

Contents

Introduction

- 1. Understandings of adolescence**
 - 1.1 *Understandings based on the contextual and particular nature of adolescence.*
 - 1.2 *Understandings based on the significance of developmental stages*
 - 1.3 *A proposed best practice framework for understanding adolescence*

- 2. Developmental youth work**
 - 2.1 *Developing Positive Youth Outcomes: The Glass Half Full*
 - 2.2 *Supports, Opportunities and Services: The Ingredients of Developmental Youth Work*
 - 2.3 *Process: The Dynamics of Developmental Youth Work*
 - 2.4 *Communities: The Context for Developmental Youth Work*
 - 2.5 *A framework for Developmental Youth Work: linking prevention programs, youth development and community development*

- 3. Peer process work with young people**
 - 3.1 *The many kinds of peer process work with young people*
 - 3.2 *Peer programs which are problem preventative in orientation*
 - 3.3 *Peer programs which combine problem prevention with youth development objectives*
 - 3.4 *Peer programs which integrate problem prevention, youth development and community development objectives*

- 4. The delivery of peer programs**
 - 4.1 *Recruitment of peer workers*
 - 4.2 *The role of peer workers*
 - 4.3 *The training of trainers*
 - 4.4 *Contextualisation of the peer program*
 - 4.5 *Funding priorities and impact on peer programs*
 - 4.6 *Best Practice in delivery of peer programs*

- 5. Conclusion**
 - Philosophy*
 - Models*

Bibliography

Appendices

- Appendix 1: An annotated bibliography of peer process work critique
Appendix 2: A case study of 'best practice' in implementing Being There.

Introduction

Within this discussion paper we will briefly:

- explore what we know about understandings of adolescence,
- explore what we know about youth development work,
- explore what we have learnt about peer process work from around the world and Australia, and
- build some frameworks of best practice that can inform the development of a national sustainable model.

This discussion paper is structured in such a way that before we explore the world of ‘peer process work’ it would be beneficial to step back and explore the world of adolescent and youth development.

The rationale behind this ‘stepping back’ is that peer process work would be generally located within the discipline and practice of youth work and here we can draw on a community of literature and practice wisdom that can add depth, breadth, and context to this study.

1. Understandings of adolescence

There are several competing discourses which articulate very different understandings of adolescence.

1.1 Understandings based on the contextual and particular nature of adolescence.

For a challenging analysis of adolescence, some of the best work in Australia has been done by Rob White and Johanna Wyn in “Rethinking Youth”.

White and Wyn highlight the significance of context – race, gender, class, sexuality, location as being at least as significant if not more significant in understanding young people than the commonality of age.

It is critical that we understand both the universal dimensions of adolescent and youth experience (the similarities based on age) as well as the particular (the differences in the experience of adolescence because of contextual factors).

White and Wyn have developed a useful grid that identifies what is universal and what is particular about the experience and construct of ‘youth’.

Universal and particular dimensions of adolescent and youth experience

Universal	Particular
Age status	Social status, e.g. class, gender, ethnicity, 'race', geographical location
Global Youth Culture	Cultural formation e.g. Youth subcultures
Compulsory schooling	Unequal provision, opportunities and outcomes
Legal prescriptions based on age, e.g. Status offenses	State regulation according to social status e.g. Indigenous young people and police
Adolescent development	Diverse life experiences and cultural norms for growing up
Youth as deficient	Youth as having multiple dimensions

“While young people do have a common status and to some extent common experiences (for example, schooling) because of their age, there are many forces that work against this”. (White and Wyn 16)

Understandings of adolescence must live with a tension of the apparent universality of youth and the highly specific, differentiated and socially divided nature of youth. It is our sense that the Kids Help Line “Being There” program has struggled with this tension and have managed to experiment with the program with a diverse range of groups of young people – indigenous groups, same sex groups, refugee young people etc.

1.2 Understandings based on the significance of developmental stages

Digging deeper into the universalising tendencies of modern academic discourse and practice traditions White and Wyn also highlight the context of developmental psychology which has ‘captured’ and ‘colonized’ our understanding of young people generally and ‘adolescence’ in particular.

They argue that the concept of adolescence is the cornerstone to many current conceptualisations of youth. “Adolescence” is the term that refers to a series of developmental stages involving mental, physical and psychological maturing that, it is assumed, all people go through. The adolescent stage of development is generally identified as the ‘teenage’ years.

Central to this conceptualisation of youth is the idea that there are clearly identifiable processes which are universal. By definition, all normal people must go through these set stages, completing their developmental tasks, in order to have any chance of being ‘normal’ adults.

The concept of adolescence basically assumes a ‘pre-social’ self, which exists within the individual that must be found and developed. The individual is seen as distinct and separate from society, as possessing a ‘self’ independent from social relationships or social circumstances.

Some of the results of this are:

- Some young people are identified as vulnerable (at risk) because a number of influences may occur which may irreparably damage the process of growing up as normal.
- This perspective also identifies areas in which deficiencies in the young person's life (for example, their socio-economic background) are associated with failure to adequately develop in a number of areas. It is the task of adolescence to reach the appropriate level of development in relation to each of these areas:
 - identity formation,
 - social relationships (family and peers),
 - education,
 - sexuality,
 - parenthood (teenage parents),
 - work and
 - money.
- The study of adolescence is dominated by a focus on those who have failed to become normal and hence are defined as a problem – problems such as relation to authority, depression and suicide. The problem is located either in the individual, as a deficiency, or with family relations which are seen in terms of social pathology.
- This philosophical basis of understanding adolescence has legitimized the involvement of professionals in young people's lives.
- The implications of this are that for such problems as unemployment the solution to the structural problem of the labour market is firmly located in individual performance and attainment (the young person or family performance) rather than social, political, economic and educational contexts.

The focus on individual characteristics, the problematising of adolescence, and the categorising of youth into a single entity differentiated only by 'normal' (or 'mainstream') and 'deviant' (or 'at risk') contrasts markedly with a broader perspective drawing on the actual experience of young people.

1.3 A proposed best practice framework for understanding adolescence

To conclude this section we have drawn on a framework developed by the International Youth Foundation and adapted it somewhat in the light of White and Wyn's work and the understandings of developmental psychology. We feel that it provides Kids Help Line with a useful framework for understanding adolescence and a starting point for conceptualizing young people as participants in a 'best practice' peer program.

A proposed best practice framework for understanding adolescence

Adolescent development is about **meeting many challenges**. The growth in those years involves identity formation, social transitions, education, sexuality, parenthood (teenage parents), work and money.

Adolescent development is **uneven**. This is the most obvious feature of the adolescent development process. Thirteen year olds, for example, vary greatly in their physical, emotional, social and cognitive development. This variance is not only among 13 year old as a group, but also within any individual 13-year-old.

Adolescent development is **contextual**. This is the feature highlighted by White and Wyn's work. Class, gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality, locational disadvantage are often more significant 'windows' through which we can understand young people than 'age' and 'normal' developmental stages of adolescence.

Adolescent development is **complex**. Try as we may, it is difficult to affect one aspect of development (e.g. cognitive) without acknowledging if not addressing the others.

Adolescent development **requires engagement**. It is fostered through **relationships**, influenced by **environments** and triggered by **participation**. Services can be delivered without engagement, but development only occurs when young people are engaged.

Adolescent development is both **ongoing and resilient**. We cannot just intervene at one point and assume all will be fine thereafter; neither can we with good conscience not intervene assuming that it is too late.

The key lessons learnt from this exploration of understandings of adolescence are that:

- Our understanding of the experience of adolescence critically influences the ways we relate to young people.
- We must understand the context within which young people live – being aware of both the universal and particular experiences.
- Our understanding of context moves beyond family to class, gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality, and geographical location.
- Locating the problems of young people within the individual pathologizes and legitimizes dysfunctional notions of normality and deviance.
- Adolescent development is about meeting many challenges. It is uneven, contextual, and complex. It requires engagement, is fostered through relationships, influenced by environments, triggered by participation and is both ongoing and resilient.
- Peer process work is a challenge to some key elements in the paradigms that dominate current understandings of adolescence.

2. Developmental youth work

In this section we will attempt to ‘ground’ the lessons drawn from the understanding of adolescence outlined above into a discussion and development of a framework for ‘best practice’ in developmental youth work.

Much of this section will draw on Karen Pittman’s work from the International Youth Foundation.

The key thesis is that the flaw with many approaches to youth work is that youth problem prevention, youth development and community development are seen as competing priorities rather than inseparable goals.

Much current youth development practice and philosophy is built on the notion of ‘The Glass Half Empty’ - premised on the public health model of intervention. This model suggests that we have to treat those who have the problem or disease, modify the attitudes of those at risk of contracting their problem because of their behaviour, and educating those not yet engaged.

Clearly the model has merit and, beginning with substance abuse, has been heavily applied to the array of youth problems. While it has brought legitimacy to the idea of prevention, it is not enough. When applied to more complex individual issues of violence, unemployment, early pregnancy, suicide, it limits strategies because of its focus on the problem. When we talk about prevention we are talking in terms of problems, however there is something fundamentally limiting about having everything defined as a problem – in the final analysis we do not assess people in terms of problems, but rather in terms of their potential.

Prevention is an inadequate goal. Problem free is not fully prepared.

2.1 *Developing Positive Youth Outcomes: The Glass Half Full*

What are the goals we as a society have for young people?

Beyond the specific goal of staying out of trouble, the policy literature usually contains good statements about how we want young people to be good citizens, good neighbours, good workers and good parents. The academic and programmatic literature usually push further articulating general lists of competencies that we want from young people. These go beyond academic competence and include other competencies related to our emotional, social and civic skills.

Paralleling the broadening of our definition of expected competencies has to be an acceptance of the importance of a second set of outcomes – those that allow young people to not only be competent but to be connected, caring and committed.

The International Youth Foundation has developed a global framework for desirable youth outcomes:

Desirable Youth Outcomes

Having a sense of:	Having an ability and motivation:
<p>Confidence <i>Self Worth</i> The ability to contribute, and to perceive one’s contribution as meaningful</p> <p><i>Mastery and Future</i> Awareness of one’s progress in life including the ability to project progress into future</p> <p>Character <i>Responsibility and Autonomy</i> Accountability for one’s conduct and obligations</p> <p>Independence and control over one’s life</p> <p><i>Spirituality and Self-Awareness</i> Connectedness to principles surrounding families, cultural groups, communities and higher deities</p> <p>An awareness of one’s own personality or individuality</p> <p>Connection <i>Safety and Structure</i> Being provided adequate food, clothing, shelter, and security including protection from hurt, injury, or loss</p> <p><i>Membership and Belonging</i> Being a participating member of a Community</p> <p>Being intimately involved in at least one lasting relationship with another person</p>	<p>Competence <i>Civic and Social</i> To work collaboratively with others for larger good, and to sustain caring friendships and relationships with others</p> <p><i>Cultural</i> To respect and affirmatively respond to differences among groups and individuals of diverse background, interests, and traditions</p> <p><i>Physical Health</i> To act in ways that best ensure current and physical health, for self and others</p> <p><i>Emotional Health</i> To respond affirmatively and to cope with positive and adverse situations, to reflect on one’s emotions and surroundings, and to engage in leisure and fun</p> <p><i>Intellectual</i> To learn in school and in other settings, to gain knowledge needed to graduate high school, to use critical thinking, creative, problem solving, and expressive skills, and to conduct independent study</p> <p><i>Employability</i> To gain the functional and organizational skills necessary for employment, including an understanding of careers, and options and then steps necessary to reach goals</p>

2.2 Supports, Opportunities and Services: The Ingredients of Developmental Youth Work

If these are the outcomes we want to achieve, what are the basic inputs or raw resources that young people need? The literature on factors influencing youth development suggest seven key inputs:

Community Support Inputs that Promote Youth Development

Stable places	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Places are important, a place that is stable which is theirs and where they feel safe
Basic Care and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• That are appropriate, affordable and if necessary confidential
Healthy relationships with peers and adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sustained caring relationships and social and strategic networks
High Expectations and standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• That are appropriate, diverse and sufficiently intense
Role models, resources and networks	
Challenging experiences	
Opportunities to participate and contribute	
High quality instruction and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In a full range of community life

2.3 Process: The Dynamics of Developmental Youth Work

In thinking about vulnerable, disadvantaged, 'at-risk' or marginalised young people, the "fix *problems* first' assumption is antithetical to the dynamic of developmental process. While problems must be addressed, it is the commitment to development – the offering of relationships, networks, challenges, and opportunities to contribute – which motivates change and growth.

There is a sizable body of academic and practical knowledge to back up the basic argument that services alone do not ensure development. The research on resilient children and youth, for example, suggests that three factors contribute to these children's ability to beat the odds:

- A strong relationship with a caring adult,
- High expectations, and
- Opportunities for meaningful participation.

In addition, these children have a sense of connectedness and confidence that allows them to develop competencies.

In summary, developmental youth work will focus on:

Characteristics of Resilient Youth

- Good social skills,
- Problem solving skills,
- Sense of independence, and
- Sense of purpose.

Characteristics of Supportive Communities

- Caring adults,
- High expectations, and
- Opportunity for Participation.

A major problem is that because funding has dictated to services, we have woven a crazy quilt of problem-specific interventions that often operate independently and inefficiently.

We have reduced the challenge of youth development to a series of problems to be solved, leaving the core inputs for development – supports and opportunities – to be addressed in a catch-as-catch-can fashion. Substance abuse, pregnancy prevention, dropout prevention, violence prevention and now suicide prevention programs all have separate funding and separate evaluation measures.

But the core of all that is offered in these programs is the same:

Common Themes in Prevention Programs

Skill building	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building social skills, problem solving skills, and communication skills.
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engaging youth through offering real opportunities for participation and leadership.
Norms and Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establishing new norms and expectations for behaviour that are sanctioned by the group.
Adult-youth relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engaging deeper and different ways for youth and adults to relate through the creation of different structures for interaction and specific training for adult leaders.
Information and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Providing problem-specific information and services or access to services.

2.4 Communities: The Context for Developmental Youth Work

Programs and organizations can have an enormous impact of young people’s lives, but this impact is either amplified or dampened by the quality and congruence of what else is going on in young people’s families, peer groups, and neighbourhoods. There

are, as always, young people who “beat the odds”, but it is the differences in family, community and society that determine the odds.

Young people grow up in a set of imbedded networks. The complexity and unevenness of adolescent development and the need for constancy in relationships, environments and engagement means that those best positioned to influence development are the “natural actors” in young people’s lives.

Programs and interventions are therefore needed. But the long-term task is to help families, neighbours, communities and society to nurture, support and demand excellence from the young people. This requires sustained investments in community institutions, associations and infrastructures.

In the ideal, adolescents and young people have their broadest, strongest and most permanent connections to family. Their further development is enhanced when they are:

- further supported by peers and neighbours;
- attached to an array of community organisations;
- engaged in school;
- exposed to work; and
- connected, as needed, with professionals that provide or broker for basic services such as health care, housing, protections and social services.

Any and all of these networks can provide the key inputs needed. The list of inputs is intentionally place/provider-generic. It states what is needed, but does not specify who supplies it or where it is found. In some communities the networks are well equipped enough that a young person can get all that is needed naturally from family, neighbours and an assortment of informal or individually negotiated experiences. In other communities, because these inputs are not available in sufficient quantity and quality, essential services, opportunities and supports may be needed. The question is how?

2.5 *A framework for Developmental Youth Work: linking prevention programs, youth development and community development.*

We can develop global best practice principles for program development in attempting to link prevention, youth development and community development.

A framework for Developmental Youth Work: linking prevention programs, youth development and community development.

Broaden the goal. When we talk about development we end up talking about supports and opportunities and recognize the importance of continuity, challenge and choice. Applying what we know about youth development suggests some obvious strategies.

We have to broaden the goals – not just schools and jobs, but health, social and civic competence. Not just competencies, but the confidence, character and connectedness needed to use them well.

Support the process. We need to understand and articulate better supports and interventions needed to achieve these goals. And we have to acknowledge and address the developmental and environmental contexts that affect outcomes.

Evaluate the whole. Two things happen when we focus too heavily on a single problem. We weaken the possibilities of both documenting impact (by tracking only a narrow set of outcomes) and having impact (by focusing too narrowly on a specific set of inputs).

Many programs argue that they are comprehensive in approach and broad in services; all should be evaluated against some basic outcomes that reflect the full set of competencies and connections desired. Anyone who has worked intensely on any discrete youth problems (e.g. Teen pregnancy) learns quickly that the problem is intertwined with education, opportunity structures, family, structural relationships and a range of developmental issues which cannot be ignored if any intervention is to be successful.

Hold institutions accountable for improving family and community outcomes. Often when designing youth programs there is a tendency to reach over school, community organizations, neighbours, families, and try to do something directly to young people. What we know is that as soon as the intervention stops, things revert.

The critical need is for us to work strategically with family and community infrastructure – schools should be working with community organisations to help work with parents, find parents, develop homework assistance programs etc. Community organisations should be helping parents and neighbours be the role models, resources and key informal supports that are so critically needed. And programmers should be held accountable to design programs for such outcomes.

Strengthen the inner rings. Build the capacity of those inner rings of support within which young people live their everyday lives (peers, neighbours, informal support groups, and families) – before setting up services.

Invest in core supports. See community organisations as catalysts as well as service providers. The challenge is to respond to the short-term needs of youth in ways that strengthen rather than undermine families and communities ability to create a 'natural' web of supports.

Build local community capacity. Investment must not be in short term, short lived, problem-specific programs, but in community organisations, in civic, cultural and neighbourhood associations, and in the larger economic, physical and social infrastructures.

When introduced into a community, programs should follow one of two roads. They should either become a part of the community – permanent, indigenous (locally owned) institutions – or they should work to strengthen the families, neighbours, and community institutions sufficiently so that the program is no longer needed.

The mistake is that we all too often make is to come in, put the program in place and believe it will solve the problem.

3. Peer process work with young people

This section explores the many kinds of peer process work with young people. It considers various examples, and concludes:

- that most of them originate with problem prevention objectives,
- that some of them also articulate a youth development purpose, and
- that a few of them integrate problem prevention, youth development and community development objectives.

3.1 *The many kinds of peer process work with young people*

Clearly there is a huge world of peer process work. Much of it is happening in organic ways, but increasingly as the ‘natural webs of support’ are breaking down in our communities and society it is being consciously programmed, researched, advertised, and developed.

Up to now we have been unable to find any attempts to provide an organising framework or typology of peer process work either globally or within any national borders. In many ways this makes sense considering that there could be as many ‘peer roles’ as there are ‘life roles’, however some researchers and practitioners have attempted to develop typologies of roles within the parameters of particular peer process work emphasis.

Below are three examples:

Example 1. Ken Rigby in his book “Bullying in school and what to do about it” provides a classification of peer helping roles for the purposes of preventing bullying.

Helping roles for students

	Educational	Personal Support	Intervening in peer conflict
Indirect contribution to countering bullying			
Peer tutor	yes	yes	no
Peer orientation guide	yes	yes	no
Buddy	no	yes	no
Peer outreach worker	no	yes	no
More direct contribution to stopping bullying			
Peer support leader	usually	yes	sometimes
Peer counsellor	no	yes	sometimes
Peer mediator	no	yes	yes

Example 2. Rey Carr from the “Peer Systems Consulting Group – Canada” identifies a range of roles within a peer helping strategy aimed at school dropout prevention work:

Roles within a peer helping strategy aimed at school dropout prevention work

Peer Helpers as:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ...Mentors | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emphasis on assisting younger students to express feelings about school life, learn appropriate social skills etc., and providing positive role models. |
| ...Tutors | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emphasis on providing more academic orientated support. |
| ...Climate Builders | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students are trained to recognize behaviour that indicates trouble or concern and learn how to initiate and maintain friendly relationships with people not necessarily in their social group. |
| ...At-risk group members | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• School students at risk of dropping out are matched with in a group setting with peer helpers. |
| ...Transition agents | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peer helpers are assigned to students who are making a variety of transitions to support them. |
| ...Dilemma managers | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• These peer helpers are assigned specifically to young people who are considering seriously dropping out of school – the peer helper is trained to enable a young person to systematically work through the dilemma’s posed by such a choice. |
| ...Re-entry agents | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The peer helper explores options with former students who are thinking about re-entering a school – extend a caring hand. |
| ...Mediators | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peer helpers assist students to resolve conflicts, particularly with persons in authority. |

Example 3. “The AIDS Bureau” - identifies four models of peer education:

Models of peer education

Peer influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Modifies peer norms so that they are congruent with and supportive of the required behaviour change.
Peer teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uses peers as trainer/educators. In some cases this education is more effective than non-peer teaching as the peers receive training from someone they already know, trust and respect.
Peer counselling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using peers as counsellors for the same benefits as in peer teaching.
Peer participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where the ‘client group’ is involved in decision making processes concerning the organisation and development and implementation of the education strategy.

These three examples alone provide us with an insight into just how broad the scope of peer process work is. They build on the work of sexual/reproductive health education, bullying prevention and dropout prevention peer process work.

Despite the lack of a global or national typology of peer process work the discourse around peer process work often uses terminology around words such as:

- Educators
- Helpers
- Supporters
- Mediators
- Counsellors.

As we read and see more examples of peer process work we discern threads of an organising framework or typology emerging – however, such a task is beyond the scope of this paper and awaits the application of someone else’ imaginative application.

3.2 Peer programs which are problem preventative in orientation

Despite the difficulty in organising peer process work into some kind of typology it is easy to identify that most peer process work is located within the tradition of problem prevention youth work.

Most peer education programs have two aims

- To modify the attitudes and habits of those at risk of contracting a particular problem (usually related to sexual and reproductive health or substance abuse) because of their behaviour, and
- To educate those who are not engaged with the identified problem.

Peer counseling programs have been developed with the expressed purpose of supporting young people who are ‘at risk’ of bullying, dropping out of school, suicide, etc.

Building on the previous section of this paper there is a common core of themes within these prevention orientated peer programs. (Adapted from previous section)

Common Themes in Peer Prevention Programs

Skill building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building social skills, problem solving skills, team work and communication skills.
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging youth through offering real opportunities for participation and leadership.
Norms and Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing new norms and expectations for behaviour that are sanctioned by the group.
Adult-youth relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging deeper and different ways for youth and adults to relate through the creation of different structures for interaction and specific training for adult leaders.
Information and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing problem-specific information and services or access to services.

Examples of peer programs that are problem prevention orientated are:

- ◆ *The Peer Helping Strategy for Drop-out Prevention* as developed by Rey Carr from Peer Systems Consulting Group of Canada. The Peer Systems Consulting Group have developed frameworks and models for a number of peer prevention programs.
- ◆ Peer education programs aimed at substance abuse prevention and sexual health/HIV prevention. Many examples can be examined from “On the level” Vol 3, No 2, published by *Family Planning Australia*.
- ◆ Peer helping work in bullying prevention as reviewed in Ken Rigby’s “bullying in schools and what to do about it”.
- ◆ *Peer Support Foundation* – explicitly a school-based prevention program developed within Victoria with intention of helping students resist peer pressure to behave anti-socially, adjust easily to a new grade, contribute to the spirit of community and promote responsibility, self-confidence and leadership qualities
- ◆ *The Roehampton Institute* – School of Psychology and Counselling/UK have documented a number of peer support prevention programs in their *Peer Support Networker* newsletter. Examples are ‘anti-bullying campaigns’ using peer

counselling at Elliot Durham School and drop-out prevention at Pennywell School, Sunderland.

3.3 Peer programs which combine problem prevention with youth development objectives

Some examples of peer process work also attempt to provide supports; services and opportunities linked to broader youth outcome goals than simply problem prevention.

Examples of peer programs that combine problem prevention with youth development objectives are:

- ◆ Kids Help Line *Being There*.
- ◆ *Natural Helpers: A Peer Helping Program* (4-H Programs). The goals of the natural helpers program is to help young people develop the capacity:
 - to prevent some of the problems of adolescence,
 - to intervene effectively with troubled friends, and
 - to improve their school and community.
- ◆ *The Young Women's Support Network* – a program that integrates:
 - a teenage pregnancy prevention peer education project,
 - participation in a support network that improves access to housing and vocational training options for single teenage mothers; and
 - opportunities for participation in leadership and organisational decision-making.

3.4 Peer programs which integrate problem prevention, youth development and community development objectives

These peer programs purposefully build local capacity and conceptualise the program as a catalyst for developing indigenous organisations.

Examples of peer programs that integrate problem prevention, youth development and community development objectives are:

- ◆ *South African YMCA: Better Life Options Program*
The Better Life Options Program is an integrated national youth development program that aims to:
 - increase the self-esteem of young people, and
 - integrate sexual/reproductive health education, vocational/community development initiatives, organisational youth participation and advocacy at local and regional levels.

The strategies involve:

- Setting up reference groups of adult/youth partnerships in each community of operation.

- Working collaboratively with the reference group, existing youth clubs, schools and other social and community infrastructure to identify existing or potential peer leaders.
- Equipping peer leaders with skills in self-awareness, gender awareness, assertiveness, negotiation, team building and leadership, and also reproductive health and rights information, through attending two five day workshops.
- Supporting peer leaders in running educational events and workshops related to sexual and reproductive information and life-skills.
- Supporting peer leaders in learning from those experiences and transferring those skills to other youth initiated development processes and programs related to broader development goals including participation in adult orientated indigenous organisations.
- Supporting peer leaders to participate in the YMCA Regional, Provincial and National Youth Committee that has direct input into the National Executive of the YMCA.

The program is monitored and evaluated through Better Life Options Program staff and young people in all regions where implementation takes place. Combines quantitative (KAP surveys pre and post program) and qualitative methods (narrative and participatory).

- ◆ *The Beacons Program in New York City – funded by the New York City Department of Youth and Community Development*
Beacons are school-based Community Centres currently operating in all New York City neighbourhoods. This initiative represents a commitment to ensuring the presence of positive supports of youth and families in evenings and weekends in neighbourhoods where residents are struggling to maintain and build community life. The program attempts to build strong schools, families and local community associations and integrates programs such as:
 - after-school care,
 - sexual/reproductive health and substance abuse peer education,
 - recreational and education activities,
 - local capacity building through involvement of neighbourhood leadership (formal and informal) in local Advisory Boards, and
 - technical assistance in the form of program design and organisational development.
- ◆ *West African Youth Initiative (WAYI) – Nigeria and Ghana a partnership between Advocates for Youth (USA) and the Association for Reproductive and Family Health (ARFH) in Ibadan, Nigeria*
WAYI works with 10 community-based peer education projects. The program addresses the crucial areas of local organisational capacity building, program skills building, development, peer education program management, strategies for youth empowerment, sustainability and resource material development.

- ◆ *Action Health Incorporated (Nigeria) is an NGO active in Lagos*
Has embedded a peer education program within an integrated adolescent health and community development strategy that includes:
 - ◆ In-school and youth centre based peer education
 - ◆ Reproductive health clinic and referrals
 - ◆ Job/vocational skills training
 - ◆ Advocacy and parent education

- ◆ *“Peer education as a strategy for community development in South Sydney”*
as per “Working together – young people, community and social change, “On the level” Vol 3, No 2, published by Family Planning Australia.

4 The delivery of peer programs

Section 4 of this discussion paper draws on national and international examples to provide an analysis of some of the key issues in the delivery of peer programs:

- 4.1 Recruitment of peer workers
- 4.2 The role of peer workers
- 4.3 The training of trainers
- 4.4 Contextualisation of the peer program
- 4.5 Funding priorities and impact on peer programs
- 4.6 Best Practice in delivery of peer programs

4.1 Recruitment of 'peer workers'

Recruitment of peer workers is seen as critical to the success of peer programs. All of the peer programs we looked at have put considerable thought into the design of the most appropriate processes.

The approach to recruitment of the Family Planning Australia peer education program.

Family Planning Australia advocate that the best recruitment process for peer work will include two stages:

- Stage 1.* Involves implementing an introductory peer skills and group/team development workshop with a larger group of young people. Young people are invited to this workshop with no promise or expectations of a formal role.
- Stage 2.* Involves a process of both self-selection and worker identification/invitation to participate in the stage of peer training for a formal role.

The approach to selection advocated by Ken Rigby.

Ken Rigby identifies various ways in which appropriate persons may be selected for peer work. He is specifically referring to a 'peer helper role' and we have adapted his framework to apply across all types of peer programs.

Rigby advocates that whatever the selection procedure, there must be collaboration between staff and young people in selection. The judgments of young people is essential – they are more likely than staff to know who would be acceptable to young people seeking help. The most appropriate young people to participate in a selection procedure are those experienced in the role. Once a team of peer helpers has been formed and functioned for a time effectively, they can be invited to participate.

Rigby outlines three approaches, which may obviously be used in combination:

- Approach 1.* Young people who are seen as likely to be good at carrying out a peer role may be informally approached by staff and/or members of a Student Representative Council (for a school) or clients reference group (for an agency) and invited to take on a role.

Approach 2. A description of each of the roles, together with a rationale for their creation, could be circulated among young people and staff who would then be asked to nominate individuals they saw as most suitable.

Approach 3. The roles could be described and advertised; and young people asked to apply prior to being interviewed by a panel representing both young people and staff

These two examples feature a staged induction and peer involvement in selection.

A staged induction provides: a *way in* to the program for young people who may initially have little idea of what it involves and who may want to check out what the expectations are; and a way for the program organisers to select appropriate participants.

Peer involvement in selection provides program ownership, as well as selection criteria more sensitivity to young people's experience, and the often more intimate knowledge of previous behaviour, attitudes, etc.

4.2 The role of 'peer' workers

The role of the peer worker is one of the most contentious issues in peer programs. There are many tensions and contradictions have been identified within the literature and in lessons learnt from existing programs. In our assessment, existing programs have not looked carefully enough at the assumptions and implications of the choices they have made.

Understanding the arguments for and against a formal role in the context of the wider discourse on professionalism in human services practice

In our view, discussion of the formalisation of the peer worker role has to be preceded by a discussion of professionalisation of human services. So we diverge from the particular world of peer process work and discuss the broader discourse of counselling and community development.

Within both these traditions of work there has been an on-going struggle about their meaning within the context of increasing pushes to professionalize. Both the 'professions' of counselling and of community development have emerged at a time when the 'natural' fabrics of communities are fragmenting and we are experiencing increased social stress from forces of globalisation and technology, and changing patterns of organising work, home and consumption.

Currently the struggle within these two traditions of work is focused around whether the emphasis of our work should be either:

- Capacity building through community based training processes which in conscious ways equip local people with the natural skills required to counsel (support one another) and re-build communities
- or*
- provision of professional *expertise* to *service* people's need for counselling and *facilitate* their efforts to build community.

During the era of the welfare state the emphasis has been on the latter. The critique of this approach is that the professional service sector has colonized individuals' and communities' capacity to care for themselves, and legitimized professional intervention on the basis of pathology (either of individuals or communities). A whole discourse of language and practice has emerged based around the role of *the expert or the professional practitioner*.

The 'expert' role has been comprehensively critiqued by such authors as Ivan Illich, Donald Kraybill and John McKnight. Some critiques of the expert role advocate that we need to completely reconceptualize professionalism, and have provided frameworks of doing that. For the purpose of this discussion we wish to draw attention to the work of Dave Andrews and explore his notion of the 'amateur professional'.

For Andrews 'amateur' is not the opposite of professional. To the contrary: the vision of being an amateur can be at the heart of being a professional. The notion of *amateur* comes from the Latin *amator*, meaning *love*. Andrews argues that in this context *amateur* means *someone who does something for the love of it*. Anyone who serves others for the love of it is an amateur – even as a professional.

Whether peer process work chooses to adopt formal or non-formal roles for young people the core of the issue is around the philosophy of professionalism that underpins the work. We consider this discussion to be critical because one of the dangers within the literature and discourse of peer process work, whether it emerges from the counselling or community development tradition, is the extent to which it buys into the language of an already colonized discourse. It assumes a particular perspective, a professionalised perspective, and sets up young people as peer program participants within that set of assumptions.

For Bonnie Benard in "The Case for Peers" the primary need is for a fundamental paradigm change. Basically this paradigm change involves a process of demystifying professional expertise and empowering people to help themselves and each other. Needless to say, this change runs counter to the socialization most professional helpers such as counsellors or teachers experience throughout their years of professional training. According to Benard for peer programs to be truly effective the groundwork of systemic change has to take place through the actual challenging of institutionalized professional roles.

Is a formal peer role appropriate?

There are as many arguments for a formal role for 'peer workers' as there are against.

Some of the literature, in particular in relation to peer counselling, goes so far as to conceptualise the young person being helped as Kids Help Line. This appears to us to be merely a logical if more extreme extension of the *expert* paradigm of professionalism. We believe it is absolutely inappropriate. It overlooks the fact that professional practice requires of professionals to exercise autonomy in the context of an extensive body of knowledge, commitment to ongoing professional development, a framework of ethics, and accountability to a professional body with its own processes of peer review and sanction. Good counselling practice, in particular, occurs in the context of supervision and opportunities for debriefing.

It is interesting that the lessons learnt from an evaluation of school based peer mediation programs in South Australia are that the formal role of students appealed to teachers and to students initially. However, once students were trained it was found that they did not want a formal role because:

- They did not want to be seen as different to other young people.
- They did not want to give up their lunch times for formal processes.

The same evaluation also identified a school which had been very successful with formal roles. It argued that for formal roles to work the school had to provide:

- well skilled support, and
- consistent support – in this case the guidance officer had been at the school for six years.

Whether formal or informal, at the heart of the work is the love of the amateur.

We would argue that the issue is not really about providing formal or informal roles for young people within peer programs. Of more significance than that is the way young people are equipped with language, values, attitudes, techniques, processes, and frameworks that do not build a sense of being different, being expert, *being a-part*; but rather builds a sense of *being there*, of standing alongside - with care, love and solidarity.

We would argue that our work could easily alienate young people from one another - rather than building bridges, supports and community within the diverse experiences of young people. The significance for young people of being perceived as different builds on our argument for underpinning any peer process work with an 'amateur' philosophy of professionalism.

Peer process work which is premised on the transformative potential of *amateur professionals*, can empower young people to support one another within a framework of providing love, attention and care rather than a framework of providing techniques, interventions, and roles. It can transform them and their communities. And it avoids the dangers of *setting them up* with impossible tensions, contradictions, and responsibilities.

4.3 The training of trainers

There is a clear argument that the delivery of peer training programs for young people requires considerable and particular skills, attitudes and understandings. Peer programs have emerged from the wider social context and been offered to local social institutions like schools and agencies. Peer programs invariably are owned by organisations with statewide or national brief. These organisations struggle with the question of whether they should deliver their training themselves, or adopt a train-the-trainer model.

Training content

One of the critical lessons learnt from reviewing peer process work nationally and internationally is that 'best practice' work includes several dimensions to the training:

- a dimension of generic human relations training for the young people,
- a dimension of specific training directly related to the program or process objectives for the young people, and
- a dimension of equipping the staff, workers, parents, community members (depends on the nature of the work) with the skills to actually provide a context within which the peer process work can operate effectively.

Best practice programs should consciously ensure that each of these three dimensions are covered.

Who are the most appropriate people to deliver peer training programs?

The first consideration is who are the most appropriate people to deliver peer training programs? The options are: staff internal to the school or agency (teachers, counsellors, or welfare workers); or visiting trainers.

Again there are arguments either way.

When local school or agency staff are themselves trained and then train others there is a greater degree of involvement of staff, and consequently the local site may be more inclined to 'own' the program. Clearly this model also does more in developing the capacity of the local school/community by leaving not only 'equipped' young people but also trained staff. Staff may also benefit through the relations they build up with the young people who provide the support and with whom they have made a common cause.

On the other hand, direct training of young people by better qualified and more experienced external trainers can be advantageous. External trainers are in some ways able to influence young people more because they are not the usual, conventional authority figures. This model also has the benefit of enabling young people to identify with the broader agency represented by the external facilitator. (Our evidence reveals that for some young people the broader link to *Kids Help Line* as a result of spending two days with a staff member has been important, and that the awareness of the agency spreads through the peer community from the commendations of those who have done the training.)

Kids Help Line has opted for a variety of both these models – in SA, WA and NT the emphasis has been on the former, whilst in Qld, NSW and Vic the emphasis has been on the latter.

The **Peer Support Foundation** is an example of a peer programs provider that has opted for a model of program delivery that trains teachers as peer workshop facilitators. This model includes a program of training that equips the *Peer Support Leaders* (the adults who become trainers) with skills to implement the peer support workshop with young people and also skills to provide on-going support to the young people. The Foundation has managed to access funding to provide training to trainers in regional and remote Australia and also encourages teachers and schools to fundraise in their local communities to send potential *Peer Support Leaders* to the training.

4.4 Contextualisation of the peer program

Providers of peer programs recognise in varying degrees the significance of the context into which their programs are delivered, and the potential for them to take a role in shaping that context.

Some approaches pay little heed to context. They subscribe to what we as community development workers would regard as a fantasy: that information or skill transmission sustains change. They forget that it is relationship that is at the foundation of change and sustains change, over the longer term. Typically these programs are offered through a train-the-trainer model, with the workshops offered to all comers at a centralised location.

Some organisations have however opted to invest more intensively within particular locations and to integrate what we would call problem prevention, youth development and community development dimensions. The strengths of these approaches are that they can develop model projects that are more wholistic, and have the potential to demonstrate better qualitative outputs over a longer term. The weaknesses are that the work is more painstakingly time intensive.

4.5 Funding priorities and impact on peer programs

Referring to our the introductory comments in section 5.2 from Karen Pittman's work on "Preventing Problems or Promoting Development" we noted that the key thesis of her paper is that youth problem prevention, youth development and community development are seen as competing priorities rather than inseparable goals.

When we explore the world of funding we find that peer process work is caught within that same web of competing priorities rather than being seen as inseparable goals.

Some peer programs are located clearly within the funding of youth problem prevention – targeting the problem of lack of information (sexual/reproductive health), bullying prevention, suicide prevention etc. Others are more located within the funding world of youth and community development – building on the emphasis of developing community capacity, focusing on supports, expectations and opportunities for young people.

Rarely is there an opportunity to combine the two funding priorities.

4.6 Best Practice Frameworks for Program Delivery from Global Research

The first framework includes lessons learnt from reviewing peer education projects known to the World Health Organisation – Global Program in AIDS. Key lessons learnt are:

- ◆ ensuring active youth participation in youth planning, implementation and assessment
- ◆ improve the conceptualising and design of projects
- ◆ ensuring effective monitoring and supervision of peer educators
- ◆ scaling-up projects, to increase coverage and ensure replicability

- ◆ developing and ensuring adult and community support to peer approaches
- ◆ ensuring that project staff have, or are assisted to develop, needed skills and capacity
- ◆ taking account of gender, ethnic, and sexual orientation issues
- ◆ ensuring early or mid-term review
- ◆ making financial and other resources available to support youth people's further initiatives
- ◆ ensure on-going documentation, reviewing and evaluation of peer approaches
- ◆ provide technical support to youth and other organisations who are partners in project conceptualisation and design

(From Youth People, AIDS and STD Prevention: Experiences of Peer Approaches in developing Countries – WHO/Global Program of AIDS)

The second framework documents ten closely related characteristics that are common features of an enhanced peer program.

- ◆ The most important characteristic of an enhanced peer program is its ability to make sense, monitor, and react to change – a quality that makes programs durable, popular and indispensable
- ◆ The second important characteristic is that it is frequently and carefully evaluated, in the context of an ongoing appraisal of local needs
- ◆ The third most important characteristic is its ability to match the talents, skills and preparation of peer workers to the most appropriate tasks, activities and programs in the local context
- ◆ The fourth characteristic is the carefulness that goes into recruitment ensuring matching of talents with program needs
- ◆ The fifth characteristic is that it recruits a broad diversity of peer workers that is representative of the diversity of the program context
- ◆ The sixth characteristic is their highly targeted, carefully designed, frequently evaluated training activities, which are specifically tailored to the needs of each group of trainees
- ◆ The seventh characteristic is their awareness of and responsiveness to the diversity of learning styles amongst young people and their focus on visual learning
- ◆ The eighth characteristic is its commitment to inclusive programming
- ◆ The ninth characteristic is their flexibility
- ◆ The tenth and final characteristic is their focus on effective marketing.

(“Refining your Peer Programs - developed by Advocates for Youth – USA, R. P. Keeling and E. L. Engstrom)

5 Conclusion

Lessons learnt from national and global discourse to inform our final discussion paper on issues related to:

Philosophy

We can choose to locate peer programs philosophically either within the frameworks provided by public health / deficit youth work or within developmental youth and community work frameworks as provided by the International Youth Foundation.

The framework impacts on the language we use, the discourse we locate ourselves within and the ethos of our program.

We need to put resources into education, sensitizing and persuading funding bodies about the importance of not allocating resources to preventative youth work, youth and community development in ways that ensure fragmentation, confusion and competition.

Peer programs build on the potential to integrate these three fields of work by:

- Not ignoring the reality of the urgent need for preventative work.
- Locating this urgent need within a broader analysis of adolescence, core themes of preventative work, and desirable outcomes– and building on the huge potential of young people.
- Recognizing that the context for sustainable development is local communities – i.e. Recognize that context is crucial for local sustainable development.
- Recognizing that there are no quick fix techniques to problem prevention.
- Acknowledging existing local capacity and targeting strategically to develop that capacity further.

Models

There are many models of peer process work around the world – one is tempted to feel overwhelmed and confused. The discourse is confusing and fragmented. However, having had the opportunity to immerse ourselves in such a discourse we can conclude that one of the critical lessons learnt is the need to develop a framework for understanding the complexity of peer process work at the same time as gleaning the modeling implications. There are endless formulae's, patterns and possibilities' for modeling a program – we have explored some of them and have made some concluding comments - however the fundamental imperative is to develop a clear framework of peer process practice that enables our work to maintain relevance and currency over time.

Some of our concluding remarks about models are:

- Within school based work most peer programs are located more with problem prevention priorities and occasionally youth development objectives. On a few occasions there are examples of the program taking on more of the characteristics of a community development approach.
- Often when the site is within a community setting there is more emphasis on community development. This usually occurs when there is a local agency/ partner who can sustain ongoing developmental input.
- The critical questions when developing a model for program delivery focus around the degree of concern about context and the capacity to balance the tension of organisational and local sustainability.
- If we wish the program to be sustainable at a local level there is a need to equip not only the young people in their peer role but also the broader context with skills and frameworks to support the work – i.e. Families, teachers, civic leaders, local organizational staff and leadership.
- Training should be provided for young people taking on a peer role and for local people who will work with and support the young people. Multiple training courses need to be provided – both targeting young people and those who support young people.
- Ongoing monitoring, evaluation and reviews should be built into the programmatic and organisational lifecycle ensuring an organisational learning culture and program flexibility.
- Building a culture and structure of youth participation at as many stages of program design, implementation, and evaluation, and organisational levels of decision making will ensure effective outcomes.

Bibliography

- Andrews, Dave. (Dec 1998) Amateur, Radical and Revolutionary Professionals: A Consideration of the Role of Vocation in Reconstructing the Profession in Terms of Commitment to Responsible Ethical Practice, *The Journal*, Vol. 1, India.
- Baldo, M. (1998) 'Peer Education: a successful strategy with some constraints'. *Sexual Health Exchange*, Royal Tropical Institute, The Netherlands.
- Benard, Bonnie. (June 1991) 'The Case For Peers'. *The Peer Facilitator Quarterly*, Volume 8, No. 4.
- Brieger, W.R., Delano, G.E., Lane, C.G., Oladepo, O. & Oyediran, K.A. (1998) 'Outcome of a Reproductive Health Education Initiative', *West African Youth Initiative (WAYI)*, Nigeria. *Advocates for Youth*, USA.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. & White, T.L. (1993) 'Youth and Nationhood: An International Challenge'. *International Youth Foundation*.
- Campbell, E. (1987) *The Peer Support Program for Primary & Secondary Schools*. Peer Support Foundation Ltd.
- Carr, R. (1999) 'Peer Support: A World View', *Peer Counsellor Journal*, Volume 12.
- Carr, R. (1984) *The Theory and Practice of Peer Counselling*. Rey Carr Peer Resources. Canada.
- Carr, R. (1991) *The Peer Helping Strategy for Dropout Prevention*. Rey Carr Peer Resources. Canada.
- Cowie, H., Farmiloe, G, Briggs, D. & Cole, T. (1996) *Peer Support Networker Newsletter*, The Roehampton Institute. School of Psychology and Counselling. UK.
- Cowie, H. & Sharp, S. (1996) *Peer Counselling in Schools*. David Fulton Publishers, London.
- Driscoll, W. (1997) 'Care-Kenya: Fire for our Children'. *AIDSfocus Newsletter*, Vol.1, Issue 5
- Esiet, N. & Okunola, B. (1998) *Action Health Incorporated (AHI)*, Lagos, Nigeria *Sexual Health Exchange*, Royal Tropical Institute, The Netherlands
- Fee, N. & Youssef, M. (December 1993) 'Young People, AIDS and STD Prevention: Experiences of Peer Approaches in developing Countries' – *WHO/Global Program of AIDS*.
- Finger, W.R. (Spring 1997) *Key Factors to Help Programs Succeed*, *Family Health International, Network*. Vol. 17, No.3
- Frankham, Jo. (1998) 'Peer Education: The unauthorised version', *British Educational Research Journal*, Oxford.

- Gilada, I.S. (June 1995) 'India: No time to lose'. The UNESCO Courier, Issue 6, Paris
- Gould, J.M. & Lomax, A.R. (1993) 'The Evolution of Peer Education: Where do we go from here?' College Health. Vol. 41,
- Harnett, P., Clarke, C. & Shochet, I. (1998) 'Promoting Family and Community Resilience in Indigenous Communities'. AusEinetter. Issue 7.
- Keeling, R.P. & Engstrom, E.L. (May 1993) 'Refining your Peer Programs'. Advocates for Youth. USA, Vol. 41,
- Kinder, Paul. 'Looking at peer education', On the level, A Healthrites publication. Family Planning NSW. Vol. 3, No.2.
- Lindsay, B.J. (January 1997) Peer Education: A Viewpoint and Critique, Vol. 45,
- Milburn, K. A Critical Review of Peer Education with Young People with special reference to sexual health. The Peer Facilitator Quarterly.
- Norman, Jane. (February 1998) 'Components of Promising Peer Led Sexual Health Programs'. Advocates for Youth.
- Ngay, A., Chege, I. & Aluar, J. (1995) Final Evaluation Report of CRUSH Project, Care Kenya.
- Pittman, Karen. (1996) What is Youth Development - Preventing Problems or Promoting Development: Competing Priorities or Inseparable Goals. International Youth Foundation, USA.
- Rigby, Ken. (1996) Bullying in school and what to do about it. The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd. Victoria.
- Ringma, C. & Brown. (1991) 'Hermeneutics and the social sciences: An evaluation of the function of hermeneutics in a consumer disability study'. Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, Vol.18, No 3, pp.57-73.
- Rosenroll, D., Saunders, G. & Carr, R.A. (1993) The Canadian Stay-In-School, Mentor Program. Peer Systems Consulting Group. Victoria, British Columbia.
- Senderowitz, J. (1997) 'Involving Young People in Reproductive Health Programs'. In Focus series.
- Stone, Nigel. (1998) Peer Helper Demonstration Project Evaluation. Boroondara City Youth Services.
- Townsend, J.W., Diaz de May, E. Sepulveda, Y. (1987) Sex education & Family Planning Services for Young Adults: Alternative Urban Strategies in Mexico. Studies in Family Planning. Vol.18. Number 2.
- White, R. & Wyn, J. (1997) Rethinking Youth. Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Appendix 1: An annotated bibliography of critiques of peer process work

A Critical Review of Peer Education with Young People with special reference to sexual health – Kathryn Milburn, The Peer Facilitator Quarterly.

This paper presents a critical review of selected literature about peer education initiatives with young people principally in the area of sexual health. Reported work in this area was found to be diverse in terms of aims, objectives, methods, findings and levels of evaluation. This paper highlights the promise of the method but draws particular attention to its potential problems. Examples of peer health education are reviewed and the issues surrounding them discussed. These include: theoretical background, rationales, cultural constraints, ethical and operational issues, and challenges for monitoring and evaluation. The paper concludes by suggesting that practitioners and evaluators must reflect on the difficulties inherent in artificially reconstructing a social process.

Peer Education: The unauthorised version – Jo Frankham, British Educational Research Journal, Oxford, 1998.

Peer education is an increasingly popular strategy for providers of personal and health education in the UK, especially amongst those who work with teenagers and young adults. This article takes an irreverent look at premises on which peer education has been founded and considers whether the approach is the panacea that so many claim. The author questions and examines the 'key tenets of faith' that underpin peer process work such as:

- ◆ The apparent 'free and frank exchange of information' between young people
- ◆ Whether what we know about 'peer pressure' can really be related to artificially reconstructed processes of peer work.
- ◆ Whether peer process work is really participatory and empowering.

Despite these questions the author believes peer process work has a place – but not as a panacea. He advocates for more thorough evaluation of programs and invites us to bring the results to the 'jury of scientific rigor'.

Peer Education: A Viewpoint and Critique – Billie J. Lindsay, Vol 45, January 1997

This viewpoint article questions some of the assumptions that underlie the use of peer workers and highlights some of the problems of training peers as paraprofessionals.

Appendix 2: A case study of ‘best practice’ in implementing Being There.

**Mt Erin Secondary School
Frankston, Victoria**

Student welfare Officer: Rick Williamson

The story of this case study is a minimally edited version of an interview with Rick and one of the school peer counsellors. The bolded italics serve as a guide to understanding some of the themes within the story.

The story

Rick discovered *Being There* through the Internet whilst searching for resources.

When it started

The *Being There* program was first implemented in April 1997. Seventeen young people participated and ten of that first group are still very involved.

Why it started

There was already a buddy system in place with year 10s supporting year 7's. Year 10s who were buddies found that when they moved onto year 11s they lost any sense of role. Rick was looking for options for these year 11 students.

The *Being There* program was introduced for year 10 and 11 students. Initially the course was advertised in the local school bulletin and many wanted to do the course.

The peer counselors were given badges and access to year 7 ‘only’ areas.

The fact that there were ‘peer counsellors’ was also announced at the year 7 assembly.

What the peer counsellors are doing

The peer counselors would identify young people alone and ask how they were going and would work in pairs. Some of the peer counselors were overwhelmed and needed more support. Rick set up fortnightly meetings.

Rick helps them in their being able to look after themselves and look after one another and is also available for personal debriefing.

One of the big advantages of the program is that Rick has feelers in the school via the buddies and peer counselors.

What Mt Erin High sees Being There as being about

The program gives people a way of connecting and builds resilience within young people.

The first day is about learning about your selves.

The second day is about learning skills, techniques to be there for someone else.

Young people learn a process of asking questions rather than providing answers and advice. They are also given information about what to do next – i.e. who can help /agencies etc.

Rick sees the key outcomes as:

- starting to observe things differently,
- becoming more aware and think differently

Recruitment and Selection

The selection process to be a buddy includes:

- Put your hand up
- Fill out a questionnaire
- Interview with senior kids
- Invitation to be involved

Usually 90 apply and only 40 spots are available

One of the difficulties has been finding a role for those who do not end up becoming buddies (who apply) – now setting up a peer tutor program.

The selection process for peer counselors includes:

- Must be a buddy
- Have to write to Rick “Why I want to be a peer counsellor”
- The existing peer counselors make recommendation from this list to Rick (they can come and talk to Rick privately if there are any people they feel uncomfortable with)
- Enlist staff opinions

The peer counselors generally represent a cross section of young people – different levels of achievement, different youth cultural groups, sub-cultural group’s etc.

Further training

When peer counselors were asked to identify further training needs from Kids Help Line they identified depression and meeting workers from other youth agencies.

Movement from periphery to centre

Many young people who have previously felt quite marginalised by the formal school system have felt affirmed through this program

On-going relationships

The fact that this program fits within the buddy system means relationships are built with year 7s (who are more open to relationships) and this means that by the time they are year 9s there is a relationship with a year 12 student.

Institutionalized within school

The peer program is written into Rick’s work welfare plan and drug education plan “turn the tide strategy’.

If Rick left he affirms that there are other teachers, the administrative staff and young people who would ensure the program continues

Being there is a catalyst and continues to be needed – it is a key starting point. It is the first time that the young people do something that is not ‘pure’ academically orientated education.

A critical mass

Significance is the critical mass – 40 buddies, 25 peer counselors from year 11 and 15 from year 12 – total of 80 young people – builds teams and changes the culture/ethos.

Gender ‘gap’

Currently 80% of the peer counselors are girls – want to increase boy’s representivity

Building community

In 1999 included a neighbouring school – will now build monthly meetings between peer counselors of the two schools

Increased participation and empowerment

In 1998 the group of peer counselors wanted to run a disco – they lobbied for it through the school decision making structures and planned for it. 80 young people attended the first one and this now happens every school term. They raise money from this event.

One of the delightful aspects of this event is that it brings seniors and juniors together.

This year 70 young people attended the meeting organised by the peer counselors to simply find people to plan and run the event – 40 of them opted to join the organising team. Rick finds this amazing considering the amount of work that is involved.

The key is it is their activity and they love it!!

The group also organised a barbeque for new year 7 students at the beginning of the first term – an act of welcome and inclusion to break down the culture of hierarchy and violence.

Advocacy

Four of the peer counselors went to a statewide school educational conference and gave a presentation to psychologists and all sorts of ‘powerful people’. This was a huge challenge and confidence boost for the whole group of peer counsellors generally and the four participants in particular.

Other examples of the peer counsellors getting involved in advocacy was when they organised to meet the local Member of Parliament to discuss a range of youth related issues.

School-structural change

On several occasions the peer counselors have been invited to sit in with top-level school staff and the principle to provide insight and ideas on how to tackle some particular school problems. The peer counsellors are identified as having a greater wisdom and insight into the complexity of issues than the School Representative Council – due to the training and experience gained in their work. The principal is listening to them!!!

Even some of the teachers have been challenged to listen when confronted by a peer counsellor about the way they treated some particular young person. This seems risky but the peer counsellors are well respected by the teachers and staff and as long as they confront skillfully and respectfully this cannot be ruled out with we are serious about empowerment.

Genuine Adult-Youth Partnerships?

“Being There” has shaken Rick and shown him how we can really trust young people – that they have amazing abilities and intelligence’s.