs, that as much as they complain initially, adolescents seem to feel comfort and secure with the high degree of structure (1989, p. 16).

The difficult task for program designers and implementers of Yirra and other similar programs,

appears to be finding methods of service delivery which provide young people with the structure they need, whilst not taking away from them their other developmental needs of freedom and autonomy. Brown in his discussion of community-based treatment facilities for adolescents claims that the more "permissive" approaches to service delivery, as opposed to those which specifically focus on drug use and the complications which stem from it, appear to "accomplish substantially more in the improvement of the welfare of young people, and in the mitigation of drug use". He goes on to state that:

If the immediate causes of drug abuse in young people are to be alleviated it shall be necessary for governments to sanction and fund agencies which are able to provide services and programs that are specifically adapted to the distinct and broad needs of young people (Brown, 1991, p. IV, emphasis added).

Alternatively, programs which seek to restrict the freedom and autonomy of young people, that is essentially to control them, may act as an incentive for young people who are there to leave, and a disincentive for potential residents considering entering the program.

As a result of having talked to informants about the rules which they experience at Yirra, I became aware that the research process was helpful to some of them in

that they would reflect on, and identify the benefits to themselves which the restrictions of rules provided. A possible strategy which workers could adopt might be to promote opportunities at Yirra where residents and a worker [as a group] could talk about the rules, and the negative and positive implications of imposing them or not. The result of such discussion may be that residents who identify positive benefits from the rules may be less inclined to resist them.

Of my informants, John and Mark were the most critical of levels. They were also the two informants who felt that they had the least choice about coming to Yirra and both left after approximately one week. Mark talked about wanting to have visitors and told me "I only just got off review today. I'm back on the very first level." [Review is in fact below the lowest level. Depending on the resident's attitude and behavior workers will decide if the resident is allowed to remain in the program.]. When asked if levels act as an incentive for him to gain privileges, like be allowed to see friends, he said "No. It's more of an incentive to leave because I haven't seen people...like that bloke there [Mark had just had a visitor arrive at Yirra, and a worker was telling the person to go away because Mark can't have visitors] I haven't seen him for fucking years and then I finally caught up with him the other day and now I can't even see him."

## Urine Tests

Rachel told me "You have to do urine tests but that's to let them know if you are 'using' or not. It's hard but that's what they are there for".

The use of drugs by residents whilst they are on the Yirra program is identifiable by 'urine tests' which they do every Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday mornings. If residents have inhaled volatile substances, however, it does not show up on their urine test. Sample jars are provided and the first time residents use the toilet on those mornings a worker will wait outside the toilet and check that they 'hear them go' and 'make sure the jar is warm' when the resident gives it to them.

Often female residents like Rachel are embarrassed about this procedure. On the other hand occasionally a male resident will make a joke about it. For example, I recall a male resident holding up his jar of urine to the light and telling a group of us [residents, workers and myself] what a wonderful color it was, and so on.

Residents generally consider the use of urine tests to be a major deterrent to drug use, primarily because it will affect their level. For example, Len said this about an incident when two of the other residents had 'used' at Yirra one night, "I was sitting there and they asked me if I wanted some but I can't see the point.

It's only a little bit and it's going to come up in your piss test". The residents who 'used' on this occasion had their levels affected as a result and one of them told me, "It was a bit of a loss because I didn't get totally wasted."

As on one occasion previously discussed, a resident may acquire drugs whilst on the premises of Yirra, for example from a visitor, or they may 'use' whilst off the premises. One of the residents who used off the premises said this about how it happened:

It's like we got all organised to go out and have a coffee and it was just going to be me and Colin [Colin was her boyfriend]. But then he brought his friend Tod and I went 'OH WOW , I've got two visitors [laugh]. YAY'. I felt REALLY important, two people coming to see me at once...We went and sat down at the coffee shop and as we were walking down I get 'Hey, how you doing'. And I get like 10 people, all my friends and I was going like 'WOW'. Colin planned it, I didn't know anything about it....Then I was sitting there and like [sniff], 'Whose smoking pot man'. And hands sort of just went under the table and I go like 'Give me a drag, give me a drag'. And they're going 'no no you'll get into trouble'. And I go 'Oh, one drag is not going to hurt'. And then I go 'Oh come on another drag is not going to hurt, come on [laugh]'. I only had 4 tokes....they stopped me after a couple of tokes. They said 'No, we can't send you back stoned and that'. Colin said 'They won't let me see you again'. And I said 'Yeah, well I'm not stoned'. I wasn't stoned, I was just feeling relaxed. Cool you know....I owned up before my urine showed it up....It didn't really go through my head 'Oh it's going to show up in my urine.

When asked why she "owned up" this resident said:

So they didn't get a shock....If I do something and they find out I'd rather be honest and them find out that way. I'm not like, 'Oh I'm not going to say nothing', because I can't deny it, it's in my urine....I felt really guilty because I let the workers down and that, but I didn't feel like I was in trouble.

As a consequence of 'using' residents may be asked to leave, although usually they are dropped levels. In this regard O'Halloran (1990, p. 44) states:

The general consensus among service providers was that they would not ask a young resident to leave simply because they returned home intoxicated. Rather, the deciding factor would be whether there was repeated and overt intoxication or disruptive and violent behaviour.

This appears to be the approach that Yirra has adopted.

The above-mentioned resident was a subject of earlier discussion. She had been aiming to go up to a particular level in order to be allowed out of the program to go to a rave. Although this young person knew that using whilst in the program would negatively affect her levels, she displayed what Piaget described as typical Concrete Operational thinking. This young person appears not to have thought about the consequences of her actions, including the probability of being dropped

to a level on which she would not be permitted to go to the rave.

Cavaiola and Kane-Cavaiola, discuss the expectations placed on adolescents in drug rehabilitation programs, and state that "behaviour needs to be judged relative to...adolescents, not by what is considered to be appropriate by adult standards." They go on to say "Since normal adolescent development means 'testing', it is important to have a series of checks and balances within the staff itself so as not to react too quickly with therapeutic discharge" (1989, p. 23).

Although not discharged from the program as a consequence of having used whilst at Yirra, this resident was dropped levels and was not allowed to go out of the program unsupervised. In order to go to the rave she chose to leave the program, and before she left, told me:

I don't think that I will have any trouble now when I get out....because I've done that time, three weeks without any drugs....that's what I wanted to do....but I don't want to stop smoking mull....By the time I get re-assessed and I get back in, the program will be full and there'll be a waiting list. Mal's [worker] already told me that, so now my interest is just to get out there and get a job.

Although this resident stated that she had achieved what she wanted to do, nevertheless she had asked about re-entering the program at a later date. As a result of

being told that there may not be a vacancy she was deterred from seeking re-entry into the program.

O'Halloran talks of recovery from drug use as being a "process" in that young people will make their own decisions, based on their own terms and as a result move toward addressing their drug use problem at their own pace. She states, that "young people need to be able to leave and return to treatment as many times as they feel is necessary in order to achieve their goals." (1990, p. 9).

It was well known at Yirra from the time this resident entered the program that she had a strong desire to go to this particular 'rave' and that she was working toward being on a level which allowed her the opportunity to leave the program unsupervised. Although her own action of 'using' was the cause of being dropped levels, it was also, according to Piaget's theory, normal behaviour for an adolescent. In order to continue to provide assistance to this resident therefore, either the rules of the program could have been relaxed, or her request for re-entry could have been more readily accepted. In this regard, there appears to be significant agreement by writers in the field that programs designed to meet the needs of adolescent substance users need to be accessible, and that waiting lists are seen to be a futile exercise (Miller, 1993; Brown, 1991; O'Halloran, 1990).

When asked if she would be leaving Yirra if the rave wasn't on, this resident responded "I think I'd be staying....I like it here...you've got the feel of security....I think, Oh I don't want to go [emphasis]".

### Group

Mandy told me:

I get a lot out of group. I love having groups. It really makes me think a lot. You discuss all kinds of things....Today's group, and yesterday's group we've told the group workers about ourselves. And in that you can sort of see a pattern forming of why you took drugs. And then where you're at now....It's really good having that written up on the white-board because you see it all. Because when it's in your head you know it's there but when it's written down you actually see it, and you see it differently.

Group is one of the major components of the Yirra program. It is held twice daily, and focuses on a range of topics including substance use and health related issues such as harm reduction strategies; and personal development such as decision making. The attitude of residents whilst in group and about group varies to a large extent, and appears to be influenced by the resident's interest in the topic, and their willingness to participate. Rachel, who at this stage seemed very enthusiastic about most things at Yirra, talked about group and told me, "Some of them are pretty good, some

of them I think what the hell has this got to do with it". Mark, on the other hand told me "They're boring. The only one we've had that was decent so far was when we learnt about Hepatitis C". When asked why he liked that group he responded "I learned something out of it."

Many residents, particularly males, say that they prefer groups which focus on drug-related issues. In groups which focus on personal development, male residents tend to have less input than female residents and are also more restless. Mark, for example, when asked about group, told me, "It sucks. Oh it's alright when they talk about drugs. When they are leading to a point instead of just doing maizes and shit" and "most of the time I just sit down and scribble on a bit of paper until it's over".

Brown in his discussion on research which involved asking workers in the field about drug-related services for adolescents reports:

A view widely expressed by workers interviewed, held that to attract and involve young people at an agency...the available activities should be sufficiently enjoyable and meaningful to earn the young person's sustained involvement. (1991, p. 42)

Although some residents do appear to enjoy all groups, and others appear to enjoy them when they focus on a particular topic in which they are interested, from

both my observations and from the comments of informants, it appears that group does not provide such sustained interest and involvement for all residents of Yirra.

The apparent differences in attitude for individual young people at Yirra toward group [essentially 'organised learning'], may be a reflection of the stage of cognitive development an individual is at. When viewed from the perspective of Piaget's theory, some of the young people at Yirra may be still thinking 'concretely', that is primarily in the here and now, and not be interested in the topics of group such as personal development, or how to change their drug use behaviour.

On the other hand, others may be thinking more like adults, in that they are thinking abstractly about the consequences of their drug use behaviour, and how they can go about changing it. To varying degrees, it is likely that individual young people at Yirra are somewhere on a continuum between these two different ways of thinking. According to Smart and Smart (1973, p. 265):

Piaget recognises the importance of maturation, he also stresses the necessity for the child to interact, explore and discover for himself in order to build his mental structures. Mental growth cannot be forced or hurried, however, since its counterpart is physical maturation.

Perhaps also, the reason for this lack of involvement is because as Brown states:

Young people tended to be reluctant to expose their feelings to others of their peer group. Such group discussions, with their customary blend of self-insight, analysis and abstractions, are perhaps suited to older people who may be more readily disposed to lucid introspection (1991, p. 460).

The expectation placed on residents of Yirra to participate in organised group discussions, may not be appropriate for many of the adolescents in the program. However, one of the criteria for going up levels, is "attending to all aspects of the program", including group. [Appendix III]. Residents of Yirra, therefore, do not have a choice about being in group. This lack of choice is also contrary to the needs of adolescents for freedom and autonomy, and at times appears to result in disruptive behaviour. For example, frequently, within group, there are incidents such as the following, which were recorded in my field notes:

.When the worker said we would have a break, two young people left the room before he had finished speaking. When asked to come back until he had finished they swore, but came back.

.Residents were asked to draw an animal or something which they feel they are like. Jenny [worker] and Adam got into quite an argument about what freedom is....Mark and Len stormed out

saying that Jenny was a stupid bitch and to 'drop it'. Jenny told them to come back or there would be negative repercussions about leaving group. They came back, the argument kept going and the residents kept protesting.

According to Brown:

Of the personnel at residential facilities, the broad consensus of opinion held that young people experienced difficulty in confining themselves to the restrictions upon behaviour which were applied in most residential settings; and when formal rules were minimal, young people were generally unable to conduct themselves in a sufficiently restrained manner to adapt themselves to the tenor and activities of the facility (1991, p. 27).

In an attempt to reduce placing such adolescent-inappropriate restrictions on young people, and as an alternative to formal discussions such as group, Brown suggests another approach which one program uses whereby "discussion would be prompted informally during the course of other activities such as crafts, outings and meals cooked at the agency" (Brown, 1991, p. 460). Along with planned group discussion, to varying degree different workers appear to apply the above mentioned approach at Yirra.

In order to meet the different needs of the young people at Yirra which may be influenced by their individual stage of cognitive development, rather than participation in groups being compulsory, perhaps residents could be given a choice about whether they

want to participate or not. For example residents could be told ahead of time what the future group topics will be, thus allowing them to decide whether they will take part or not. Alternative activities such as those suggested by Brown could be made available for residents who choose not to take part in group. During this time the workers at Yirra could seek opportunities, as I have observed some workers at Yirra do, to informally discuss issues with the young people.

The fore-mentioned quote from my field notes, regarding an argument in group between a worker and one of the residents about what 'freedom' means, appears to be inappropriate behaviour on the part of the worker. This example indicates a possible need at Yirra for worker supervision and/or training. As O'Halloran states there is a need for "counsellors who are particularly sensitive to the developmental needs and capacities of individual young people, and to the exercise of power in the counselling relationship." (1990, p. 1, emphasis added).

The above mentioned strategies may also result in less disruption within group for residents like Mandy who enjoyed it, and who told me:

I just get so much out of them. Like the alternatives to taking drugs really opened up my eyes...that was really good for me because it made me see other things that I want to do...that I

don't need to take drugs for...and I don't want to take drugs for.

## Recreation

When asked about rec. Mandy responded:

I love it. Yeah, I have a terrific time. Like before I came here I never used to do anything like that. All my life revolved around was drugs and you know going and getting the money. Getting the drugs. And then not really doing much, just partying. The same people just doing...but not actually doing things.

Twice daily residents go out on recreation and these times are usually the focal points of the day. Most often a worker and possibly a volunteer take residents in the van on an outing, off the premises of Yirra. On occasion however, particularly if residents say they don't want to go out, photography is done for rec. and involves taking photos around the building, garden or of other people there. Films in turn are developed in the 'dark room' [one of the bathrooms has been converted to a dark room] usually under the guidance of a particular worker who teaches photography skills to residents.

Most often residents go out for rec, and where they go, and/or what they do is largely decided by them. This decision process usually entails a worker bringing the group of residents together, telling them how much rec.

money they have and then deciding as a group where they will go. When the decision is not unanimous, a majority rules approach is usually adopted. This results in conflict at times, especially when the majority appear to have had their choice often in the past and minorities claim to never get to do what they like. On these occasions the workers tend to intervene and influence the decision, which may or may not resolve the conflict.

In this regard, and in relation to Piaget's theory of adolescent development, Hyatt Williams states:

not usually until fourteen or fifteen are the processes of thinking in abstracts fully developed. From this age onwards, discussion and debate, testing out the provocative, the ability to listen and to understand that others may legitimately have a different viewpoint are the hallmarks of a growing maturity (1975, p. 43).

For a young person who has become dependent on drugs, this developmental process may have been impaired, as Golden and Klein state "Chemically dependent adolescents miss out on the opportunity to master age-specific skills which are essential for healthy adult functioning." (1988, p. 36).

The following comment by Shaun about deciding where to go for rec. however, possibly reflects a change in his cognitive development:

I would sit back and not voice my own opinion like on where we should go for rec. and stuff like that, but now if I feel like doing something different from the other people I'll say 'well maybe we can go here today and just go there tomorrow'. Just come to a compromise. That's something I've never done before.

Although the young people at Yirra appear to be given 'freedom of choice' as to where they go for rec., there are limitations, as the following extract from my field notes records: "Suggestions for rec. today included 'do a bank, and get a couple of screwdrivers and do a couple of breaks'." These types of comments generally raise a laugh from others present, and are not considered to have been meant to be taken seriously.

A more real restriction however, is the non-availability of money to finance rec. activities. Rec. money is a combination of \$3 per resident per day which is provided by PCM, and is supplemented by a portion of the rent which residents pay to Yirra. The amount of rec. money available for any particular day is recorded for the benefit of both residents and staff on a white board in the staff area. Factors which appear to influence the amount available include the number of residents in the program, whether they have spent some in advance and/or whether a cheque has come down from Head Office. Sometimes residents would 'save up' rec. money to do something such as 'go-karts' which is \$10 per person. On these occasions, or when there is not

enough to pay for an activity such as the movies, they will do 'free rec.' instead. This includes a wide range of activities such as bush-walking, going down to the beach, the art gallery, or going for a drive somewhere to take photos.

Residents frequently complain about the minimal amount of money available for rec. and having to do free rec., for example, Mark commented "What's the use in going to the coast? Its boring. We've seen it all before. I get sick and tired of sitting in the car all day". When asked if he could think of any other things he would rather do he responded, "Yeah, but we haven't got no money because those fuckheads at Perth City Mission won't sent no money down."

Doing rec. appears to serve a number of purposes for the residents of Yirra. Firstly, sometimes the residents just want to "go out". As Rachel said "Its the same with any person if you're home too long, you've got to get out." Secondly, as Mandy's earlier comment infers, rec. provides an alternative to drug use. Shaun also commented, "It keeps your mind off things. It keeps you focused on whatever you are doing for recreation. Its relaxing....Instead of just sitting there watching TV all day, you use energy".

Miller states, "Adolescence is a time of high physical activity and the maturation of psychomotor skills. Recreation activities have a role in the health

restoration of the drug-affected adolescent" (1993, p. 6). According to a study carried out by Miller on a similar program to Yirra, findings indicated that the main reasons for informants using drugs was to "forget", "escape", "have fun", "get high" and for "the effect" (1992, p. 85). Rather than focusing on passive recreational activities, some writers on adolescent treatment programs suggest that the focus should be on exposing young people to natural alternative highs other than substance use (Brown, 1991; Obermeier, et al., 1989). In this regard Obermeier and Henry state:

Programming should exhibit a wide range of activities effective in altering moods, and providing natural highs, as well as enhancing physical development and conditioning. Adolescents must be able to perceive the benefits of their behaviour in order for them to repeat it (1989, 174).

Obermeier and Henry go on to state "What is important is that physical activities provide the perfect medium to teach adolescents how to have fun and recreate without chemicals" (1989, p. 175).

In general, it appears from informants' comments, that the young people at Yirra look forward to going out on rec. Although most seem to enjoy cost-free activities, they also desire to do a wide range of activities including that which Shaffer, Philips and

Enzer describe as "exhilarating and fulfilling activities coupled to skill and competency building features" (cited in Brown, 1991, p. 42).

In this regard, Shaun told me:

Sometimes we might go for a drive, like up to Mundaring just for a walk or something. Things like that. It just depends on how much money we've got. It's a bit limited. We should probably get a bit more money so we can do much broader things like go-karts...Or maybe horse riding, things like that. abseiling or even a bit of canoeing.

### Boredom

An extract from my field notes records:

Rachel was sitting on the hallway floor outside one of the bathrooms which is the 'dark room'. She wanted to get in but Len and a worker were developing a film. I asked her if she would like to do an interview in the meantime. She said she couldn't be bothered doing anything, she was 'so bored'.

When talking about weekends, Mark told me, "it's boring, just the same as the week days." It is quite common to hear a resident say "I'm bored" or "this is boring". They may for example, say this as they walk through the staff room, or get up while group is in progress and walk out shouting "this is boring".

John, while talking about the times that he said were the most stressful for him, said that these were

the times he also felt bored. Like, "When you have to go out on rec. without any money, when you're not allowed out of the place and before you can turn the teli on to actually have something to do". When asked if there was anything else he could think of to do, he responded "Watch teli [laugh]. That's about all I can think of, there's not much else to do".

Residents are not permitted to watch television [which is in the lounge] before 4.30 p.m. in the afternoon on weekdays. On weekends this rule does not apply. Although residents are aware of the rules with regard to TV watching, occasionally in the day they will turn it on. A consequence of breaking this rule is that residents involved are given an 'extra chore'.

Some residents, like John did not like the rule with regard to TV watching. Shaun, on the other hand said that he liked the restriction on TV watching because "instead of just sitting there watching TV all day you use energy". He said that he preferred to be active like going out on rec. Shaun told me:

When you watch TV all day you start to feel bored, get anxious or something like that. But when you're bowling or something like that you're not bored because you've got something to do all the time. I haven't been bored since I've come here.

Although the program plan for Yirra appears to be a full day, there are often times when residents are left

for an hour or two to amuse themselves. The times when residents are most likely to have spare time are in the afternoon after rec. and on weekends. Len said that the times he found he was bored were when:

we get back from rec., we sort of have our lunch, do our chores and sort of sit....I just go to sleep most of the time....Oh, there's always something to do but I can't be bothered doing anything. It's probably because I've got withdrawals or flashbacks from the drugs I've had, still.

The rec. room has both pool and ping pong tables, a substitute basketball ring [made out of a milk crate] is in the back garden, and there is often a worker and/or a volunteer, along with other residents to play one of these games with, or to talk to. Residents are also encouraged to find a hobby such as photography, art, carving, reading or writing to do in their free time.

Often residents spend free time sitting out the back talking, often with a worker and/or a volunteer; or in the rec. room playing pool, generally with others watching and talking. Aside from doing this, some residents have hobbies which they enjoy as did Rachel who spent a lot of time in her room writing poetry, while others might go to sleep in their room, or sit outside talking.

Although the 'free time' available to the young people at Yirra may be conducive to the needs of

adolescents for 'freedom' and 'autonomy', not all residents appear to be content with amusing themselves within the confines of the program, and with the options available to them there.

It is important also to remember that prior to their entry into the program, for many of the young people at Yirra, the use of, and experiencing the effects of drugs, had occupied much of their time. In this regard, Rachel told me "On the weekends you wonder what your friends are doing. You think they will be doing this and that and the next thing you'll be thinking 'Oh I'd be doing that too but I'm not, I'm here, so get on with it'." When asked what her friends might be doing Rachel replied, "Smoking cones, they'd be using drugs....They'd be like E'ing on the weekend."

It appears that although some of the young people at Yirra are content to amuse themselves during periods of free time; finding things to do which they enjoy, such as photography, playing pool or writing poetry, even they occasionally become bored. Some residents, on the other hand, appear to be bored both during free time and during program activities such as group and/or rec.

With regard to programs for adolescents, Brown discusses the diversity of needs of young people which has been observed by workers in the field. He states:

A theme which underlies these observations may be a need to incorporate an element of diversity and flexibility in the conduct of programs in order to more effectively engage young people in activities which are fulfilling to them. (1991, p. 43.)

He suggests that for those young people who seek "exhilaration", programs should be more heavily weighted toward action-oriented activities", whereas other young people might prefer "insight-oriented" activities. Similarly, Miller in his discussion of a list of adaptations Phoenix House [based on the TC model] has made to accommodate adolescents, stated that one adaption was for "More recreational opportunities to promote leisure skill building and to prevent boredom" (1993, p. 8).

Although some young people at Yirra appear to be constantly complaining about being bored, others, like Sue, appeared to always have something to do. When talking about 'free time' Sue told me that she felt that she had to "amuse" herself, and said:

That's what we're going to have to do when we get out of here anyway, amuse yourself. It's a bit of a pain in the bum but you get that don't you....I mean you've got to decide what you're going to do and sort it out for yourself don't you?

Aside from the problems some residents may have in finding fulfilling activities to do within the confines of Yirra, the attitudes of other residents like Sue,

with regard to dealing with being 'bored', may also be to some degree reflective of their cognitive stage of development as described by Piaget.

Although some residents like Sue appear to adapt to the options available to them at Yirra for finding fulfilling activities to do in their spare time, others do not. In order to alleviate boredom for those residents who experience it, program designers and implementers of Yirra therefore, need to keep in mind the diverse needs of adolescents, and to provide activities at Yirra which individual residents are interested in doing during periods of free time.

## THE PEOPLE AT YIRRA

### Introduction

Yirra is a social setting and therefore the presence and behaviour of others impacts on the experience of each person within it (Blumer, 1969, p. 52). The program consists of a transient population of residents who enter and leave the program at different times and for different reasons. They stay for various lengths of time ranging from a few hours to seven or eight weeks.

There are also many other people at Yirra including the workers, program coordinator and office staff, and finally, there are other people who come into the program such as volunteers, students, researcher [such as myself], teachers [ie the 'literary person'], residents' visitors, juvenile justice workers, people from social security, and even occasionally the next door neighbour.

With regard to the people they encounter at Yirra, informants tended to talk about 'other residents', and frequently raised the issue of 'disrespectful language and behaviour' by some of them. During interviews, informants also frequently talked about 'the workers'. The following discussion therefore focuses on

informants' experiences in relation to other residents in the program and the workers.

### Other Residents

Mandy talked to me of how she felt about having another female resident in the program. She said it's:

Just great. I don't know it's just female companionship like nothing you'd expect from the boys. It's someone to confide in. Like I can talk to the boys but I can't confide in the boys. It's just that helping hand that you need and to share a room, everything like that...We've decided that we're really going to help each other.

Mandy also said that if other residents aren't "ready to deal with it [terminating or reducing their drug use] it can be a drag down" for her. "Sometimes they just go off the rails and I think what are you doing here?"

Most residents, like Mandy, appear to see Yirra as a combination of 'drug rehab' and 'home'. Although to a large extent they seem to understand and accept the volume and diversity of people around them, they also desire and endeavor to have a living environment which is supportive and one which they enjoy.

Relationships between residents are not always harmonious and occasionally conflict arises. In extreme

cases someone leaves, or at least thinks about it. When this happened to Sue she said:

I didn't know what was going on. All I know is they reckoned I was getting my own way all the time. It was just like if they could get me to leave they could make their options less [by this Sue said she meant that they would have one less person to consider when deciding things like where to go for rec.].

Although this conflict was resolved, Sue left the program a week later for another reason but said:

It's like I still feel uncomfortable about some of the things that were said. I just think I'll go back to my own crowd at least they don't hang shit on me...talk behind my back....I hope to come back to visit. I'm going to miss the staff here.

The forming of a group for the young people at Yirra is difficult due to the frequent entry and exit of residents. Sometimes residents who feel that their existing group is harmonious for example, appear to worry about or resent new residents coming in. On occasion they would become aware that someone has had an entry assessment or a worker would tell them that someone new is coming in. Residents would then quiz the worker as to what their name is, what they look like, and so on. The two main factors residents appear to be concerned about are whether it is a 'friend' or an

'enemy' of theirs. When asked how she felt about new people coming in Rachel said:

I'm not really bothered...unless it's an enemy, and then I will be gone....Oh, I don't know. It would be pressure. I've been toying with the possibility for ages. If I felt threatened, I would just leave.

The experience for new residents of being made welcome or not, to some degree, depends on the above factors. Although Mandy was pleased to have another female in the program, on occasion residents are not made to feel as welcome as her new female companion was. For example, Sue talked about the situation where a new male resident had come in and was not being made welcome by the other male resident there, "It's sort of that male territory thing. I think he will be a lot more comfortable when Shaun gets back though because they've got the same interests".

Aside from the arrival and/or departure of residents, there appear to be certain behaviours which contribute to the bonding or fracturing of residents' relationships, either personally or as a group. One apparent contributing factor appears to be a resident's 'drug raving' or 'drug use' whilst in the program. The residents who appear to be the most committed to changing their drug use behaviour claim that these factors place pressure on them. Shaun talked about his

feelings with regard to one of the residents who "got stoned". He said that "It got me a bit depressed. I hope that person gets caught". "Because they can't handle it they have to have a bit of drugs. So to sort of see them off their face, I found that a bit hard".

The relationships and group dynamics between the young people at Yirra are an intrinsic part of their experience of the program. Caviaola et al. state that based on Piaget's theory of adolescent development, one of the needs of adolescents is the need for "peer acceptance" (1989, p. 16). They assert that in general, adolescents are inclined to act differently with regard to peer-acceptance based on their stage of development.

Younger adolescents [from around 13 to 15 years], Cavaiola and Kane-Cavaiola claim, are strongly influenced by "group rules" and "the most pathological member of the group is looked up to as the leader". For "Middle adolescents" [aged between 15 to 17 years], although "still peer-oriented...the most pathological teenager is usually no longer intimidating the group", and older adolescents [aged from 17 to 19 years], tend to become more focused on personal issues such as "careers, relationships", and so on (1989, pp. 16-17).

According to this theory, therefore, the diversity of ages of residents at Yirra is likely to also result in diverse ways of thinking by individual young people. Whereas some may be focusing on the need for peer-

acceptance, adhering to group rules, and be influenced by a group leader, others may not. They may instead be thinking more introspectively about their own lives and futures.

It is important to note also, that to a large degree, the young people at Yirra do not have a choice about who they spend much of their time with. For the first week in the program, for example, Mandy had no option but to spend her time either with the male residents in the program, or with the workers, some of whom were female. She was delighted to have a female resident for company when Lara entered the program.

Although when assessing a potential new resident for the program, workers take into consideration their age in relation to others already in the program, at different times at Yirra there may be significant age differences between the residents in the program. These factors, along with the transient nature of the population of Yirra, are all likely to impact on the dynamics between residents, and within the group of residents.

A number of writers in the field of adolescent substance use suggest that the group of residents within a program could be used as a positive support system (Obermeier & Henry, 1989; Miller, 1993; Logan, 1991; Brown, 1991). However, due to the diversity of ages of residents at Yirra, and what appears to be their

different levels of cognitive development, along with the transient nature of the program's population, the feasibility of achieving a peer support group seems questionable.

However, peer support between residents of Yirra, such as that which Mandy and Lara had established, is not only desired by some residents, but is also considered by them to be beneficial in helping them deal with problems they have in relation to their substance use. Such informal support networks also appear to some degree to be promoted by the workers at Yirra.

With regard to support from other residents at Yirra, Rachel told me, there is "support from other people in the program" and "Sometimes there isn't because they are talking about drugs all the time and you don't want to really hear about it".

### Disrespectful Language and Behaviour

Shaun told me:

At times I don't know how one of them [another resident] has got away with things they've done. They haven't gone down a level and it's been surprising. It just depends on the staff member at the time. Their mood or what kind of day they're having, or how they're feeling, or if they've provoked it.

With regard to his own attitude and behaviour Shaun added, "Just because that person's got away with it doesn't mean I've got a right to. Maybe I might get someone who's having a bad day and I might be the person to go down [levels]".

What Shaun is referring to, and one of the major issues raised by informants, with regard to other residents, is that of 'disrespectful language and behaviour', directed toward one another and/or toward the workers. To some degree a focus by some residents on this issue may be influenced by the program rule which emphasises "respect" as one of the major criteria for being allowed to remain in the program and to go up levels [Appendices I & III].

In general, female residents appear to consider this issue more serious than do the male residents. Mandy commented on her first impressions of Yirra and said:

I was a bit amazed when I met the boys on the program....their attitudes towards the whole program. They're pretty good most of the time but sometimes their attitude is pretty disrespectful, inconsiderate and uncalled for. Its not the way your attitude should be in a group situation.

Mandy talked a week later about the way the boys treated the female residents and said "It's not so much that they are really disrespectful. I don't think anyone

appreciates being called a bitch and being told to fuck off all the time."

Similarly, Sue talked about how the workers "take a lot of crap" and said:

I don't know how they handle the way some of these guys talk to them....the way they don't respect them and the way they talk to them....they're there to help them and they're putting it back in their face....they're not respecting them at all.

According to Peterson:

In Erikson's view, even such a disturbing and antisocial tendency as juvenile delinquency may often only represent a symptom of the adolescent's urgent need to construct a satisfying identity (1989, p. 351).

Peterson goes on to say that such disruptive behaviour is influenced by an adolescent becoming "frustrated by one or more obstacles in the way of his achieving the kind of identity he or she wants". In this regard, Peterson states that Erikson suggests adolescents who are allowed to "experiment" with this type of behaviour will eventually decide for themselves that it does not fit the identity they desire (1989, p. 351).

Much of the literature regarding adolescent substance use programs refers to the type of behaviour

informants have talked about (Miller, 1993; O'Connell, 1989; O'Halloran, 1990; McLaughlin, 1991; Youth Affairs Bureau, 1988). Although it is often stated that, "'normal' adolescence tends to be a period characterised by erratic and sometimes delinquent behaviour" (Miller, 1992, p. 5), O'Connell adds:

Adolescents showing high levels of personality traits such as rebelliousness, impulsivity, untrustworthiness, anger, immaturity, insecurity, egocentricity, and irresponsibility have been found to be at risk for alcohol and narcotic abuse (O'Connell, 1989, p. 51, emphasis added).

In addition to this, young people who have been using substances, and cease suddenly [for example, entered Yirra], may also for some time afterward continue to be affected both physically and emotionally (Youth Affairs Bureau, 1988, p. 32).

At Yirra, what informants consider to be disrespectful language and behaviour, appears to disrupt not only elements of the program, such as group and rec; but also to cause conflict between the young people in the program. As a result of conflict between residents, separate groups may evolve which act in opposition to one another, or conflict may be ongoing between individuals within the program. For example, for some time, Mandy had complained about the continuing 'practical jokes' played on the girls in the program by

one of the male residents. The following extract from my field notes records one of these incidents:

On our way out for rec., as the girls were getting into the bus, Rob put the hose on Mandy. She was very angry and called him a 'fucking idiot', and threw a milk crate at him. When she got into the bus Mandy began to cry.

With regard to this type of behaviour, and in regard to workers in programs such as Yirra, Miller suggests that program implementers need to acknowledge the nature of adolescents, and that staff "need to tolerate a greater degree of emotional lability and 'acting out' behaviour" (1993, p. 6). He goes on to say:

Allowing freedom and tolerating the excesses and aberrant behaviour of the adolescent drug users in turn requires strength, patience and the ability to set limits and impose consequences. It is also accepting of the need not to reject the adolescent or take personal offence despite their outbursts and transgressions (1993, p. 9).

Workers at Yirra not only need to have an understanding of the nature of adolescents which includes a tolerance of 'acting out behaviour', but also an ability to deal with the conflict which arises between residents as a result. Although programs such as Yirra need to acknowledge that this type of behaviour is 'normal' for some young people, they also need to

consider the impact of this type of behaviour on other residents in the program who are the recipients of it.

A study carried out by O'Halloran discusses the decisions made by workers in programs for adolescents with regard to admitting residents who are either "intoxicated at the time of arrival or 'known' to be unmanageable due to their drug and alcohol use/problems" (1990, p. 44). O'Halloran states that workers told her:

The deciding factor in all cases was the safety of other residents, not only in terms of violence or other forms of abuse, but in terms of the influence which older streetwise youth might have on younger less 'experienced' youth. (1992, p. 44).

The following account by Sue is of an incident at Yirra which she considers demonstrates the disrespectful behavior by some residents, and the manner in which workers dealt with it:

Yesterday a crate was stuck around the corner and they actually lit it and then they went to the toilet on it....No one actually admitted to it so they can't really do anything about it when no one actually admits to it. So they [the workers] just let it go, which shouldn't be done, they're too easy. In a way they are, and in a way they're not, because they [the residents] came here to better themselves and the workers would expect them to be at that level. Where they're not going to respect anyone or anything because no one's given them respect or anything like that. But they just, they abuse them too much. Some of the things they say. I wouldn't be able to handle it.

## The Workers

Shaun told me "The workers are great. Like they offer so much different support....Everybody is different, they're not all the same". Although he saw them to be different, he said "they're all heading for the same place, you still get support". Similarly, Rachel told me that "they have a worker side to them, but they are like mates".

Informants talked about how workers would make themselves available to residents who had problems which they wanted to talk about. Rachel said that "if there is a problem they will come and say is it bad....If you are sick they say are you alright, better go to the doctors or something....If they are busy, they will set a time with you" and "With personal problems, if they ask what it is and you say I don't want to talk about it, then they respect that and go away."

Not all informants however, had entirely positive comments to make about workers. For example, Mark told me:

They're just bitches and cunts. Oh I don't really dislike any of them, not really. Oh, a couple of them I feel like kicking them or something. But you can't really do that [laugh] can you? Sometimes you feel like booting them or something

and saying 'Oh, sorry' [laugh] And make out it was an accident or something. Like trip them over on the step.

When asked if he would do that, Mark responded, "I would if they pissed me off that much".

Mark did however say that he particularly liked two of the workers. The ones, he said, who "actually take you out on rec." He also said of one of these workers, "every time he wakes me up in the morning it's good to get up. He just does things that make you laugh....He's more of a friend than a worker".

The residents of Yirra appear to spend almost as much time in the company of workers as they do with other residents. Although there are times when a resident may have taken a disliking to one or more workers [as did Len who wanted to change his 'secondary'], in general the young people appear to seek out workers for company. Residents may, for example, come into the staff room where staff are working or talking and have a serious conversation or fool about. Although, as Rachel says, "the office is sort of out of bounds", usually workers don't appear to ask residents to leave unless they are busy. Shaun told me his experience has been that "You've always got a chance to talk to them if they're not busy...as long as they're not doing their secretarial stuff or whatever".

It appears that with regard to Piaget's theory, and in relation to an adolescent's search for identity, for the young people at Yirra the needs for 'power' and 'freedom' are reflected in the types of relationships they desire with workers. They seem to want to have equal power with workers 'as friends', but also freedom with regard to making their own decisions whilst still receiving 'support' from workers.

When talking about workers, the positive traits which informants appeared to have identified included the workers being 'like friends', 'non-judgmental', 'supportive' and 'understanding'. According to Brown (1991, p. 41) the types of assistance provided by workers in programs for adolescents, be it practical [such as helping them with Social Security entitlements], or other less formal assistance [such as taking them to visit a friend], helps to establish an effective relationship. He quotes Howard and Zibert who promote "realistic advocacy and demonstration of good faith so that trust can develop....consequently the worker can earn the right to confront if necessary" (cited in Brown, 1991, p. 41).

It is important therefore, for the workers at Yirra to establish rapport and friendship with the young people there. Alternatively, as O'Halloran states one of the loudest "protestations" by young people who had experienced youth agencies was that workers use their

"authority to make life hard for the young person."  
(1990, p. 26).

From comments by informants and my observations, it appears that different workers at Yirra use their position to varying degrees. The most popular and effective workers appear to be those who are consistent, yet inclined to be flexible, often appearing to make decisions based on the facts about a particular situation rather than strict adherence to program rules. In general it appears that residents hold these workers in high regard, and co-operate more readily for them.

Based on his research, Brown states that the workers interviewed had identified "allowing the young person to know 'where the worker is at' - and an understanding of the feelings and experiences of young people, as important characteristics". Some also believed that workers should have "the ability to set limits, yet without behaving in a manner which could be constructed as punctilious or sanctimonious" (Brown, 1991, p. 48).

As previously discussed, often the responsibility for managing disruptive behaviour by some residents at Yirra lies on the shoulders of workers. Dealing with such incidents in a "stolid, dispassionate or officious manner", according to Brown, is likely to result in young people avoiding the program (1991, p. 41). The establishment of a trusting relationship between the

residents of Yirra is therefore not only beneficial to them in meeting their needs, but also in facilitating the effective running of the program.

When employing and training workers for Yirra therefore, a focus needs to be placed on a worker's abilities to understand young people, and to effectively communicate with the residents in the program. Sincerity is of the utmost importance in this regard. In a study carried out by O'Halloran young people interviewed said that "the worst thing a worker could do is say that they understand or care *when they don't.*" (1990, p. 26).

From the comments of informants, it appears that many of them have encountered workers at Yirra who are effective when working with the young people there. Most of them appeared to see the workers to be "counsellors", "befrienders", and "helpers towards them achieving their goals". Mandy, who felt this way told me:

they're so helpful and supportive. You know they're always there to do the right thing by you....It's good to have positive people around you, like encouraging you along the way.

## WHAT YIRRA DOES FOR ME

Both Len and Shaun commented on the benefit of being at Yirra as opposed to "being on the street". Len put it this way, "It's hard when you're on the outside. Like I could leave and get drugs right now....You could walk out of here and go to a dealer, but you try not to". Shaun said:

For me it's really the best place to be....It's like I'm a different person because none of your mates are coming in putting peer pressure on you....The staff and that, just the environment, it's safer....I'm dealing with some things and people here are helping. It's just a hell of a lot easier than if I was on the street or something.

Shaun also commented "It's heaps better than prison that's for sure....It's freedom". Shaun said that he would describe Yirra as a "Good place to start sorting out your life."

Residents' comments with regard to the 'freedom' Yirra offered, as opposed to 'being on the street', or in 'prison' reflects the need of young people for freedom which Catalano et al. state is related to Erikson's theory of an adolescent's search for identity (1989, p. 16). Although the Yirra program may be a confined and controlled environment to some degree, it appears that for some of the residents there it still

offers more freedom for them than do alternative environments available to them.

Many writers in the field of adolescent substance use discuss the effects of peer pressure which Shaun talked about (Brown, 1991; Obermeier & Henry, 1989; Youth Affairs Bureau, 1988; Brook, Whiteman & Gordon, 1982). According to Obermeier and Henry, "Negative peer pressure was one of their [adolescent's] primary influences prior to treatment." (1989, p. 164). Similarly, Brook et al. state "With respect to the role of peers, the availability of peer models of drug use has been implicated as a causal factor in the youngster's drug use" (1982, p. 1153).

Peer pressure is one of the issues on which 'group' at Yirra focuses. The importance of this topic is reflected in the comments of residents with regard to their concerns about dealing with peer pressure, particularly to use substances. Of particular concern to some of the young people at Yirra, is dealing with this pressure once they leave the program and return to environments in which they will encounter their friends who will be using drugs.

In this regard, Rachel told me she wanted to stay at Yirra for longer than the 6 weeks which was negotiated at her entry assessment. Rachel told me:

I want to stay longer, I don't know, it's safer. It's safer because you're not in contact with, If I was to leave now I would be in contact with my friends who are using....I would be in a situation where they are using and they would be 'bunting up' [injecting] in front of me and I would be thinking I want to, I want to. So if I leave now I probably would use.

The issue of peer pressure to use drugs was discussed in a paper published by the Youth Affairs Bureau in 1988. Although this paper acknowledges the positive affects of mass education campaigns such as the "Respect Yourself Campaign", it also refers to a comment by a prominent psychologist in the field of substance use who states, "A more viable option is to teach adolescents to resist peer pressure and to feel confident by having self-esteem in resisting it." (1988, p. 30).

In this regard, Shaun talked about strategies he has learned at Yirra for dealing with decision-making and peer group pressure. He said that he believed that they would help him for "later on" once he leaves Yirra. Shaun told me:

I'll use it out on the streets with some of my mates....I'll tell them 'no, I don't feel like doing that'. I'll say 'you can do it'. Instead of just being a sheep and following, if I don't want to do something I'll just let them know that I don't agree with it.

Shaun's comment with regards to Yirra being "heaps better than prison...it's freedom", reflects the primary differentiation he has made between the two options put to him by the court system; compared to prison for Shaun, Yirra represented 'freedom'. Similarly, one of my other informants, Mark, also told me "I preferred to come here because I've got more freedom here than jail".

In talking about the nature of adolescents, and the tendency for some young people to engage in criminal activities, Erikson states "seemingly psychotic and criminal incidents do not have the same fatal significance which they may have at other ages" (cited in Peterson, 1989, p. 351). From this comment it can be inferred that the fact that a young person has engaged in criminal activities does not necessarily mean that they will always do so. The incarceration of an adolescent, as a result of such activity however, may result in their identifying themselves with the criminal system. In this regard Erikson goes on to say:

The legal classification of such a deed may seal a young individual's negative identity as a criminal once and for all. This, in turn, relieves him of the necessity to search further for a 'good' identity (cited in Peterson, 1989, p. 351).

The deleterious affects of being placed in custody, are discussed by Howard and Zibert, (1990, pp. 240-241). They state "Those who are placed in custody are

generally seen as those whose freedom would pose greatest threat to the community and possibly themselves." Howard and Zibert, go on to state that "incarceration is notoriously ineffective in preventing further criminal behaviour", and that it often increases negative behaviours "including learning how to commit other crimes than the one[s] for which sentenced, and encouragement to use more and different drugs".

It appears therefore, that based on Erikson's theory of identity development, and the above mentioned negative effects of placing an adolescent in prison, that aside from the additional freedom Yirra may offer residents like Shaun, there are other important advantages for them in not being in prison.

Informants also talked about the effect Yirra has on them with regard to other problems which they associate with their drug use. Most of the key informants said that they felt Yirra provided that "extra support" they needed. Shaun's reference to Yirra being "safer" was a comment which I heard other residents make; and during my data gathering period at Yirra, I had an experience which gave me some insight into what residents see as the "unsafe" world outside of Yirra. The following account from my field notes records:

We were walking down Walcott Street when Kelly said 'That was the dealer I owe money who just drove by'. He turned around and began cruising beside us honking his horn. Kelly looked frightened and worried and said 'Lets go back'. I saw a group of men playing sport at the park we were walking by and said we might be better to go over near them for safety. She agreed. The 'dealer' parked his car and stood by it for 10 minutes or so. Eventually, we walked down between some buildings and made our way back to Yirra OK.

Before Sue left Yirra she said that Yirra had helped her. Her goal was to "slow down on speed" and she felt she had achieved this. Sue told me "Just coming here, just gave me that extra support".

Mandy told me that she was already changing her drug use behaviour before she came to Yirra but that being there made her feel "more confident" and "more relaxed" about it. She said that aside from working on changing her drug use behaviour she was also "becoming in touch" with herself.

In relation to Erikson's theory of an adolescent's search for identity (Peterson, 1980, pp. 343-348), being at Yirra appears to have provided Mandy with the opportunity to think introspectively about her 'self' in general, not only problems she has been having which are related to her substance use.

Mandy said about Yirra that "It's one of the best places to go if you're willing, if you're genuine about

dealing with any drug problems you have. Or not only drug problems, any self problems".

## CHAPTER SIX:

### CONCLUSION

Yirra was established over two years ago, by PCM and the ADA. The specific purpose of this program was to provide a drug rehabilitation service which was suited to the unique needs of adolescents. It is a new and innovative program largely based on the expert opinion of people who have worked in the field, current research, and theories regarding service provision for adolescents.

Although this knowledge had primarily been gained as a result of field research and experience, it appears from the YSASPD Report that potential recipients of this service were not consulted during the design and planning stage of the Yirra program. Since its inception, and as a result of providing this service to adolescents who have problems related to their substance use, the Yirra program has continued to evolve experimentally and experientially; and changes are constantly being made with regard to service provision.

To date the Yirra program has not been formally evaluated. As this program was specifically designed for adolescents, it is particularly important at this early stage in its development, for program designers and

implementers to be provided with documentation regarding the appropriateness of this program, as it has evolved, for young people.

Rather than carry out such an inquiry from the perspective of management or the workers at Yirra, this study was focused on gaining some understanding of the experience of Yirra from the perspective of program participants. The approach to inquiry which was adopted, has provided the young people at Yirra with a voice to feed back to program management and implementers their perceptions of a program specifically designed for adolescents.

Program management have stated that they intend to use the knowledge gained from this study to direct an evaluation of Yirra which is planned for 1995. Therefore, although the young people who have participated in this study have left the Yirra program and probably will not have an opportunity to see the outcomes of this research, it is intended that this documentation of their experiences of the program will be used to influence future decisions made by the policy makers and implementers of the Yirra program.

It is anticipated also, that knowledge gained from this study may be useful to program designers and implementers of other programs similar to Yirra, and to the fields of youth work and addiction studies.

Whilst carrying out fieldwork at Yirra, I endeavored to bracket my understanding of adolescent theories in order to allow the young people at Yirra to tell their experience, from their perspective. In the initial stage of inquiry, interviews with residents were broad and non-directive, allowing the young person to raise the issues which they believed were important to their experience. These issues in turn directed future inquiry and to a large degree shaped the design of this study. My observations of activities and interactions between the people at Yirra were also recorded in the form of fieldnotes. To the degree to which they were relevant, program documents were also included in my data.

At the conclusion of the data-gathering phase of this study data was analysed inductively and categories, sub-categories and dimensions of program participants experiences were more comprehensively developed. These were subsequently analysed based on Piaget's and Erikson's theories of adolescent development.

It appears when viewed from the perspectives of these prominent developmental theorists, informants' comments regarding their experiences of Yirra, along with my observations of young people in the program that, to varying degrees Yirra does and does not meet the developmental needs of adolescents. It appears also, that this is largely due to Yirra not being designed to

acknowledge the lack of homogeneity of the group of young people in the program, including their reasons for coming to Yirra, differing ages and varied levels of cognitive development.

One of the most important issues which I believe this study has identified is the degree to which residents of Yirra actually perceive themselves to have had a choice about entering the program. This appears to influence their attitudes toward being there. Those residents who said that they felt that they had made a 'personal decision' about coming to Yirra, tended to use whatever the program offered them to begin working toward changing their substance use, and working toward solving other problems they felt they had. On the other hand, residents of Yirra who felt that being in the program was not the result of their personal choice tended to resist the services which it offered.

Another important issue identified is that the stage of adolescent development for individual young people at Yirra, which is possibly influenced by their age and the consistent use of substances, has influenced the degree to which they participate in, and in turn perceive the benefits of, program elements such as 'group' and the 'level' system. These elements of Yirra are less suited to residents who are still in the stage of 'concrete operational' thinking, and more suited to those who employ 'formal operational' thinking.

Although the workers at Yirra need to acknowledge and understand that the disrespectful language and behaviour of some young people in the program is typical of adolescents, the impact of this on other residents also needs to be considered. The implication of this is that at times decisions may have to be made by workers as to whether the young person/people should remain in the program or not.

The issue of 'boredom' which was also raised by informants indicates a desirability for program planners and implementers to provide a greater variety of activities on the premises of Yirra, which residents will be interested in doing in their free time. Another need identified for adolescents in the Yirra program is that they must be assured that they can leave the program and re-enter at a later date. Although it appears that residents do have this option, being told that there is a waiting list may act as a deterrent for residents to approach the program and request re-entry.

From the comments of informants it also appears that they perceive the primary role of a worker at Yirra to be that of someone whom they can trust, who will listen to them and be non-judgmental, and who will assist them in personal and practical ways. Most of the young people I interviewed felt that the workers at Yirra were like this, however others told me that their experiences were to the contrary. It is important

therefore for the workers at Yirra to take on the role of the 'listening friend', rather than to use their position in an attempt to control the young people, or overtly press their own beliefs and values upon them.

It appears from this study that in order for Yirra to more effectively meet the needs of a larger number of young people who enter the program, it needs to be designed and implemented with further consideration for the developmental needs of adolescent substance users.

In conclusion, it is apparent from both the comments of informants and my observations of Yirra, that many of the young people in this program desire to make their own decisions about their lives. This includes dealing with the problems they believe they have with regard to their substance use and their goals for the future. Although they want to be autonomous in this regard, they also appear to have a strong desire to have the support, understanding and even suggestions of other people whom they believe they can trust.

As many of the young people who enter the Yirra program believe that they do not have family and/or friends to fulfill this role for them, it becomes the primary role of the workers at Yirra. It is important, therefore, that the workers are people who not only have an understanding of the nature and needs of adolescent substance users, but that it is in their nature to be

empathetic and understanding toward these young people...and above all...to have hope for them.

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## APPENDICES

"YIRRA" HOUSE RULES

ALL OF US NEED TO SHOW RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER.  
ALSO, TO HELP KEEP EACH OTHER SAFE, AND TO MAKE THE PROGRAM  
WORK, WE NEED THESE RULES.

No drugs

No violence or self harm

No blatant or threatening language

No vandalism/graffiti

No stealing

No sexual activities with others

Residents must remain within Yirra

All telephone calls must be paid for, may be supervised, and  
must be no longer than ten minutes. This includes incoming  
calls, which are only to be answered by staff.

All residents are to help in the cleaning of Yirra

No smoking in the house or vehicles

Residents and staff are not to use cigarettes as barter

On Monday - Friday, and Sunday night, television and noise  
cease at 11.00 pm and lights out at 11.30 pm.

On Saturday nights, television and noise cease at 1.00pm and  
lights out at 1.30pm.

Television may be watched after 4.30pm daily. Television  
off during meals and wash-ups.

No "R" rated videos.

Pornography of all sorts is banned

Headphones may be needed for some music

Clean up after yourself

No socializing in bedrooms

Eat messy foods in kitchen, dining and outside areas

\*\* Staff areas are out of bounds except with staff

**FORM OF CONSENT**

I ..... agree to participate in this research and know that I may withdraw at any time.

It is understood by me that my role will be that of an informant to the researcher (Bethany Byatt) as to my experience of Yirra.

I have had explained to me the reason for this study, how it will be carried out and what is expected to be done with the results. I have also been advised of potential risks to myself which may result from my participating.

The researcher has my consent to publish any information I provide on the condition that I am not identifiable.

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Participant Date

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Researcher Date

## MOVING TOWARDS CHANGE

Family visitors and girlfriend/boyfriend as negotiated with Primary/Secondary  
Two personal calls per day (must be paid for before call), let staff know you are making a call so it can be recorded properly  
Go down to shop once per day, on request during business hours  
Negotiate written plans with Primary two days before your planned outing, supervised urine on your return from outing  
Attend appointments alone, supervised urine on your return  
As many business calls as necessary, negotiated & recorded by staff

Move to next level depends on:

Doing allocated chores  
Attending appointments aimed at achieving goals  
Completing preparation for 1:1 sessions in your journal  
Showing respect for others  
Continuing to plan and act upon short term goals, and towards longer term possibilities  
Clean urines  
Attending all aspects of the program  
Begin to initiate goal setting and action towards interests and needs

## CHANGING

Family visitors and girlfriend/boyfriend as negotiated  
Three personal calls per day (must be paid for before call), let staff know you are making a call so it can be recorded properly  
Go down to shop once per day, on request during business hours  
Negotiate written plans with Primary/Secondary two days before your planned outing, supervised urine on your return  
Attend appointments alone, supervised urine on your return

Maintained by:

Doing allocated chores  
Attending appointments aimed at achieving goals  
Completing preparation for 1:1 sessions in your journal  
Showing respect for others  
Continuing to plan and act upon short term goals, and towards longer term possibilities  
Clean urines  
Attending all aspects of the program  
Begin to initiate goal setting and action towards interests and needs  
Develop realistic plans and supports for when you complete the programme

YIRRA (YOUTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICE)  
LEVELS

Please bring your journals to Wednesday Weekly Progress Meeting and Friday Focus Group  
Levels reviewed by all staff at Wednesday Progress Meeting  
Discuss levels with Primary/Secondary before the Meetings  
Outings planned two days in advance and okayed by Primary/Secondary

THINKING ABOUT CHANGE

No visitors  
One (only) short supervised phone call (until on next level) to family, girlfriend/boyfriend (must be paid for before call)  
Only out with group (Recreation)  
May attend appointments with staff, negotiate family visits  
As many short supervised business calls as necessary, negotiate with staff

Move to next level depends on:

Setting appointment times with staff for 1:1 to discuss and concerns, questions about the programme, and your journal  
Showing respect for others  
Doing allocated chores  
Attending all aspects of the program  
Clean urines

TALKING ABOUT & PLANNING CHANGE

Visits from girlfriend/boyfriend and friends need to be negotiated with Primary/Secondary two days before they visit  
One personal call per day (must be paid for before call), let staff know you are making a phone call so it can be recorded properly  
Arrange family visits/visitors with your Primary/Secondary  
Attend appointments alone, supervised urine on your return  
As many business calls as necessary, negotiated & recorded by staff

Move to next level depends on:

Discussing in 1:1 sessions, immediate needs and future possibilities  
Begin to plan and act upon short term goals  
Showing respect for others  
Attending all aspects of the program  
Completing preparation for 1:1 sessions in your journal  
Doing allocated chores  
Clean urines