The Welfare Needs of Refugee Youth in a TAFE Program

Barbara Mary Reeckman


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Declaration of Originality

This thesis does not contain material which has been accepted for any other
degree in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis
contains no material previously published or written by any other person, except
where due reference is given in the text.

Signature: Barbara Reckman
ABBREVIATIONS

AMES  Adult Multicultural Education Service (formerly Adult Migrant Education Services)
ASAS  Asylum Seekers Assistance Scheme
ASPLR Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings Scale
CAMHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CMYI  Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues (formerly EYIN)
CRYP  Collingwood Refugee Youth Program
DIMA  Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
DSE  Department of Secondary Education
ESL  English as a Second Language
EYIN  Ethnic Youth Issues Network (now CMYI)
JPET  Jobs Placement Employment and Training Scheme
NESB  Non English Speaking Background
PTSD  Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
SIGSC State Inter-Government Settlement Committee
STEP  State Education and Training in Youth Suicide Prevention
TAFE  Technical and Further Education
UN  United Nations
VFST  Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture
YAMEC Young Adult Migrant Education Course
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ABSTRACT

Refugee youth are a disadvantaged group with needs for specific service provision and educational programs. The literature recommends an integrated service delivery or holistic approach to meeting their welfare needs.

This qualitative study explores the effectiveness of the YAMEC (Young Adult Migrant Education Course) program in identifying and responding to the welfare needs of refugee youth in an urban TAFE setting. Semi-structured interviews were used to gain the perspectives of 9 students from 3 diverse ethnic groups (East Timorese, Somali and Iraqi) and 3 teachers (Anglo-Australian). The specific welfare needs of the refugee students and the ways in which the YAMEC problem met these needs were identified.

Outcomes of the research indicated that the quality of the relationships with the teachers, built up over time and with constant contact, enabled this group of refugee young people to develop the trust required to ask for help when they had problems. They were reluctant to access TAFE Student Services or other community agencies unless a teacher was directly involved. Class coordinating teachers took on an advocacy and welfare role. Financial problems, difficulties accessing social systems, unemployment and health problems seemed to be the most prevalent. Gender and ethnicity influenced the needs and expectations of refugee young people.
This research indicated that the YAMEC program was a positive educational experience for young refugees because it incorporated trauma recovery principles. It did this by: providing relationships of trust with supportive adults; providing social connectedness; providing a context that was free from discrimination and violence; providing structure and purpose in their lives; opening educational and vocational pathways; linking them to appropriate welfare services; helping them to develop an identity in this new cultural context and helping them find their place in Australian Society.
THE YAMEC CLASS

We go to the Young Adult Migrant Education Course.
We come every day.
There are a lot of different people in our class.
We can talk.
We are a community.
We are a family.
We come from different countries.
We speak different languages.
We come from different cultures.
We learn to accept people with different characters.
We share English as a language.
We share money.
We share our home room.
We share a kitchen.
We share tea, coffee and food.
We share barbecues.
We share many fun times together.
We share excursions.
Sometimes we share our stories.
We read and write and study together.
We help one another with homework.
We have nice people in our class.
We help one another.
But we are all different.
We are happy to come to school.

YAMEC STUDENTS 2000
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) definition of a refugee is someone who:

"Owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his/her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." (VFST, 1998, p. 22)

Australia issues about 12,000 visas a year under the Refugee Program, the Special Humanitarian Program and the Special Assistance Category. The latter two cover people who do not strictly meet the above definition (VFST, 1998, pp. 22-23). For the purposes of this research, they will be considered as refugees.

In the decade between 1981 and 1991, the number of refugees worldwide has more than doubled from 8 to 17 million and there could be a further 18 million displaced persons (Klimidas & Minas, 1995). Due to a reduction in migrant intake and the continual occurrence of gross violations of human rights such as those in Afghanistan and Iraq, the proportion of migrants who are refugees will increase.
Refugee youth are among the most disadvantaged groups in our community. Many have experienced torture, severe trauma and lengthy stays in refugee camps; all have experienced uprooting and loss. Most have had interrupted education and some have never been to school. Their situations have meant that many have not completed the normal developmental tasks of childhood and adolescence. They may have arrived in Australia without their families or have experienced family breakdown on arrival. (Ethnic Youth Issues Network, 1994; Heperlin, 1991; Van Der Veer, 1998; VFST, 1998).

The YAMEC (Young Adult Migrant Education Course) program has been developed in the Faculty for Further Education of an urban TAFE (Technical and Further Education) College. It addresses both the educational and welfare needs of migrant youth with interrupted education. Most of the young people participating in the program are refugees.

There is strong support from the literature that refugee youth are a disadvantaged group requiring specific service provision and programs (Frederico, Cooper, & Picton, 1998; Klimidas & Minas, 1995; Rado, Bradley, & Foster, 1986). The literature also recommends an integrated service delivery or holistic approach to meeting the welfare needs of refugee youth (Aristotle, 1990; Heperlin, 1991; Sengaaga Sali, 1998).
There is very little literature, which explores the welfare needs of refugee youth in post secondary school educational institutions in Australia. Mainstream schools and tertiary institutions do not seem to be catering for the special needs of this group (Burgess & Christadoulou, 1995; Chandra-Shekeran, 1998). Programs based in Language Centres or communities which address the needs of refugee youth have been identified in the literature (Burgess & Christadoulou, 1995; Hepperlin, 1991). No research evaluating the effectiveness of these programs seems to have been undertaken.

The YAMEC program is attempting to address the needs of refugee youth in a TAFE setting. Exploratory research would provide a basis for evaluating and developing future programs. This qualitative study will explore the welfare aspects of the YAMEC program by posing the following questions.

1.1 Research Questions

What are the welfare needs of the refugee youth attending a TAFE program for young adult migrants (YAMEC)?

How do their refugee experiences contribute to any difficulties they might encounter in completing this course?

Do other social characteristics such as ethnicity and gender affect welfare needs?

How does the YAMEC program meet the welfare needs of refugee youth?
Definition of Key Terms

See Appendix 1 for definitions of the following key terms: youth, welfare needs, ethnicity and services.
CHAPTER 2: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature review is organised in five sections.

1. A summary of the refugee experience, the resettlement experience and the trauma reaction with particular reference to youth and cultural identity issues.

2. Onsite service provision and integrated service delivery and the philosophical basis for this approach.

3. Programs that have been developed both within the education system and the community to address the welfare needs of refugee youth.

4. Primary research findings in the mental health, welfare and educational needs of refugee youth.

5. Recommendations for practice and the need to further research and develop programs for refugee youth.

2.1 Refugee Experiences and the Problems of Resettlement

Many refugees have been tortured; all have experienced traumatic events including uprooting and loss. Uprooting refers to the experience of being forced to leave one’s familiar surroundings (Van Der Veer, 1998, p. 4). Many have been in refugee camps for years.

2.1.1 Torture

Torture experiences include severe beatings, deprivation, isolation, mutilation, sexual violence, starvation, exposure, sham executions, forced witnessing of torture to others and abuse of family members (VFST, 1998, p. 20).
The purpose of State torture is

"to destroy the individual's psyche through isolating the victim and destroying their dignity, personality and power over his or her life."

(Ethnic Youth Issues Network, 1994, p. 3)

By releasing this broken person into the community fear and intimidation are spread. The VFST (1998, pp. 29-31) describes 4 key ways in which persecutory regimes destroy individuals, families and communities:

i) Creating a state of terror and chronic alarm in which an individual's and a community's safety is made dependent upon submission to the oppressor;

ii) The systematic disruption of basic and core attachments to families, friends, religious and cultural systems which leads to a sense of loss designed to shatter one's sense of continuity and identity;

iii) The destruction of central values of human existence - in torture nothing is sacred, previous assumptions of the self and the world are shattered;

iv) The creation of guilt and shame through: violating boundaries, degrading individuals and confronting individuals with impossible choices. Many survivors think they should have done something to help others even though it was impossible.

2.1.2 Trauma

"Trauma is an emotional state of discomfort and stress resulting from memories of an extraordinary catastrophic experience which shattered the survivor's sense of invulnerability to harm." (Figley, 1985, p. xviii)
The DSM IV defines a trauma as having happened when a person,

"experienced, witnessed or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others and the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness or horror." (Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders: DSM-IV, 1994, pp. 427-8)

Terr also considers serial traumatic experiences, defined as a series of long-standing or anticipated blows (Terr, 1991). This is particularly relevant to understanding the trauma experiences of people subjected to discrimination.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as described in the DSM IV (1994) has the following features: a history of a distressing event that is outside the range of usual human experience; re-experiencing the trauma in nightmares, intrusive thoughts or flashbacks; numbing of responsiveness or avoidance of acts related to the trauma; and persistent symptoms of increased arousal. This does not cover the extent of psychological symptoms that occur after protracted violence and systematic persecution (Becker, 1995; VFST, 1998) and it does not take into account the social context in which the trauma occurs (Summerfield, 1995, pp. 19-20).

Traumatic events typical of the refugee experience include: witnessing death squads and mass murder, rape, disappearances, forced marches, extreme deprivation, forced displacement from home, perilous flight, separation from family members, refugee camp experiences, and deprivation of education and the opportunity to play (Ethnic Youth Issues Network, 1994, p. 5; Van Der Veer, 1998, pp. 10-14; VFST, 1998 p.18).
2.1.3 Refugee Camps

Many refugees spend years in camps uncertain if they will be accepted for asylum in a third country or repatriated. There is generally no organised education. Food, water and health care are inadequate. In some camps overcrowding, corruption, violence, rape and sexual abuse of children are common. (Bevan, 2000, p. 37; Ethnic Youth Issues Network, 1994) (Gedi, 2000, p. 115)

"Young people growing up in refugee camps are denied the basic human rights of secure, safe accommodation, safety from abuse, education and adequate health care." (Ethnic Youth Issues Network, 1994, p 6)

2.1.4 Resettlement

Refugees often experience an overwhelming sense of dislocation on arrival in a new country. They may have to deal with accommodation problems, financial difficulties, language difficulties, social and racial discrimination, identity loss, family breakdown, isolation and grief. They have to negotiate the education, health and welfare systems (Ethnic Youth Issues Network, 1994, p 7). Many circumstances in the settlement process can maintain and exacerbate the trauma reaction (Bevan, 2000; VFST, 1998, Fig 2).
2.1.5 The trauma reaction in refugees

Arrival in a safe country does not necessarily lead to restoration of safety and security. Victims of torture and trauma are left with fundamental changes in their belief system - about self, other and the world. Symptoms and behaviours emerge which are disruptive to everyday functioning and perpetuate the impact of traumatic events (Herman, 1992; Van Der Veer, 1998; VFST, 1998). The VFST (1998) divide these symptoms and behaviours into four categories: anxiety, helplessness and loss of control; loss grief and depression; shattering assumptions about human existence; and guilt and shame.

**Anxiety, Helplessness and Loss of Control**

Terror can persist for a long time after the event with the experience of helplessness being the critical factor. Manifestations of anxiety may include: physiological or somatic symptoms such as panic attacks, headaches, pain, difficulty breathing, heightened state of arousal and hypervigilance; cognitive symptoms and signs such as poor concentration, poor memory, distressing memories, sleep disturbances, confusion and dissociation and behavioural effects such as avoidance, withdrawal, aggressive behaviour and detachment. (Herman, 1992, pp. 33-50; Van Der Veer, 1998, p15; VFST, 1998, pp. 33-42).
Loss, Grief and Depression

Loss and/or prolonged separation from significant others characterise the lives of refugees. Grief is shaped by the social context in which it occurs (Roesenblatt, 1993). There are striking similarities in grieving across the diversity of human cultures nonetheless cultures differ widely in defining death and in defining what is an appropriate expression of grief (Rosenblatt, 1993, p. 103). Cultures differ markedly in rules about the openness, intensity and control of anger and aggression in bereavement (Rosenblatt, 1993, p. 104). Culture is such a crucial part of the context of bereavement that individuals who have been uprooted from their cultural and sometimes family contexts, such as refugees, may have difficulty effectively coming to terms with loss. In war and flight mourning rituals can rarely be carried out. The process of resettlement can exacerbate the sense of loss (VFST, 1998).

Bowlby proposes a model of grief as occurring in stages with emotional responses as being common to all cultures (Bowlby, 1980; VFST, 1998). The final stage of acceptance and resolution is often not reached in cases of extensive loss such as mass violence and genocide. There are profound consequences for the capacity to form new relationships when grief is unresolved (VFST, 1998, p 45).
Effects in refugees associated with loss include: grief reactions such as numbness, denial, yearning, anxiety, emptiness and apathy; altered attachment behaviour in relationships such as increased dependency, fierce self-sufficiency, compulsive care-giving, guardedness and withdrawal; fear about relationships such as fear of intimacy, scrutiny of motives, ready devaluation and idealisation of others; and depression in the form of pessimism, loss of interest, sleep disturbances, appetite disturbances, poor concentration, self blame, hopelessness and suicidal thoughts (Van Der Veer, 1998, p.16; VFST, 1998, 42-45)

Refugees have not only experienced losses but may also have been subjected to intolerable traumatic stresses. If trauma is associated with death, especially if witnessed by a child, then age-appropriate grief and mourning may be complicated (Pynoos, Steinberg, & Wraith, 1995). They may postpone grieving until they feel safe enough to do so.

Shattering Assumptions about Human Existence

Janoff-Bulman (1995) proposes that post-traumatic stress following victimization is largely due to the shattering of basic assumptions victims hold about themselves and their world (Janoff-Bulman, 1995). Old assumptions and theories of reality are shattered producing psychological upheaval.

In refugees this includes: the loss of trust and meaning; damage to the capacity to trust; loss of future; changes to moral concepts; loss of continuity of the self; and shattered identity (Herman, 1992, p. 51; Pynoos et al., 1995; VFST, 1998, 49-53).
"Trauma occurs when one loses the sense of having a safe place to retreat, within or outside oneself to deal with frightening emotions or experience." (VFST, 1998, p. 50)

Guilt and Shame

Refugees have often been confronted with impossible choices. They imagine they could have done something to avert the traumatic events. Other effects of guilt and shame include: the use of fantasy to exact revenge, self-destructive behaviour, avoidance of others, self derogatory comments with the inhibition of the experience of pleasure being one of the most profound (Pynoos et al., 1995; Van Der Veer, 1998, p.14; VFST, 1998, pp. 53-56).

2.1.6 The impact of Trauma, Uprooting and Resettlement on the Family

During resettlement family roles and responsibilities are often dramatically altered. Children often bear the burden of communication in the new country and may become carers of other family members. Traumatised parents can have a reduced capacity for emotionally supporting and protecting their children. Financial difficulties and cross-generational conflict, exacerbated by contact with a new culture can create extra burdens. Children are often taught not to trust anyone. Guilt and worry associated with leaving family members behind disrupts recovery. (Bevan, 2000, pp. 40-42; Garbarino & Kostelny, 1993, p. 41; Pynoos et al., 1995, p. 78; VFST, 1998, pp. 57-59)

"Basic trust is particularly difficult to achieve when parents are psychologically unavailable, and parents are at increased risk of being psychologically unavailable in a war zone or among refugee and displaced populations." (Garbarino & Kostelny, 1993, p. 36)
2.1.7 Issues for Children and Young People

Some children have been victims of violent experiences or have witnessed maltreatment of their parents. Others are victims of problems stemming from their parents' experiences. These can include forced separations and loss of a familiar environment (Van Der Veer, 1998). Others can suffer from lack of clear communication about their experiences or transgenerational transmission of symptoms even if they are born after the event (Van Der Veer, 1998; VFST, 1998). It is a myth that children do not notice things that adults do and recover from terrible experiences quickly (VFST, 1998). Children need to be provided with information and facts to help them understand and grasp what has happened and need to be encouraged to express their sensory impressions of the event (Dyregrov, 1998).

The negative affects of trauma may only surface in adolescence at a time when they have to carry out the adolescent developmental tasks of separation and individuation in an environment they experience as strange and sometimes hostile (Hepperlin, 1991; Van Der Veer, 1998).

'A trauma-induced sense of discontinuity can have a disrupting influence on the adolescent task of integrating past, present and future expectations into a lasting sense of identity.' (Pynoos et al., 1995, p. 83)
Unaccompanied refugee minors are in a highly vulnerable position. The progress of young people through the normal developmental stages of life, is often delayed in those who have experienced war, violence and refugee camps. Young people who have been forced to leave their parents have added difficulties completing the normal developmental tasks of adolescence. They may have been separated before the tasks of separation and individuation had been completed. Young refugees at 20 - 25 are still to face the tasks of adolescence. They may worry about their parents and feel they have failed them (Bevan, 2000; Van Der Veer, 1998; VFST, 1996).

Parental support and responsiveness are major components in the recovery of children and adolescents after traumatic events (Pynoos et al., 1995). Kinzie et al. found that young Cambodian refugees who lived with at least one member of their biological family were less likely to have a diagnosis of PTSD than those living with foster families (Kinzie, Sack, Angell, Manson, & Rath, 1986).

2.1.8 Acculturation and Identity Development

Acculturation is the process of change that immigrants undergo when they adapt to a new culture (Bevan, 2000). It is not merely the learning of a new culture but also deciding what is to be saved or sacrificed from the old (Bashir, 2000, p. 66).
Integration or biculturalism, which is the adoption of what seems to be the most important elements of the new culture whilst maintaining the most important elements of the old, seems to be the most adaptive response (Berry, 1990). Complete assimilation into the dominant culture, total rejection of the dominant culture or marginalisation from both are other responses (Berry, 1990).

Acculturative stress is the pressure experienced by members of a minority culture to undergo cultural change and the problems they face in their attempts to adapt to the new culture (Bashir, 2000; Klimidas & Minas, 1995). Acculturative stress may be greater for refugees because they have not voluntarily chosen to come to the country of resettlement. Children and adolescents acculturate more quickly and to a larger extent than their parents (Klimidas & Minas, 1995). Attempts by adolescents at too rapid acculturation into the new peer culture is likely to create anxiety in the immigrant family who fear rejection of their ethnic heritage (Bashir, 2000).

The development of identity is a major task for young people to accomplish in order to function within society. In young immigrants, identity development is closely related to the process of acculturation. Young refugees have to adjust to their immigration and refugee experience as well as negotiate their place in a new environment (Bevan, 2000). The maintenance of an ethnic identity seems to be an important component of self-concept of minority youth (Klimidas & Minas, 1995; Phinney, Lochner, & Murphy, 1990).
Frederico et al. (1998) noticed that family conflict and identity difficulties appeared to arise most often in assimilated or marginalised Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese young people, those who had denied the culture of their parents. They concluded,

"that a clear and strong sense of ethnic identity appeared to provide an adaptive advantage in the face of structural disadvantage."

(Frederico et al., 1998, p. 35)

Bevan summarises the key issues in relation to identity development of young immigrant people as: the impact of negative attitudes towards their culture of origin, the development of a generation gap between young people and their parents, young people assuming parentified roles, and differences in rates of acculturation between young people and their parents (Bevan, 2000).

2.2 Integrated Service Delivery and School Linked (Onsite) Services

There is a range of literature advocating integrated service delivery and inter agency collaboration to meet the welfare needs of refugees (Aristotle, 1990; Hepperlin, 1991; Sengaaga Sali, 1998). There is also a range of literature advocating school-linked services as appropriate ways of helping "at risk" youth, refugee youth and their families (Boyd, 1996; Lawson & Briar Lawson, 1997; Ryan, 1996). Services could be linked to post-secondary educational institutes such as TAFE colleges. The Community Development Model for Service provision is the philosophical basis for this approach.
Lawson and Briar Lawson (1997) describe school-linked services as:

"bringing health and social service providers onto school sites" (p. 17).

This definition assumes: services are provided through a collaboration among schools, community organisations and social service agencies; the schools are central participants in the planning, and the services are provided or coordinated by personnel located at the school or nearby (Lawson & Briar Lawson, 1997, p. 17)

Aristotle (1990) states that the community development model or holistic approach should be the primary focus of agencies when providing services to survivors of torture and trauma (Aristotle, 1990). Sengaagi Sali (1998) found that programs committed to an integrated approach to service delivery help the recovery process in Horn of Africa refugee women and their families (Sengaaga Sali, 1998). Heperlin (1991) recommends an integrated service delivery approach in working with Indo-Chinese refugee youth (Heperlin, 1991). Boyd (1996) reports that coordinated service ventures benefit "at-risk" children and their families and that

"traditional fragmentation of responsibility among a variety of social and health services is dysfunctional and unacceptable" (p. 9).

He suggests schools need to lead the push for coordinated services and a key factor in any successful venture is a shared sense of community identity (Boyd, 1996, p. 9). Ryan (1996) emphasizes the importance of networking in building holistic programs of support for young people and their families (Ryan, 1996, p.102).
The literature strongly supports using an integrated service delivery model to meet the welfare needs of refugee young people in educational institutions.

2.3 Programs Addressing the Welfare Needs of Refugee Youth

Several programs which attempt to address the settlement, social, recreational, health (including mental health) and educational needs of refugee youth are described in the literature. They are based in communities or Language Centres (Centres run by the Department of Education providing on-arrival, English language instruction for children). They are:

- the Sydney Indo-Chinese Refugee Youth Support Group (SICRYSG), an example of community mental health intervention with a prevention and early intervention focus (Hepperlin, 1991);
- the Western Young Peoples Independent Network (WYPIN) which was started from the Footscray Migrant Resource Centre to address the underrepresentation of NESB (Non English Speaking Background) youth in the community and their limited access to community agencies (Rodd, 1995);
- the welfare provisions for young migrants and refugees at the Noble Park Language Centre (Burgess & Christadoulou, 1995);
- the African Youth Support Group which developed out of Westall Secondary College in the South East region of Melbourne (Sengaaga Sali, 1998).
Features common to most programs are:

- A community development or integrated approach to service provision
- Social and recreational programs
- Information provision
- Personal and peer support
- Homework support programs

Two services designed specifically for refugee youth are worth examining in more detail.

2.3.1 The Education and Training for Refugee Youth Project

Giddens (1996) describes the Education and Training for Refugee Youth Project which was managed by the Ethnic Youth Issues Network in metropolitan Melbourne. This project used a combination of case work and community development to identify gaps in the current service provision of education and training and to address the barriers experienced by young refugees. There was scope within the project to offer assistance in the areas of health, housing, income support, immigration and legal advice.

Almost 400 refugee young people were assisted in the 20 months for which the project was funded. The young people were assisted in developing strategies to deal with issues or referred to specialised services. They were tracked, supported and advised when changing educational pathway. Teachers were resourced by the project workers.
Issues other than educational needs identified were:

- Homelessness
- The need to find work in order to support family members
- Refugee experiences which required specialist counselling
- Financial difficulties
- Health problems
- Family breakdown
- Immigration queries
- Legal/Police problems. (Giddens, 1996)

2.3.2 The Victorian Foundation for the Survivors of Torture

The VFST (1998) identify 4 key goals for recovery from traumatic experiences:

"To restore safety, enhance control and reduce disabling effects of fear and anxiety.
To restore attachment and connections to other human beings who can offer support and care.
To restore meaning and purpose to life.
To restore dignity and value which includes reducing excessive shame and guilt." (Fig. 3)

In cases where trauma is prolonged, interventions are required to overcome the effects of trauma (VFST, 1996). Intervention strategies should involve individuals, families, organisations and communities (VFST, 1998, pp. 73 -100). The VFST run short term group programs in schools addressing these recovery goals (VFST, 1996).
2.4 Primary Research in the Mental Health, Welfare and Educational Needs of Refugee Youth

Very little primary research with refugee young people seems to have been carried out in Australia. Bevan (2000) reviewed the research into the impact of the refugee experience and mental health problems in young people, much of which addresses mental health morbidity and is USA and Canada based (Bevan, 2000, pp. 38-39). She concluded,

"These studies reveal a picture of fluctuating mental health status for some of the worst affected young refugees and the continuing influence of their refugee experience on their later lives. Conversely, they also reveal an astonishing level of resilience and adjustment." (Bevan, 2000, p. 53)

She highlighted the importance of the more reflective, non-research-based literature which provides insights into the experiences of young refugees and their families. This is authored by workers in schools or in settlement services (p. 53).

Rado, Bradley and Foster (1986) conducted a detailed study of migrant and refugee youth using structured and unstructured interviews with bilingual interviewers. They interviewed 30 newly arrived youth and 30 earlier arrived youth; (15 Vietnamese, 16 Khmer, 9 Polish and 2 Hungarian), and 70 welfare personnel and teachers. The English language ability of the young migrants was also assessed. They concluded that,

"Migrant/refugee youth between 15 and 19 years, who are at the post compulsory schooling age are one of the groups that tend to miss out on participation and equity." (Rado et al., 1986, p. 3)
Among their recommendations were the needs for refugee students to have regular contact with an advisor/counsellor, preferably bilingual, and to have access to out of school recreational facilities and multicultural youth centres. For older adolescent students with interrupted schooling they recommended:

- Income support for students,
- Coordination between TAFE and secondary systems,
- The recognition of non-Australian qualifications,
- Cultural awareness training for teachers,
- Bureaucrat inserviceing,
- Counselling about educational choices.

Rice, Rice and Dhamarak (1993) took a case study approach to looking at the experience of young Southeast Asian Refugees in Australian schools. These young people had experienced considerable trauma and had grown up with deprivation and disrupted education. Very often they live in unstable and unsupported accommodation, having left home because of overcrowding or family problems. This breakdown in living conditions further compounded the difficulties of gaining an education. They concluded,

"Bad health resulting from their past traumatic experiences prevents them from performing adequately in schools where they have resettled." (Rice, Rice, & Dhamarak, 1993, p. 43)

They saw it as vital that educators and health carers be made aware of the experiences of this group of adolescents so they can be adequately supported within the school.
Frederico, Cooper & Picton (1998) conducted in-depth, open-ended interviews with 22 homeless young people from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam and 29 young people who were still living with their families. They found that young homeless people from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam required a range of culturally sensitive mainstream and ethno-specific services to meet their housing, economic, educational, emotional and social needs. They found that settlement stress, economic hardship and family unemployment together with issues of discrimination and racism were common experiences in the young homeless.

"There is a pressing need for policies to prevent those living with family who may be at risk, becoming homeless and to help young refugees and immigrant people as soon as possible after they become homeless; to protect them from further harm and alleviate the effects of poverty and structural disadvantage." (Frederico et al., 1998, p. 36)

Luntz (1998a, 1998b) describes a study which she conducted in 1997 for the Department of Human Services to find out why so few young people from NESB access mental health services. She interviewed 56 welfare personnel from ethno-specific services, mainstream services with high NESB caseloads and student welfare coordinators. She held discussions with 52 NESB young people in small groups including 1 group of refugees.
She found:

- There was confusion about the meaning of “mental health”.
- The stigma and shame surrounding mental illness was much greater in ethnic communities.
- People from ethnic backgrounds were dismissive of the value of talking about problems.
- People from ethnic backgrounds want advice when they have practical problems. They were confused when presented with a range of choices and found clarifying questions rude and intrusive.
- Young people said that their parents would never seek help because it is shameful to admit to problems. (Luntz, 1998b)

Macrae & Chandra Shekeran (1998) found that housing problems, the cost of living, difficulty in finding employment and the lack of community support were among the issues concerning refugee youth at the Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE (Macrae & Chandra-Shekeran, 1998).

Refugee young people have been identified by the Statewide Education and Training in Youth Suicide Prevention (STEP) Project as one of three high-risk groups. Farnan (1999) conducted a focus group with 5 young refugees in the Western suburbs of Melbourne to determine their needs in relation to this program.
Her key findings were:

- English Language Centres were regarded as a positive school experience.
- Mainstream education was considered to be insensitive to the needs of refugee youth.
- Young refugee people often left school early either because of unhappiness at school or because of the need to help their family with financial support.
- Mental health services needed to be more culturally sensitive.
- The Australian way of life was culturally alienating.
- Settlement in Australia lead to changes in family dynamics. There were difficulties for young people without family.
- There was no direct mention of suicidal ideation. (Farnan, 1999)

2.5 The Need to Develop and Research Programs for Refugee Youth

There is strong support from the literature for the need to develop programs addressing the welfare needs of refugee youth both within educational institutions and in the community.

Sengaaga Sali (1998) found that African families in Australia do not adequately access mainstream services. As there is no welfare state in Africa they lack an understanding of services and institutions. African women will not generally approach a stranger or an organisation about their problems. (Sengaaga Sali, 1998) This is verified by Gedi (2000) who reports,
“The Western concepts of health, medicine and counselling are foreign to many Somali communities which may therefore be reluctant to utilise counselling and other external support services.” (Gedi, 2000, p. 115)

Chandra-Shekeran (1998) found that little support exists for under 18 year-old refugee students placed in mainstream secondary colleges (Chandra-Shekeran, 1998). Burgess and Christodoulou (1995) reported that many students returned regularly to the Noble Park Language Centre from mainstream schools for support and counselling (Burgess & Christodoulou, 1995).

Rutter (1994) recognised the need for pastoral support in colleges of further education and access to youth work for refugees, aged 16 to 19, in England. She also advocated the establishment of links with the community including families, refugee groups and professionals if schools were to establish real support to refugee students (Rutter, 1994).

According to Klimidas & Minas (1995), there is universal agreement that refugee children constitute a high risk for the development of mental health problems. Both settlement factors and a traumatic history contribute to their risk. They identified the availability of social support as an important factor contributing to the better adjustment of refugee adolescents. (Klimidas & Minas, 1995, p. 97)

Burgess and Christodoulou (1995) reported,

"the Ethnic Youth Network recognises the need for support units to be based in Language Centres and schools with an advocate concentrating on issues which are preventing young NESB students living with confidence in the Australian community." (Burgess & Christodoulou, 1995, p 224)
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Rationale for the study

I work in another department at the TAFE college which delivers the YAMEC program. In 1998 I worked in the YAMEC program as a Numeracy teacher. At this time I was completing a Post-Graduate Diploma in Educational Studies in Student Welfare and chose to examine refugee youth issues as part of this course.

The YAMEC program has always had a strong pastoral care component but the teaching staff could not deal with many of the issues facing the young refugees. Workers from community agencies were invited into the department to work with the young people, many of whom could not be contacted by phone or had no fixed address. This program grew out of the needs of the students rather than from policy or organisational decisions. For the sake of future planning, I felt that this program needed to be explored and principles for effective practice be identified and used to further develop models and approaches.

3.1.1 Relationship to Participants/ Insider-Outsider Issues

Minichiello et al. (1995) discuss the advantages and disadvantages of insider researchers and outsider researchers (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1995, p. 182). My position as a semi-insider (Owen, 1999, p. 135) made it easy for me to negotiate this research. In respect to the teachers I am an insider. Although I do not work in the same department, I am a member of the same faculty and we often have occasion to meet.
My impression was that because our shared status as colleagues in the same institution and because of my genuine interest in their program, the teachers were quite open and generous in the information they disclosed during the interviews. This may not have happened had the researcher been a complete outsider. The teachers were keen to have their program documented and researched.

In respect to the students I am an “outsider” in terms of culture and status but I am also a familiar face in the institution and this may have been less threatening to them. Although I knew some of the students in the program, I had not taught any of the students who participated in the study.

### 3.1.2 Personal Biases

"Because the researcher is the instrument in qualitative enquiry, a qualitative report must include information about the researcher." (Patton, 1990, p. 472)

In working as a teacher with young refugees with interrupted education, I have observed the difficulties they face in accessing appropriate educational and vocational pathways and having their basic survival and emotional needs met. I believe that refugees have significant needs due to their refugee experiences and that unless their basic welfare needs such as shelter, safety and security are met, refugee youth will not be able to benefit from the study opportunities offered to them. I support programs that strive to meet these welfare needs and I think integrated service delivery and on-site service provision are appropriate ways of doing this.
3.2 Why use qualitative methodology?

"Qualitative Research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting." (Creswell, 1998, p. 15)

Qualitative research seemed to be the most appropriate way to attempt to answer my research questions which ask "what" and "how" rather than "why" (Creswell, 1998, p. 15). I wanted to explore aspects of a program and understand how the participants perceive the program, how they define their needs and how the program meets their needs.

Qualitative research addresses the complexities of multicultural research (Merchant & Dupuy, 1996). It does not seek to obtain a representative sample nor to produce generalisations about the target group but rather to gain insights into the issues. It allows for individual stories to be told as well as stories unique to specific cultural groups. In qualitative research insights are secured from complex, multiple and socially constructed realities (Berg, 1998).

Miller (1997) speaks about qualitative research as,

"... a 'window' through which we might 'see' and comment on significant social issues." (Miller & Dingwall, 1997, p. 2)
3.3 Setting and Participants

The interviews were conducted at the Language Studies Department on two separate campuses in a metropolitan TAFE college where the YAMEC program is delivered. Small private meeting rooms or vacant classrooms were used for the interviews.

Three teachers and 9 of the students participating in the program were interviewed. Three Somali, 3 Iraqi and 3 East Timorese students, who represent the main ethnic groups of refugees or asylum seekers in the programs, volunteered to be interviewed. They were aged between 18 and 26. Students in the program are aged between 16 and 27 but because of the difficulty of organising parents or guardians to sign the consent form, only students who were 18 or above were interviewed. The students were able to speak English well enough to understand the consent form and participate in an interview.

As many of the students, particularly the Somali, were not literate in their own language, it was decided not to have the plain language statements and consent forms translated. Both genders were included with 5 male and 4 female students being interviewed. In July 2000 there were 41 females and 44 males in the program. Copies of the Plain Language Statements and Consent forms are included in Appendices II, III and IV.
3.4 Subject Recruitment

3.4.1 Teachers

I attended a YAMEC program staff meeting and explained the nature of the research and my criteria for subject selection. Originally two teachers agreed to be interviewed and asked to be interviewed together as they were concerned about being identified. I decided to interview a third teacher, as I wanted the perspective of someone working in the same program on a different campus.

3.4.2 Students

A meeting with 2 of the YAMEC classes was organised and I introduced myself and explained the nature of the research and my criteria for selecting subjects. The teachers said that students would not participate without the support and encouragement of staff so it was decided the students would inform the teachers if they wanted to participate. The staff gave me the names of the student volunteers. I organised a meeting with them as a group to explain the plain language statement to them in a step by step fashion and to clarify any of their queries. I made it quite clear that participation would be entirely voluntary and participation would not lead to any direct benefit to themselves, personally. An interview timetable was arranged.
3.5 Methods

3.5.1 Data from interviews

Data was collected using open-ended questions in a semi-structured or general interview guide approach (May, 1989; Patton, 1990). Student subjects participated in a semi-structured interview of approximately 30 minutes duration. I used a general interview guide but as I wanted to build a conversation within a particular subject area, I worded some questions spontaneously. Sometimes I had to repeat or reword questions if the subjects seemed confused. I was interested in exploring the students' experience of the program, any problems they experienced that interfered with their studies or made their lives difficult and what help was available to them both within and outside the program.

The dual teacher interview took 75 minutes and the single teacher interview took 30 minutes as I had refined the questions to explore issues that may differ across campuses. In these interviews I wanted to get an overview of the young people's situations and the teachers' perspectives about the students' welfare needs and how they perceived the program addressed these needs. Copies of all interview guides are included in Appendices V, VI and VII.

The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Subjects were given the option to inspect copies of the transcript for their comment and correction. Subjects were advised that they may be asked to participate in a brief follow-up interview, should the need arise.
3.5.2 Other sources of data

Significant comments, made by YAMEC teachers or service providers at formal meetings, during informal conversations or during phone conversations, were recorded in a diary. Enrolment data was provided by the Language Studies Department. This included countries of origin, entry levels of education and gender of the students enrolled at the beginning of Semester 2, 2000.

During the year I attended various workshops to deepen my understanding of the issues facing young refugees. These were: “Strategies for Working with Refugee Children and Adolescents Affected by War-Related Trauma” conducted by the VFST at The Third World Conference for the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies; a 2 day training workshop “To Promote the Mental Health of Young Refugees” conducted by the VFST and the Austin CAMHS as part of the STEP program and a workshop entitled “Changing Cultures - Enhancing the Mental Health of Refugee Young People through Education and Training” run by the Centre for Adolescent Health and the Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE.

3.5.3 The semi-structured or general interview guide approach.

Patton (1990, p 278) stresses the importance of interview data in capturing the perspectives of the program participants. May (1989) uses Polit and Hugler's definition of semi-structured interviews as:

"those organised around particular areas of interest while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth" (p 171).
She stresses

"the importance of maintaining enough flexibility to elicit individual stories while gathering information with enough consistency to allow comparison between and among subjects" (p 175).

Patton (1990) calls this approach the "general interview guide approach". The interviewer has a list of questions or issues that are to be explored but is free to build a conversation within particular subject areas and word questions spontaneously. (Patton, 1990, p. 283). This approach was used as the research methodology as it allowed for topics important to the participants to be discussed as well as covering enough common topics to allow comparison between subjects. The semi-structured or focused interview is one example of what Minichiello et al. (1995) define as in-depth interviewing. In-depth interviews are defined as conversations with specific purposes:

"A conversation between researcher and informant focusing on the informant’s perception of self, life and experience, and expressed in his or her own words. It is a means by which the researcher can gain access to, and subsequently understand, the private interpretations of social reality that individuals hold." (Minichiello et al., 1995, p.61)

In depth interviewing is an appropriate method to access individuals’ words and interpretations. In depth interviewing is not used as hypotheses testing but as theory building (Minichiello et al., 1995, p. 75).

3.5.4 Use of Self

One of the challenging aspects of interviewing is

"the effective use of self to establish rapport and gain information” (May, 1989, p171).

"The quality of information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer." (Patton, 1990, p. 279)
The ability of the interviewer to establish rapport is built on the ability to convey empathy and understanding whilst remaining neutral or non-judgmental about the content of the responses. I am a trained counsellor and have extensive experience using active listening, establishing rapport and communicating empathy to clients. I applied these skills to qualitative research interviewing.

My previous experience in working in the YAMEC program as well as the reading and professional development that I have done in this field have provided me with some knowledge of the difficulties that young refugee people face.

3.6 Cross-cultural issues

Very little seems to have been written on the methodological problems of cross-cultural research although much attention has been focused on the ethical problems of researching minority groups (Minichiello et al., 1995, p. 182). Feminist research and multicultural counselling have made valuable contributions to this topic (Merchant & Dupuy, 1996; Schoup Olsen, 1996). I will restrict this discussion to issues involved in cross-cultural interviewing.
3.6.1 Language/concepts

Language difficulties were clearly an issue in this research as the students were from NESB backgrounds. To reduce language difficulties, Keats (1993) advises the use of formal but simple language, vocabulary which is in high frequency use and the avoidance of idiomatic expressions and slang (Keats, 1993, p. 119). I endeavoured to keep my language simple and to use the language of the participants whenever possible. When the respondent does not have a good grasp of English then responses will be brief, ideas will be unelaborated and frequent repetition of questions will be necessary (Keats, 1993, p. 117). I found this to be the case with some of the participating students who were more recently arrived. The time each interview took was a good indication of the ability of the student to elaborate on his/her answers.

It is important for the researcher to establish whether the concepts under study have any meaning for the researched groups (Hines, 1993). Some concepts have meanings in one culture but not in others. There is no direct equivalent of social welfare in Japanese (Hines, 1993) and the lack of welfare services in some African countries (Sengaaga Sali, 1998, p. 19) may mean these concepts are not clear to African refugees. I had to explain the concepts of ‘confidentiality’, ‘legal requirements’ and ‘case manager’ to a number of the participating students.
3.6.2 Use of Interpreters

If interpreters are to be used it is important that the background, dialect, gender and ethnic identity of the interpreter are acceptable to the respondent (Keats, 1993, p. 116) (Goldstein, Safarik, Reibolt, Albright, & Kellett, 1996). I considered using interpreters but interpreters might have contaminated responses. Young people are sometimes very reluctant to make disclosures to others within their community particularly when the communities are relatively small and recently established, as was the case of the Somali and Iraqi communities. Therefore, I selected participants who could communicate adequately in English.

3.6.3 Non verbal communication

The meanings of simple gestures such as eye contact and hand shaking or other non-verbal cues such as distance between persons may not have the same function in the culture of the respondent as that of the interviewer (Goldstein et al., 1996; Keats, 1993). If an interviewer is not absolutely sure that a gesture will be correctly interpreted then it is best to adopt a more formal, impersonal manner (Keats, 1993, p. 121).
3.6.4 Social demands and role relationships

In many cultures it is important to maintain smooth social interaction than to get correct interpretation of a speaker's meaning (Keats, 1993). The importance of courtesy in certain Asian groups may interfere with obtaining reliable information (Hines, 1993, p. 3). People of many Asian cultures would hesitate to ask an interviewer to repeat a question for fear of embarrassing him/her (Keats, 1993, p. 119).

3.6.5 Characteristics of interviewer

A researcher's gender, age, prestige, expertise, personality, professional status or ethnic identity may limit or determine what he/she can accomplish (Hines, 1993, p. 3; Minichiello et al., 1995, p 182). The interviewer must also maintain an awareness of his/her own assumptions and biases (Merchant & Dupuy, 1996). Schoup Olsen (1996) emphasizes the cross cultural feminist research perspective involving the importance of the interviewer starting with intensive self-analysis.

"I began to believe the most trustworthy analysis results from the researcher being in the same critical plane as the researched, thereby allowing not just the content, but the entire research process to be scrutinized." (Schoup Olsen, 1996, p. 2)

"Feminist researchers strive for egalitarian, reciprocal interview relationships and show respect and regard for the knowledge being shared." (Schoup Olsen, 1996, p. 2)

I am an “outsider” in respect to the ethnic identities of the young people I interviewed. I also work as a teacher in the TAFE College, which puts me in a position of authority.
I am a member of the white Anglo-Australian culture and I am a generation older than the young people whom I interviewed and this could have influenced the nature of their disclosures. Time constraints did not allow for detailed ongoing consultation with the students involved in this research but this would have been an appropriate and empowering strategy.

3.6.6 Understanding of respondents

"Getting valid, reliable, meaningful, and usable information in cross-cultural environments requires special sensitivity to and respect for differences." (Patton, 1990, p. 340)

A researcher cannot make assumptions about how people from other cultures respond and react. An empathetic understanding of the worldview of the members of a particular cultural or ethnic group and an ability to grasp the problems and issues as they pertain to and affect the lives of that group are essential to the cross cultural researcher (Hines, 1993; Merchant & Dupuy, 1996). Cross cultural researchers need to be able to,

"...suspend their own framework as much as possible in order to really see and hear the experience of others who are different from themselves." (Merchant & Dupuy, 1996, p.6)

I made every effort to find out about differing norms, values, taboo subjects and gender issues before commencing interviews. I have had experience teaching students from all three of the cultural groups. Two of the Somali girls requested to be interviewed together. I was happy to accommodate this, as it seemed more culturally appropriate. It also allowed for some clarification of the meaning of questions in their own language. A JPET worker reported that Somali youth often appear in groups of four for interviews. (Round, 16.5.2000, Pers. Comm.,)
3.6.7 Use of feedback and cross checks

Keats (1993) suggests the use of feedback and checks to ensure the purpose of the interview is being understood. The tapes confirmed that I regularly used paraphrasing and question rewording when there appeared to be confusion about meaning. Despite the challenges of cross-cultural interviewing, it is still far superior to the use of standardized questionnaires (Patton, 1990) because it allows for complexity of responses and meanings to be explored.

3.6.8 Limitations of the interview in relation to refugee issues.

I found only 4 of the 9 student subjects disclosed any problems they were experiencing. Only one of them disclosed a problem, which affected his/her ability to study. Several YAMEC teachers reported that it took a long time for these students to trust teachers enough to tell them about problems.

"For a lot of students it takes a long time before they'll tell us what problems they really have or that they have problems or even about experiences." Cathy (Interview with Teacher C, 31.8.2000).

This clearly has implications for obtaining sufficient data to form a complete picture from a one-off interview with a stranger. It also has implications for interviews with service providers.
Refugees may have past experiences of questioning that equated with interrogation and led to punishment and they are therefore reluctant to disclose information in an interview situation. Refugees may be extremely fearful of officials and paperwork (Keats, 1993, p. 121). Research with refugee young people using interviews as a main methodology may need to be carried out by someone who has already established a relationship of trust with the subjects. Alternatively time must be taken to establish a relationship and several interviews may be needed.

Despite the limitations of this methodology in relation to cross-cultural and refugee factors, some students did disclose significant problems and one in particular disclosed a serious personal problem that had not been discussed with teachers.

Luntz (1998b) used a discussion group with 4 young refugees as part of her research examining why young people from NESB do not access mental health services. She reported the group was not very successful because 2 members of the group came from opposite sides of the same conflict and as both had lost a parent they found being in the group very painful. One member was a Moslem woman who felt very uncomfortable in a mixed sex group. (Luntz, 1998a, p. 4) This reinforces the importance of finding out about differing norms, values, taboo subjects and gender issues before commencing cross-cultural interviews.
3.7 Recording the data

All interviews were taped and transcribed. This allowed me to be more attentive to the subjects. I still took some notes. These notes were useful for formulating new questions or locating important quotations from the tape. I also noted my observations and reflections about the interview immediately afterwards. (Patton, 1990, pp. 347-353). Other relevant comments made by teachers or service providers either in informal conversation or in meetings were recorded.

3.8 Analysing the Data

The purpose of qualitative investigation is to generate rich descriptive data from the participants’ worldviews and the purpose of analysis is to make meaning out of it. Data is compared across data sources to enhance credibility of results. (Merchant & Dupuy, 1996)

The aims of my analysis were to find answers to my research questions by looking for common themes in the data as well as highlighting differences among the students. I wanted to allow for the stories of individuals to be told and the experiences of cultural groups to be recognized.
The first step was to create categories of data or codes from the interview transcripts and group them in order to make meaningful interpretations (Hurworth, 1996). I constructed a hand generated visual display, a grid or matrix (Hurworth, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The themes corresponded to answers to specific questions or groups of questions.

The interview questions and responses for the teachers were grouped differently. The data from the teachers was more general as it reflected all of the students in the program. The teacher grids included some categories, which were common to the students. I used the teacher grids to explore how the programs differed across campuses. The cells in the grids also provided valuable material for quotes or examples (Hurworth, 1996).

3.9 Ethical Considerations

3.9.1 Pilot Study
I piloted the questions with an Eritrean student, an ex-YAMEC student, who had transferred to study in another department. I was able to check his understanding of the plain language statement, the consent form and the interview questions as well as gain feedback on the interview process. He reported that the questions were easy for him to understand and that he didn’t feel uncomfortable. He was confused about the meaning of “subject to legal requirements” on the plain language statement and consent form and this alerted me to the need to explain this carefully to participating students.
3.9.2 Informed Consent

All subjects were given a plain language statement describing the purpose of the research, the nature of their participation and how the information would be used. It included my contact details in case they decided to withdraw their participation from the research (Appendix II). Subjects were asked to sign an "agreement to participate" form (Appendix IV). These details were also explained at the start of each interview. Consent for audiotaping of the interview was included on the participation form.

3.9.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality was assured except when legal grounds require reporting. Subjects were informed of this possibility. The young people found this part of the plain language statement rather confusing. All names were changed in the writing up the research.

3.9.4 Risk to subjects or researcher

"Interviews are interventions that affect people. A good interview lays open thoughts, feelings knowledge and experience." (Patton, 1990, p.353)

Whereas I did not envisage my interviews would create any psychological stress for the teachers, I was aware that the young refugees may have experienced torture and most certainly would have experienced trauma and uprooting (VFST, 1998).
Whilst I was interested in exploring their current experience in the YAMEC program and their current welfare needs, these could be inevitably linked to their past experiences. I also needed to gather some demographic data, which may have triggered traumatic memories.

Arrangements were made to refer the young person to an appropriate service should the need have arisen. The TAFE College has a crisis counselling service and I made sure a counsellor was available. I could have also referred the young person to the Victorian Foundation for the Survival of Torture if I felt they needed long term trauma counselling. The pastoral care teachers were nearby in the case the young person needed to debrief with a familiar adult.

I made it clear to the participating students that I would not be asking them questions about their refugee experiences and none of the students exhibited signs of re-experiencing trauma. When one student disclosed that all of her family had died, I acknowledged the sadness of her situation but did not ask for further details. Three of the students raised current issues, which were of a worrying or distressing nature but I was able to contain this within the interview by acknowledging their difficulties and listening in a non-judgmental way. I did suggest one of the students might benefit from exploring the problem with a counsellor.
Stamm identifies the possibility of a counter-transference response to traumatic disclosure for the interviewer (Stamm, 1995). Appropriate back-up support was available from my supervisor or the TAFE counselling service. Writing notes after each interview was a helpful way to manage the distressing disclosures.

### 3.10 Trustworthiness

There seems to be considerable variation in the literature in the terms used when discussing the trustworthiness or believability of qualitative research: validity (Merchant & Dupuy, 1996; Minichiello et al., 1995), objectivity (Minichiello et al., 1995), reliability (Minichiello et al., 1995), consistency (May, 1989), credibility (Patton, 1990) and persuasiveness (Eisner, 1991).

The goal of objectivity is making knowledge able to be shared.

> "The researcher needs to provide systematic evidence of the actual research methods used to collect and analyse data so that there is some possibility of replication." (Minichiello et al., 1995, p.182)

Exact replication of procedures and results demonstrate that the results are reliable (Minichiello et al., 1995). Reliability is generally not possible in qualitative research because it is difficult to reproduce the exact conditions of data collection.

According to May,

> "consistency in a qualitative study can be thought of as comparability i.e., having enough information about the informants and enough detail in their stories that the investigator can compare the major elements." (May, 1989, p. 176)
Internal validity refers to the extent that the research design, research instrument or research result investigate the research question(s) they were intended to investigate. There has to be a close fit between the data and what people actually say and do. Probing and cross checking during interviews are forms of validity checking (Minichiello et al., 1995).

I have clearly described the method of data collection and analysis. Using multiple sources of data collection or multiple research methods is referred to as triangulation and is considered by many authors to enhance validity (Bloor, 1997; Eisner, 1991; Minichiello et al., 1995; Patton, 1990). I have used two main sources of data namely teacher interviews and student interviews.

Strategies to enhance validity include asking the participants for their feedback on interviews, analysis and conclusions (Bloor, 1997; Merchant & Dupuy, 1996, p.7). I have shown the teacher-participants copies of my findings taken from their interview data and obtained feedback. Time did not permit me to do this for the students but it would have been useful to do so. Descriptive data and verbatim quotes from the transcripts have been included in my report and peers and experts have been consulted about my interview techniques and data analysis.
CHAPTER 4: BACKGROUND TO STUDY

4.1 The Development of Educational Programs for Refugee Youth in TAFE

In the 1980s in response to the identification of high unemployment rates and high drop out rates from the education system, a range of educational providers established special provision for refugee young people. In 1987, the Northern Region of Melbourne, AMES and TAFE jointly funded the Collingwood Refugee Youth Program (CRYP) and the Migrant Access Youth Program. AMES delivered CRYP, the first stage of the pathway, and students then progressed to Migrant Access Youth Programs at TAFE. Similar programs were developed in the Western and Southern regions with the involvement of the Department of Secondary Education (DSE). Students from these programs successfully articulated into TAFE bridging, certificate and advanced certificate courses or found employment. (Migrant/Refugee Young People at Risk, 1994, pp. 3-4)

Among the key aspects of these programs were:

- availability of ongoing educational and counselling support,
- adult learning environment,
- consistency of committed teacher input and relevant curriculum development,
- articulation with educational pathways or employment,
- pastoral and on arrival counselling (Migrant/Refugee Young People at Risk, 1994, p. 4).
In the CRYP program the teachers provided student counselling whenever students were perceived to be having personal or study related difficulties. Practical placement or work experience was seen to be a vital component, particularly if students were interviewed about their future goals after the placement. A camp program was set up to meet the students' social and personal needs. The students were involved in budgeting and cooking and cultural exchange. They also learnt about aspects of Australian life. *(Collingwood Refugee Youth Program Course Advisory Committee Report, 1987)*

In the early 1990s changes in funding policy resulted in the breakdown of these pathways. AMES was no longer able to provide services for clients under 18 and they could not provide programs beyond 510 contact hours. Young refugees were required to attend mainstream secondary colleges, which were not always appropriate. As the TAFE component was still intact, the Migrant Access programs began to cater for students with very low levels of literacy. *(Migrant/Refugee Young People at Risk, 1994, p 8)*

When the Migrant Access Certificate became obsolete in 1997, the CGEA (Certificate of General Education for Adults) was adopted as it was the only certificate that catered for low level literacy students but it was not an ESL certificate. The Migrant Access Program was renamed YAMEC (Young Adult Migrant Education Course). The YAMEC program is currently using a new ESL certificate which caters for students with low levels of literacy.
In 1993, the Victorian Ethnic Youth Issues Network (EYIN), the Australian Youth Foundation and the Australian Bicentennial Multicultural forum held a national forum on the needs of refugee young people. They stressed the need for intensive language programs which required more than 12 months funding. They also concluded,

"It is fundamental to the success of education and training programs, that this client group have access to support in housing, health, counselling and advocacy. If we are serious about supporting the educational and training needs of this disadvantaged group it is therefore essential that we understand their settlement issues, which compound and increase barriers for them in achieving their educational and training goals." (Migrant/Refugee Young People at Risk, 1994, p. 6)

The features of the YAMEC program, as it was operating at the time of the interviews, will now be described. This information was largely obtained from the interviews with the teachers who are profiled below.

4.2 Teacher Profiles

4.2.1 Annie

Annie has been working in Adult Education for 20 years. She has worked with Child Migrant Education, in refugee youth programs at AMES and in a secondary school. She has worked in the YAMEC program for 5 years and was responsible for establishing the program at one of the campuses as well as coordinating the welfare aspects of the program. She was allocated 1 day per week time allowance to do the welfare coordination in the first year of the program. Subsequently she was given no time allowance for this.
Annie left the YAMEC program in second semester, 2000 due to what she reports as a lack of support for her work from management. She reports feeling burnt-out as a result of the difficulties experienced in her role in the YAMEC program. She has a full-time ongoing position at the TAFE.

4.2.2 Beth

Beth has been working in the YAMEC program for 3 years. She is Class Coordinator for one of the YAMEC Groups. The YAMEC students are put into classes according to their language and literacy needs and they spend about 16 hours per week with their Class Coordinator. She has been working in the Language Studies Department for 12 years. Prior to that she taught ESL in Technical schools for 10 years. At the time of the interview, Beth was working on a 0.6 contract at the TAFE.

4.2.3 Cathy

Cathy has been working in the YAMEC program for 3 years. She has been with the Language Studies Department for 15 years. Prior to her training in ESL she taught Horticulture for 7 years. Cathy is Class Coordinator for one of the YAMEC groups at the other campus. She also teaches Science and sometimes Mathematics in the YAMEC program. Cathy has a 0.8 ongoing position at the TAFE.
4.3 Features of the YAMEC Program

This program assists young adults, aged between 16 and 26, who often have disrupted or incomplete schooling, to develop vocational/educational goals and pathways. The course is taught at two campuses of an urban institute of TAFE.

The teachers estimated that between 75% and 80% of the students were refugees or asylum seekers. At the beginning of Semester 2, 2000, out of a total of 85 students at both campuses, 28 were from Somalia, 11 were from Vietnam, 9 were from Iraq, 7 were from East Timor and 6 were from Ethiopia. A detailed profile of the country of birth of all YAMEC students is shown in Table 1. Enrolment is ongoing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Birth</th>
<th>Campus A</th>
<th>Campus B</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>85</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Country of Birth of YAMEC Students.
The level of education of students prior to arrival in Australia is shown in Table 2.

Six students had arrived with no formal education with 33 students receiving 6 years or less of formal education prior to arrival.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level (years schooling)</th>
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<th>Total</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Education Level of YAMEC Students.

Students were recruited into the YAMEC program in various ways. Sometimes friends or members of their ethnic community referred them to the program. The students themselves were the program’s best recruitment tools. Language Centres, various Secondary Schools, Youth Workers and Juvenile Justice Workers also referred students to the program.
4.2.1 Staffing

At the time of the interviews there was only 1 full-time member of staff working on the YAMEC program with most staff working in part-time positions, either ongoing or contract, or employed sessionally. Most TAFE colleges employ significant numbers of part-time contract and sessional staff.

Students were assigned to a class group according to their language and literacy needs. Each class had one main teacher, called the Class Coordinator, who assumed responsibility for the pastoral care of the students, although no extra time was allocated for this. Students would spend a significant amount of class time, up to 16 hours with their Class Coordinator each week. Sessional teachers were employed to teach Numeracy and Science and some English. One teacher from each campus had been assigned a time allowance of 2 hours per week to deal with the welfare needs of the students.

The TAFE college had a Student Services Department with one of its functions being student welfare. Student Services' counsellors would usually see students for a maximum of 8 sessions after which they referred them elsewhere.

4.2.2 Curriculum

Students were enrolled in Certificates I or II ESL Access or Certificates I or II ESL Academic as well as Certificate 1 in General Education for Adults for Mathematics. Students typically stayed in the program for 1 to 2 years. Students were given ASPLR (The Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings Scale) assessments every semester.
The teachers described the program as an ESL program with a broad curriculum which is based on the needs of the students. As well as addressing the English language and learning needs of the group the course offered Science, Mathematics, Computers, various electives, a sports program, an optional homework program and vocational skills training which included work experience. There were no specialist sports teachers employed in the program at the time of the interviews.

The teachers worked hard to create an interesting and vital curriculum which aims to meet the needs of the students. They were action-oriented continually organising speakers, experiences, programs, excursions and visits. The curriculum also dealt with mental health and welfare issues as well as practical, hands-on survival topics such as cooking and negotiating the public transport system.

"It's a course that has evolved from the students and we look at the course and what is best for the students at any given time. It's flexible. It might change depending on your students. You can't set things in concrete very much, it has to be a fluid thing." Annie (Interview with Teachers A & B, 10.8 2000)

"We've had sports programs. One of the really good things about this program was swimming for girls only. It gave the girls a chance to go swimming in a female environment without any males. That was a really important thing for those girls. They can't swim and some of them had never been swimming at all so that was a really good program." Annie (Interview with Teachers A & B, 10.8 2000)
The teachers reported that the YAMEC course has a very strong retention rate and they saw this as a positive outcome in itself.

"Most of them wouldn’t have attended school or very seldom attended... The work we do is achievable whereas if they have come from a secondary school they would have failed continuously... " Annie (Interview with Teachers A & B, 10.8.2000)

When students left the program they were followed up by the teachers. They generally left to go to another course, to go back to secondary school or to start work. Some got into mainstream courses, apprenticeships or traineeships. Sometimes they were offered work from their work experience placement. Teachers assisted students in finding appropriate courses or vocational pathways.

4.2.3 Homework Program

Both campuses ran a homework program for YAMEC students. At one campus the homework program ran for one hour per day before regular classes start. It was staffed by one teacher and this was considered part of the teaching allotment. On the other campus it was run for half an hour both before and after regular classes. All Class Coordinators attended and this time was not considered as part of their teaching allotments. The homework time was sometimes used to help students who needed forms filled in or had welfare problems to discuss.
4.2.4 Physical Setting

The YAMEC classes occupied 2 classrooms at each campus, which were set up to meet their needs and shared a third with other classes. There were 3 YAMEC classes at each campus. The students were allocated a space to store their folders, pens and personal belongings. Posters and student work were displayed in these rooms. There was a quiet reading area with books, magazines and comfortable chairs and a homework corner with extra worksheets and activities. Stereos and videos were sometimes made available. The students were usually allowed to use these rooms at lunch time.

At one campus the teachers had provided tea and coffee making facilities and a microwave, which they had procured themselves. They had screened off a corner of the room for Moslem prayers. They had two computers and potted plants in the room.

4.2.5 VicHealth “Changing Cultures Project”: Enhancing the Mental Health of Refugee Young People Through Education and Training.

The TAFE institute which runs the YAMEC program along with two other TAFE colleges, a Migrant Resource Centre, a Centre for Adolescent Health, a Secondary College, a Language Centre and a Hospital have recently been funded to conduct this project over a 3-year period. The project will document effective models of education and training provision for refugee young people. The project will use an action research model and will address: program and organisational development, community development, and research and evaluation, which will inform policy formation.
4.2.6 Pastoral Care/Welfare Aspects of the Program

The teachers reported the pastoral care element and the strong welfare component of the program as being essential to its success. The pastoral care program ensured that each student is well known and cared for by at least one teacher. All the Class Coordinators took on an advocacy role and provided welfare support for students but only one teacher per campus each had a 2-hour time allowance to do this.

"The students feel comfortable. They feel welcome. They are happy to be here and they actually succeed." Annie (Interview with Teachers A & B, 10.8.2000)

"They feel safe and secure and I think it's just a warm friendly place for them to be." Beth (Interview with Teachers A & B, 10.8.2000)

"They feel they're supported here. They feel they can always come to us with any of their problems and we'll do our best to refer them or sort it out if we can." Cathy (Interview with Teacher C, 31.8.2000)

Teachers spent a lot of time helping and advocating for students by doing things like: assisting with filling in forms, making phone calls, organising appointments or interpreters and writing letters of support or character references. Sometimes they accompanied students to their appointments at Student Services and community agencies or attended court cases.
CHAPTER 5: STUDENT PROFILES

5.1 The East Timorese

Since the Indonesian invasion of East Timor in 1975 and its subsequent annexation, many East Timorese have left their country because of gross violation of their human rights (*SBS World Guide*, 2000).

The East Timorese who sought refuge in Australia have been classified by the Federal Government as asylum seekers and are on temporary visas. Their applications for permanent residence have been frozen sometimes for as long as 5 or 6 years. They receive benefits via the Asylum Seekers Assistance Scheme, which is administered by the Australian Red Cross. They receive 89% of Centrelink benefits. They have access to Medicare but no Health Care cards. They have the right to work but cannot access public housing. All the East Timorese have Red Cross Case Workers, who they see every 2 weeks. The Case Workers look after the welfare needs of this group. (*Red Cross Case Worker*, 22.9.2000, pers. comm.)

5.1.1 Peng

Peng was 25 years old, ethnic Chinese and Buddhist. His first language was Haka and he also spoke Tetum, Indonesian and Mandarin. He lived in a flat in an inner suburb with his wife, his 2 year-old son and his grandmother. His mother, father and elder brother also lived in Melbourne and he had 2 sisters in Darwin. He arrived in Darwin in March 1999 and after 1 month transferred to Melbourne.
Peng had 8 years of schooling in Indonesian in East Timor. He also studied Haka for 5 years at home. He started the YAMEC program in February 2000 and was referred by a friend. In 1999 he attended English classes in his local community but for only 4 hours per week over a 2-month period. He plans to complete the YAMEC program and then go onto to further study. He finds the YAMEC teachers very good and helpful.

He did not report having any problems that affected his studies or impacted on the rest of his life. He would approach the Red Cross first if he needed help with any problems. He just stays at home when he is not at TAFE.

He did not wish to return to East Timor because his house has been burnt and all his family is now in Australia.

"Stay in Australia because in Timor, my house, everything is burnt. It's gone." Interview with Student 1 (3.8.2000).

5.1.2 Bijay

Bijay was ethnic Timorese, Catholic and 21 years old. He spoke Haka, Tetum and some Indonesian. He arrived in Australia in 1995 via Bali. He had 7 years schooling in East Timor and attended an inner suburban secondary college in Melbourne for 4 years. He started the YAMEC program in February 2000 and was referred by a teacher in his secondary college because he needed more English skills. He found high school to be too noisy. There was too much work and he couldn't afford the school uniform.
Bijay lived in a flat in an inner western suburb with his brother. He also had a sister in Melbourne but his parents were still in East Timor. In his spare time he visited his uncle and cousins and enjoyed playing table tennis at TAFE.

He did not disclose any problems that affected his study or his life. He would approach his Red Cross Case Manager for any problems he might need help with. He liked learning English in the YAMEC program and found the teachers nice and helpful. He would have liked to spend more time learning about computers though. He wanted to get a job when he completed the program. He did not know whether he wanted to return to East Timor or not and reported that his parents’ house had been destroyed by militia.

5.1.3 Qun

Qun was ethnic Chinese, Catholic and 26 years old. He spoke Haka, Tetum and Indonesian. He arrived in Australia in 1994 via Bali. He had only 2 years schooling in East Timor. He attended an inner suburban secondary college for 18 months but found he could not manage the English required for high school study. A friend told him about the YAMEC program and he was in his third year in the program.

He lived in an inner suburban flat with his family, which was composed of his parents, two sisters, his brother and himself. His uncle also lived in Melbourne and supported Qun’s family for their first 6 months here. His brother was working as a kitchen hand.
Qun reported that he worried about getting a job. He also worried about whether or not he would be granted permanent residence. He was very worried about being placed in a Detention Centre and forcibly repatriated.

"I don't want to go back because my house, my everything is just no more. Just only ground now, no more." Interview with Student 3 (3.8.2000)

"I'd like to stay here but I don't know my future. Maybe tomorrow, maybe next week, maybe next month, the Australian government may send me back. I don't know." Interview with Student 3 (3.8.2000)

"...just when the Immigration call me to interview, after the Immigration say I can pass, if no, the Immigration say I'm not passing, 28 days I must go out now. If no go out the Immigration put I to jail." Interview with Student 3 (3.8.2000)

He was happy in the YAMEC program and thought it was a good opportunity to study. He reported the teachers as being very helpful. They helped him a lot with his English and he felt they would help him if he had a problem. He intended to get a job on completing the program. In his spare time he mostly stayed at home but sometimes he visited friends.
5.2 The Iraqi

Life in Iraq has become extremely difficult since the 1991 Gulf War due to damage to infrastructure, economic problems, internal conflict and the UN blockade (*Amnesty International Report*, 1998; *SBS World Guide*, 2000). Minority groups such as the Assyrians have been caught in the conflict between larger groups, such as the Kurds in the north, and the central government. Assyrian activists have been detained and intimidated and Assyrian schools have been banned (*AINA*, 2000). Young Assyrian males have often left Iraq to avoid being drafted into the army.

The 3 Iraqi students interviewed were Assyrian Christians. They spoke Assyrian also called Chaldean as well as Arabic. They were Catholic. All three came to Australia via Jordan where they spent 3 to 4 years living in rental accommodation with their families before being granted humanitarian visas for Australia.

They all lived with other family members and received Youth Allowance from Centrelink. The Assyrian Catholic Church seemed to play an important connecting and supporting role in this community. Apart from Centrelink, they didn’t seem to be accessing community agencies.

*The Iraqis tend to come out with their families and they tend to be in a comfortable social unit and are better looked after.* Beth (Interview with Teachers A&B, 10.8.2000)
5.2.1 Ramzia

Ramzia was 22 years old and had been in Australia for 2 years. She spent 4 years in Jordan with her family before coming to Australia. She had 10 years of schooling in Iraq and undertook a computer course in Jordan. She studied at AMES (Adult Multicultural Education Services) for 18 months before joining the YAMEC program in February, 2000.

She lived in a house with her mother, 3 brothers and 1 sister. Her father died before the family left Iraq. One of her brothers came to Australia 8 or 9 years ago.

Ramzia was referred to the YAMEC program by a friend and came to improve her English. She liked everything about the YAMEC program and found the teachers very helpful. After finishing the program she would like to do a Retail Course and work in this field.

She did not disclose any problems that affect her studies or her life but indicated she would go to her big brother or her mother first, if she needed help. She had a car accident earlier in the year and told the teachers about that. Ramzia has some Arabic-speaking as well as Assyrian friends. She went out with her family and enjoyed playing tennis at TAFE.
5.2.2 Nadiya

Nadiya was 22 years old and has been in Australia for two and a half years. She spent 3 years in Jordan with her family before arriving in Australia. Her father died in Jordan and her mother died when she was 5 years old. She lived with 3 of her brothers in their own house. Her older brother left Iraq when she was 6 and established himself in Australia. She had a married sister in Melbourne, a married sister in Greece, a married sister in Moldova and a married brother in the United States.

Nadiya started studying English at AMES but didn’t like it because she was with older people. She found out about the YAMEC program from a Secondary School teacher at a friend’s school. She said she has learnt a lot in the YAMEC program and liked the way the teachers teach. Her Class Coordinator had helped her sort out problems with Centrelink benefits. On completion of the YAMEC program she wants to study Office Administration and seek work in that field. Nadiya did not go out much as she had to do all the housework. Sometimes she visited her sister. She enjoyed playing volleyball and tennis at TAFE.

Nadiya did not disclose having any problems that interfered with her studies but she was very unhappy about a marriage that had been arranged for her by her older brother with an Assyrian who was currently living overseas. She was frustrated by her living situation, as she was responsible for all household chores and she had to obey her older brother. She didn’t have many friends. She did not think anybody could help her and if she left her brothers’ home she would be ostracized by the Assyrian community.

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"I don’t have that much friends here so that makes it harder for me. And I’m not going out that much. And other reason my brothers are rather frustrating." Interview with Student 5, (11.8.2000)

"I got an older brother. I live with him. Actually I don’t know him that much because when he leaves Iraq, I was 6 years old. So I don’t know him very much and when I came here I was young, you know, so he think I still a baby girl and he is making pressure on me so much.” Interview with Student 5, (11.8.2000).

"I don’t like to live with him. It’s really hard." Interview with Student 5 (11.8.2000)

"He’s not going to listen to me. He’s not going to care about that." Interview with Student 5, (11.8.2000)

Nadiya commented about her arranged marriage:

"... they say he’s good and he’s working and he can caring about you but if you don’t love him that’s the big problem. You have to love him, you know, because you’re going to live with him not your family.” Interview with Student 5, (11.8.2000).

5.2.3 Noah

Noah was 18 years old and he had been in Australia for 2 years. He spent 3 ½ years in Jordan after leaving Iraq. He had only had 3 years primary schooling in his own country. He lived in a Housing Commission house with his parents, 4 brothers and 1 sister. Noah came straight to the YAMEC program on arrival in Australia. An Egyptian friend advised him that TAFE was better because his son found Secondary School was too hard.

He enjoyed learning English and was particularly enthusiastic about working with computers and using the Internet. He found the YAMEC program to be good and relaxing. The only thing he disliked about the program was the behaviour of some of the other boys.
Noah wants to do an autoelectrician apprenticeship when he leaves the YAMEC program. The only problems he disclosed were worrying about how to find an apprenticeship and worrying about having to spend 3 or 4 years in the YAMEC program. He said that if he had any problems he would first ask his teacher and then he would go to Student Services. His teacher has helped him in the past with filling out forms and Centrelink problems. He thought his teacher would help him to find an apprenticeship.

Noah attended an Assyrian Catholic Church. Apart from Centrelink, which an Egyptian friend referred his family to, and the Housing Commission, which an uncle’s nurse referred them to, his family wasn’t accessing community agencies. He had many friends, mostly Iraqi, and they enjoyed playing soccer, playing billiards or going to the Swimming Pool.

5.3 The Somali

Since 1991, Somalia has been in a state of civil chaos with warfare between rival clans. Over one million people have fled to neighbouring countries to avoid starvation, persecution and death and hundreds of thousands have been killed. It is not unusual for families to have lost members and to have spent several years in refugee camps without access to education or adequate health care. (Beattie & Ward, 1997; Gedi, 2000).
All of the Somali young people in the YAMEC program are Sunni Moslem and Somali is their first language. Some also speak Arabic or other languages depending on their country of refuge. Somalis tend to have very large families although these families are often no longer intact. Extended family is an important source of support in this culture. The Somali arrived in Australia under the Special Humanitarian or Family Reunion programs and they receive Youth Allowance from Centrelink (Gedi, 2000).

5.3.1 Samira

Samira, who was 21, was the only surviving member of her immediate family. She left Somalia for Kenya in 1992 where she spent 3 years in a refugee camp. She received no schooling in Somalia or in Kenya. She was living with a nephew and his family of 9 children.

Samira went to a Language Centre on arrival and then went into Year 10 at an inner suburban secondary college. She was referred to the YAMEC program by a Refugee Youth Worker. Samira liked the work in the YAMEC program and found the teachers to be nice and helpful. They helped her with filling in forms and homework.

Samira did not disclose any problems that affect her studies or her life. She would go first to family or friends if she had problems and then approach the teachers. She had a Case Manager from a Migrant Resource Centre, when she first arrived, to help with settlement issues such as housing and schooling. She visited Somali friends and sometimes attended Somali weddings.

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5.3.2 Khadija

Khadija, who was 18, spent 5 years in Syria before coming to Australia in June 2000, with her mother and 4 brothers. Her father was still in Somalia and they had to wait 2 years before they could sponsor him to join them. She received no education in Somalia but attended school in Syria where she studied in Arabic. They stayed with an aunt on arrival but at the time of the interview had their own house.

Khadija’s uncle advised her to go straight to the YAMEC program as he told her TAFE is better for learning English. She was very happy in the program and found the teachers to be nice and friendly and the other students to be good. Her only friends were at TAFE and she tended to stay home on weekends.

She worried about her father in Somalia and this sometimes interfered with her studies. She wished she had money to send him. If she had problems she would go first to her family and then to her teachers. Her teachers had helped her with information about university courses. Khadija wanted to be a doctor.

Her family had a Case Manager who helped them with settlement issues. Her uncle made this contact. They went to a Turkish female doctor for their health needs.
5.3.3 Ali

Ali was 19 years old and had been in Australia for 5 years. He spent 5 years at an English Primary School in Kenya, where he went when he left Somalia. He lived in a flat in Kenya as a refugee. He spoke Somali, Swahili and Arabic.

Ali was living in a Housing Commission flat in an inner suburb with his mother, 4 brothers and 2 sisters. Another brother lived away from home. His parents separated after arriving in Australia and his father had gone overseas.

Ali has tried 2 Secondary Colleges in Melbourne and has attempted Year 11. He reported that his English was not good enough and he was embarrassed because he could not do the work or complete projects. He also felt uncomfortable because other students made fun of the way he talked.

"... actually in 1999 I attended another High School in Maribyrnong, because I couldn't do this school and I really feel embarrassed because like I couldn't work properly, I couldn't hand in my homework and also projects and some things. So I feel left out, so you know I just want to get out of there and go to another school to try, you know, other people. I might find some people to help me and things like that. Well, I start doing Year 11 there and I couldn't do it still." Interview with Student 9 (15.8.2000).

"... if I'm at High School and I start talking everybody would laugh. They make fun of me because I don't speak good English." Interview with Student 9 (15.8.2000)

Some friends told him about the YAMEC program.

"They're going to this place. There is some teachers like Social Workers. I don't know, they help students with problems." Interview with Student 9, (15.8.2000).
He felt comfortable in the YAMEC program and described it as friendly.

"Nobody make fun of me and I really like the teachers here, they help me a lot." Interview with Student 9 (15.8.2000)

On completion of the program Ali was hoping to take a hospitality course. He enjoyed cooking and he wanted to work in this field. The only thing he disliked about the YAMEC program was that he had not found a best friend in it. Ali had lots of friends outside the program and had a very active social life. He went to parties and nightclubs and had a Mexican girlfriend. He went to the gym and played basketball at TAFE.

Ali did not disclose any problems that affect his study but he felt unwelcome in Australian society. He had experienced racism and victimization by the police, ticket inspectors and nightclub security personnel. He didn’t feel comfortable being in Australia and he missed the open sense of community in Somali society.

"The houses is open. You go anywhere you like, not like here, every house is shut." Interview with Student 9 (11.8.2000)

"The most thing I don’t like in Australia is like if you come from a friend’s place or your house or going somewhere else and sometimes the copper catch you and they like, they ask you your name and everything. And when you ask them that’s the police right. And we say, “Why you doing this to me?” And they say, “That’s our job.” Well, actually, you look at them properly, you see some white person, like crossing the road, they don’t talk to them." Interview with Student 9 (11.8.2000)

"Even some Nightclubs like you’re not allowed to go in because you’re black." Interview with Student 9 (11.8.2000)
"..the Security goes to us, 'Yous can't go. You're gonna make trouble there. You're gonna steal things.' Well, we wouldn't do it. You just don't want us to go in, we can tell that." Interview with Student 9 (11.8.2000)

He sometimes approached the YAMEC teachers when he had problems. He described the YAMEC teachers as very special.

"Because they understand easily and also you know like they're very helpful." Interview with Student 9 (11.8.2000)

They also helped him to manage his anger, usually about racist taunts, which occurred outside the TAFE.

"Sometimes I get really angry for some reason and they really let me cool down." Interview with Student 9 (11.8.2000).

"I fight sometimes with these people... There are a lot of young people around who sometimes they fight my friends or they bash up my friends or sometimes they come to tease us." Interview with Student 9 (11.8.2000).

Ali's family had a Case Manager for settlement issues when they first arrived. He attended a recreational program for youth at his local community centre.
6.1 What are the welfare needs of the refugee youth attending a TAFE program for young adult migrants?

The welfare needs of the refugee young people in this TAFE program as identified by the teachers were:

- adequate income support,
- access to housing/homelessness,
- treatment for health problems,
- access to appropriate services,
- access to work,
- help in negotiating social systems (including the social security, transport, legal, hospital and immigration systems),
- social connectedness,
- structure and purpose in their lives.

When asked about their problems, the students interviewed identified:

- family separation,
- racism and victimization,
- cultural expectations from family,
- uncertainty about immigration status,
- difficulties in finding employment.
These are similar to the issues identified by people who have worked with young refugees in Melbourne such as Sengaaga Sali (1998), Macrae & Chandra-Shekeran (1998), Giddens (1996) or researchers such as Farnan (1999) and Frederico et al. (1998).

6.1.1 Income Support

"Once they've got a house to live in and they've got money then they're settled and they can learn. But really until that point of time, until you've got those sort of survival needs sorted out, learning is a very much secondary issue." Annie (Interview with Teachers A & B, 10.8.2000)

The teachers reported that students often had problems with Centrelink. Students have found that their benefits were cut or stopped and they haven't understood why. Students have had trouble filling out the forms required by Centrelink. The teachers have a direct telephone line to Youth Workers in Centrelink and have called to sort out these problems for the students. They have also written letters of support for students.

Two of the students interviewed, Nadiya and Noah, reported that they had asked the teachers for assistance with Centrelink problems. Ali had sometimes asked teachers for monetary loans and Khadija wished she had money to send to her father.
6.1.2 Housing

Homelessness was reported by the teachers as sometimes being a problem, particularly with the African male students. The Somalis have large families and sons have been sent to live elsewhere if their behaviour was deemed inappropriate. This seemed to occur because they behaved in a way, which although would be regarded as normal in western culture, was considered culturally inappropriate by their families. They might have gone to another family member but if there was no-one to take them, then they were on the streets. Some students have arrived in Australia without family support. These young people may end up in unstable shared living arrangements with others in similar situations or living alone. The teachers organised appointments with housing workers or social workers who often met with the young person on campus.

"We often have students come in with problems. They have got problems at home and their living arrangements are not satisfactory. They don't know what to do about it. They're quite distraught and it affects their study and their attendance at TAFE." Cathy (Interview with Teacher C, 31.8.2000)

"We've just gone through quite a worrying time with one of the boys who was homeless, who was actually kicked out of his own home and his auntie's home and he was behaving probably, we would say, like a normal 18 year old but inappropriate for his religion and culture. He was literally put in the street by his family and he had nowhere to live. He got very depressed, very anxious, quite paranoid, terrible mood swings and we could really see deterioration in his mental and his physical well being. So we put him in contact with a Social Worker and there's one particularly good one, close by and he has got housing now and he is a lot better although living by himself is perhaps not easy for him. He's still coming to terms with that." Cathy (Interview with Teacher C, 31.8.2000)

Living alone with no family or cultural support would be extremely isolating for this young person and could reinforce the isolating experience of being a refugee.
6.1.3 Accessing Services

Teachers assisted students to access appropriate social support/community services. They set-up appointments with housing workers, social workers, drug counsellors or JPET (Jobs Placement Employment and Training Scheme) workers, who came to the TAFE campus to work with students. The teachers sometimes referred students to the counsellors at Student Services but the students tended not to go unless a teacher accompanied them. Student Services won’t give emergency loans to students but the Migrant Resource Centre has given vouchers for food.

The teachers have worked with the following agencies: Catchment Refuge, Melbourne Emergency Housing, Migrant Resource Centres, Community Health Centres, JPET, Juvenile Justice, CAMHS, Foundation House (VFST), The Red Cross and the Refugee Legal Service.

6.1.4 Health

The teachers reported that the African students, particularly the Somali and Eritreans, often had health problems. Some students had spent 8 or 9 years in refugee camps. Gastric problems, TB, gynecological problems in Somali girls (the teachers assumed were possibly a result of circumcision), heart problems, diabetes and eyesight problems have been reported. Some of the girls appeared to be underweight. Eyestrain has been a problem. Some students didn’t know about glasses or saw them as inappropriate for young people.
Some students have complained that they suffer from headaches, bad dreams and bad sleep and regularly take Panadol and Dispirin. Some of the East Timorese suffered from ongoing respiratory illness.

"We have a few with ongoing health problems but they'd be the ones who'd be the most troubled emotionally too." Cathy (Interview with Teacher C, 31.8.2000)

"We had a boy last year with cancer in the shoulder that wasn't even discovered until he played soccer and got a knock in it. He'd just been in Australia a month." Beth (Interview with Teachers A&B, 10.8.2000)

6.1.5 Work

The teachers reported that YAMEC students find it difficult to access work. Two of the students interviewed, Qun and Noah, reported worrying about getting a job. Some were under pressure to send money back to family members in their country of origin.

"There was pressure on her to get a job and she wanted to stay at school and her living conditions became quite intolerable. She was very depressed about it because of the pressure for her to get a job. So sometimes, especially when they have family left back in East Timor, the young ones are expected to contribute financially. If they don't then they're seen as not being loyal to the family and this can cause problems and has caused problems for some of our students." Cathy (Interview with Teacher C, 31.8.2000)
6.1.6 Negotiating the System

The teachers stated that the YAMEC students need information about Australian society and its expectations of them socially, legally, around employment and in relationships. The teachers reported that some of the students have difficulty understanding the processes and the filling in of forms for services such as Centrelink benefits, hospitalization, citizenship and obtaining a drivers licence. Three of the students interviewed had obtained help from the teachers in order to complete forms.

Some students have had difficulty understanding and paying bills. Others had accumulated transport fines because they had not understood the system. Student Services, after being approached by the teachers, organised student transport concession tickets at the secondary rate of $6.30 instead of the tertiary $61.30 rate.

"We do have a girl who must have come under a sponsorship but the sponsor isn't supporting her at all. So she was walking from Brunswick to school everyday and back and has absolutely no money at all so we've arranged for her to have a monthly travel card at least." Annie (Interview with Teachers A&B, 10.8.2000)

Teachers have liaised with the Juvenile Justice Department. They have also attended court cases to act as character witnesses. They have referred and sometimes accompanied students to the Red Cross Tracing Services to trace missing family members.
6.1.7 Social Connectedness

The teachers reported that the YAMEC program provided the students with a social network, a sense of belonging and connectedness. They met other young people from similar and different backgrounds and had opportunity for social and recreational time within their daily schedule.

"What I like, it's friendly. Also I feel more comfortable when I'm talking because, by the way, if I'm at High School and I start talking everybody would laugh." Ali (Interview with Student 9, 15.8.2000)

This has been particularly important for those who lack an intact family, as they have no other form of membership in society.

6.1.8 Structure and Purpose

The teachers reported that the YAMEC program provided the students with a regular occupation, a daily structure and a basic education, which would enable them to access further education or employment.

"...just the routine or the regularity of getting up, doing something every day. That's very important structure in their lives. It makes them feel like they have a purpose. Tends to help with their motivation and perhaps even towards their well-being in that they're a lot more positive, less depressed, just because there is something regular to take up their time..." Cathy (Interview with Teacher C, 31.8.2000)

"Timetables are vital." Annie (Interview with Teachers A&B, 10.8.200)

6.1.9 Family Separations

"A lot of them don't have an intact family. They might be with an aunt or a sister so they're still with a say member of the family but not parents. Quite a lot actually haven't got a Mum and Dad, brothers and sisters type set-up." Annie (Interview with Teachers A&B, 10.8.200)
Separation from members of nuclear or extended family and loss of family members seem to be an important issue for refugee young people. Several of the young people interviewed did not have an intact family situation because members of their families had died in their countries of origin or countries of asylum (Ramzia, Nadiya, Samira); parents had been left behind in the country of origin (Bijay, Khadija); family members had settled in different countries (Nadiya); or family breakdown had occurred since settling in Australia (Ali). Khadija reported that worrying about her father who is still in Somalia sometimes interfered with her studies.

6.1.10 The Impact of Racism/Discrimination

One of the Somali students, Ali reported that his biggest problem was not feeling welcome, in this country because of the racism and victimization he experiences from the police, from night club security personnel and from groups of “white” boys.

“I fight sometimes with these people... There are a lot of young people around who sometimes they fight my friends or they bash up my friends or sometimes they come to tease us... Could be Australian, other nationalities, just white still.” Ali (Interview with Student 9, 15.8.2000)

None of the other young people reported experiencing racism but Cathy reported that the teachers got completely different treatment to the students when they contacted Centrelink and other government agencies on their behalf.

“...we’re treated with a lot more respect than they are and that makes a huge difference.” Cathy (Interview with Teacher C, 31.8.2000)

“How a young person’s culture is perceived by others can have huge ramifications on their identity and self-esteem.” (Wong, 2000, p. 86)
"Racism, cultural insensitivity and a lack of support for cultural diversity as well as the labelling of young people on the basis of colour, religion or race may be contributors to depression in young people." (Cassaniti & Sozomenou, 2000, p.77)

Racism and discrimination were identified as major causes of anxiety, low self-esteem, anger and depression in young NESB background people in NSW (Wong, 2000, p.89). Racism and discrimination because of ethnicity have been reported by Indochinese young people in public spaces, at school and from the police (Doan, 1995; Frederico et al., 1998; Lyons, 1995).

6.1.11 The Impact of the New Culture/ Acculturation.

Two main issues were identified in this study that seem to result from differences in acculturation between the young immigrant/refugee and other family members (Bashir, 2000; Klimidas & Minas, 1995). Family breakdown can lead to homelessness, particularly in boys. Family conflict around the areas of social freedom and marriage arrangements can lead to emotional or mental health problems in girls.

Although none of the students who participated in this study were homeless, the teachers reported that homelessness often results from cultural conflict between the young person and their family. This situation has been reported by other authors (Gedi, 2000; Rice et al., 1993).
One of the Assyrian young women disclosed her main problem to be an impending arranged marriage with a man from her own culture, who is currently awaiting a visa for entry into Australia. She seemed to be extremely unhappy about the prospect of marrying a man whom she doesn’t know or love and very frustrated because her older brother, who his head of the family, would not even consider her opinion on the matter. She did not think anybody could help her and she did not want to leave her family. Not having many friends to go out with and having sole responsibility for household chores also bothered her. Bashir (2000, p. 68) reports that this type of conflict within families could contribute to the development of isolation, identity difficulties, depression and eating disorders in some immigrant young women.

6.1.12 Uncertainty about immigration status

The anxiety created by not knowing what one’s future holds and being unable to access many of the services available to people with permanent residence, as is the case of the East Timorese, could well exacerbate feelings of anxiety, helplessness and loss of control which are components of the reaction to trauma (VFST, 1998).
6.2 Differences between teachers' responses and students' responses.

The teachers were responding from their experiences with all of the students in the YAMEC program whereas the students only responded for themselves. All of the students interviewed were in stable living situations with at least one other family member and all volunteered to participate in the study. Students living in more stressful situations may not have been willing to participate in such a study. The participating students either may not have experienced many practical problems or may not have wished to disclose them to the researcher because of cultural norms or refugee experiences.

The teachers tended to focus on concrete or practical problems such as money, housing and health but with an awareness that these problems could well be linked to refugee status and affect the mental and emotional well being of the students as well as their ability to learn. On the other hand some of the students disclosed experiencing problems which involved intense feelings such as: anger, isolation, embarrassment and rejection over discrimination; frustration, worry and unhappiness about cultural expectations; grief and worry over loss of or separation from family members; and anxiety and distress about uncertain immigration status.
Students may find it much easier to ask teachers for help with a practical problem but may be suffering in silence over more existential problems for which there are probably no simple solutions. Both Ali and Nadiya felt that discussing their problems with teachers or counsellors was a waste of time because they would not be able to help. There may also be cultural barriers to discussing these kinds of issues (Sengaaga Sali, 1998). Some of these feelings may well be intensified due to previous traumatic experiences.

People who work with survivors of trauma may experience compassion fatigue (Figley, 1995) or vicarious traumatization. This is

"a process of change resulting from empathic engagement with trauma survivors. It can have an impact on the helper's sense of self, world view, spirituality, affect tolerance, interpersonal relationships, and imagery system of memory." (Pearlman, 1995, p. 52)

The teachers may have had a tendency to concentrate on the concrete problems brought by students because they felt able to find solutions. They are not trained trauma counsellors. When helpers are exposed to traumatic material they may feel overwhelmed and helpless. They try to gain control by creating structure or limiting their fields of intervention.

"In the face of feeling overwhelmed by a perceived lack of control, one may seek situations less likely to present challenges, thereby restricting the types of activities and relationships in which one engages." (Rosenbloom, Pratt, & Pearlman, 1995, p. 74)

Both the practical/survival related problems as well as the emotional/affect issues will impact on a student's ability to study in the YAMEC program. Teachers need to be aware that both may be operating and of the impact this might have on them, personally.
6.3 How do their refugee experiences contribute to any difficulties they might encounter in completing this course?

"Often they've had dreadful experiences and a lot of them are victims of torture and trauma. They've had very difficult lives. They've had separation of families. Some of them are totally on their own." Annie (Interview with Teachers A&B, 10.8.2000)

"They've seen relatives killed perhaps." Beth (Interview with Teachers A&B, 10.8.2000)

6.3.1 Health

"Disease seems to be more prevalent amongst our group of students for their ages than you would find in your normal group of Australian children the same age." Cathy (Interview with Teacher C, 31.8.2000)

Chronic health problems affect regular attendance at TAFE, the ability to concentrate in class and the ability to focus on study. The teachers assumed that some health problems, particularly gastric problems, in the Somali, Ethiopian and Eritrean students might be related to lengthy stays in refugee camps.

Students have also reported chronic headaches, bad dreams and bad sleep.

"The students who have had particularly traumatic experiences are the ones that are suffering these headaches" Cathy (Interview with Teacher C, 31.8.2000)

The VFST (1998) report headaches and sleeping disturbances can be manifestations of anxiety or grief reactions, which are components of the trauma reaction.
The teachers reported that sickness among the East Timorese was more prevalent during the crisis in East Timor in 1999. The teachers also noticed increases in depression and anxiety in students as a result of stressful living situations such as homelessness.

Inadequate health care, nutrition and water supplies are reported by many authors to be typical of refugee camps as well as overcrowding and violence. (Bashir, 2000; Gedi, 2000) (Ethnic Youth Issues Network, 1994). Bashir(2000) reports that surveys of refugee children in holding camps revealed a range of disorders including, under-nutrition, parasitic infections, anaemia, encephalitis, malaria, pneumonia, tuberculosis and diarrhoeal diseases but with better health care these children can achieve normal physical health.

According to Bevan (2000) research suggests that there are higher rates of mental disorder symptoms observed in refugees compared to the general population. Bashir (2000) reports the prevalence of depressive disorder, psychosomatic problems and school-related behavioural problems in young refugees. She reports that depression is the most frequently noted psychiatric disorder in the refugee population but somatisation is its most common form of expression. Bodily expressions are more acceptable to some cultural groups than emotional complaints (Bashir, 2000. p. 71). Chronic depression, survival guilt and post-traumatic stress syndrome have been commonly found in young detached refugees (Bashir, 2000, p. 71). Rice et al. (1993) report that many young Cambodian refugees still have nightmares about their past, causing difficulties in concentration on their studies.
It would seem that previous traumatic experiences, lengthy stays in refugee camps as well as the reporting of news from their countries of origin all could affect the physical and mental health of young refugees.

6.3.2 Homelessness

Homelessness occurs in young refugees because of lack of family support or family breakdown as a result of acculturative stress. Students without stable and adequate living situations are clearly disadvantaged in obtaining an education. This is also true of non-refugee young people but it is much harder for a young refugee to negotiate the housing system.

“They have got problems at home and their living arrangements are not satisfactory. They don’t know what to do about it. They’re quite distraught and it affects their study and their attendance at TAFE. And sometimes we notice first in the attendance falling away and then we eventually get from them what the problem is.” Cathy, Interview with Teacher C, (31.8.2000).

Gedi (2000) reports that cultural conflict can lead to conflict between generations in Somali families. Some Somali young people want to leave home and live with friends or in youth refuges. Parents are upset by this and believe that the Australian system makes it too easy for children to become financially independent. Some parents try to restrain their children. These problems are particularly severe for single Somali mothers who have come to Australia without their husbands and so lack the support of a partner. (Gedi, 2000, p.114)
Rice et al. (1993) found lack of stable living conditions to be a problem for South East Asian refugees who had come to Australia as unattached minors as well for those who had left home due to family problems. Frederico et al. (1998) found that settlement stress, economic hardship and family unemployment together with issues of discrimination and racism were common experiences in the young homeless South East Asian refugees.

The rate of homelessness amongst refugees and asylum seekers could be increasing due to current government policies. Dunbar reports that homeless refugees are more likely to enter in the category of asylum seekers who are not entitled to housing assistance (Dunbar, 2000). Many refugees are granted Temporary Protection Visas or are unrecognised by the government and have no right to assistance in seeking housing (Clutterback, 2000).

6.3.3 Family Separations

Most of the young people reported separation from significant family members but all had stable living arrangements with at least one significant other. Loss of or separation from family members can have a significant effect on young refugee people and their ability to study successfully in their country of resettlement. Gedi (2000) reports that anxiety about family, and the lack of family support can reduce the motivation of young Somalis to study English.

"Isolation from extended family networks and traditional sources of guidance and support has a significant impact on young Somalis as they attempt to deal with settlement in an alien environment.” (Gedi, 2000, p. 115)
Gedi also confirms that many young Somalis do not live with their natural parents in Australia but with extended family or even distant relatives.

"Most of these children feel safe, but at the same time helpless because their parents have been left behind. This contributes to behavioural and emotional difficulties." (Gedi, 2000, p117)

Unaccompanied refugee minors have been mentioned consistently in the literature as being in a highly vulnerable position when trying to resettle in a new country without family guidance (Bevan, 2000; Van Der Veer, 1998; VFST, 1996).

6.4 Do other social characteristics such as ethnicity and gender affect welfare needs?

6.4.1 Ethnicity

Information from the nine students interviewed does not enable generalisations to be made about the welfare needs of specific ethnic groups. Information gained from the teachers who have knowledge of the situations of many students identifies themes from which inferences can be drawn. The members of three different ethnic groups included in this study seemed to have different service needs and means of accessing services. This seemed to be influenced by their immigration status and the existence of family support. The students also differed in how often they approached the teachers for help.
The East Timorese were linked to the Red Cross where they receive their Asylum Seekers Assistance Scheme benefits. The students interviewed reported that they would approach their Red Cross Case Workers first, if they had a problem. Anxiety about immigration status and worry about finding employment were the only problems disclosed by the East Timorese students.

One of the teachers, Cathy, reported that the East Timorese tend to have supportive families and are generally more self-reliant. They will only approach teachers for help with problems after they have tried to sort them out by themselves. If they have family back in East Timor, they may be expected to send money to them and this puts pressure on them to find work.

The teachers reported that Assyrian Iraqis tended to come out with their families and seemed to be in supportive social units. Apart from Centrelink, the Housing Commission and the Assyrian Catholic Church, the Iraqi students did not seem to be regularly accessing any other services or community organisations. Two of the Iraqi students reported asking the teachers for help with Centrelink problems. One of the Assyrian girls, Nadiya reported problems, which seemed to result from differences in acculturation between her brothers and herself. Noah, the Assyrian male, was worried about finding an apprenticeship.
The teachers from both campuses reported that the African students, particularly the Somali, Ethiopian and Eritrean were the ones most likely to approach them for assistance with welfare issues. The African male students were more likely to have problems with housing as a result of family conflict or separation from parents. The African students were also more likely to have health problems.

The Somali students all reported to have been assisted by Case Managers with their initial settlement needs. The Somali female students said they would first go to their families and then to their teachers if they had problems. Ali disclosed that he sometimes goes to the teachers with his problems. The Somali students disclosed worrying about family members left behind, problems involving racism and victimization and needing help to fill in forms required by Centrelink and other government bodies.

The differences in welfare needs and patterns of service access probably result more from the circumstances under which each of the ethnic groups arrived in Australia rather than cultural differences. The nature of the conflict in their home country, their particular refugee experience and resulting immigration status seem to be important factors in determining welfare needs.
6.4.2 Gender

Except for the East Timorese who mainly socialised within their extended family or stayed at home, the male students in the study seemed to enjoy more social freedom than the females. The East Timorese may be restricted in their ability to access entertainment because of their meager ASAS allowance (89% of Centrelink allowances). Both Ali (Somali) and Noah (Iraqi) seemed to enjoy a variety of social and recreational activities and had networks of friends. Ramzia, Nadiya (Iraqi), Samira and Khadija (Somali), on the other hand, tended to socialise within their families or during TAFE hours. Nadiya was the only female who reported the lack of a more extensive social network and a social life outside her family as being a problem. Khadija and Samira disclosed that because of their religion they could not use the gym at TAFE as boys were present.

Cathy (the teacher) reported that female students tended to become sick more often than the males. The female students reported having headaches, colds and stomach complaints more often. Cathy also reported that there was pressure on female students who lived with family or friends with children to help with the children. They might have missed out on class, social activities or excursions because of these responsibilities. Gedi confirms that young Somali women are expected to play an active role in the care of elderly, sick relatives and in raising younger siblings (Gedi, 2000). On the other hand, the male students were reported to have housing problems much more often. Annie (the teacher) reported that the African girls were more serious about their studies and tended to see the excursion program as frivolous.
A forum conducted by the New South Wales Transcultural Mental Health Centre in 1998 on issues relating to the mental health of young people from NESB considered young females of NESB -

"...to be a group at risk of mental health problems due to the high reportage of conflict, stress and depression resulting from problematic relationships with parents. Problem areas outlined by the forum included religion, attitudes to sexuality and marriage, and relationships with other groups within Australian society, as well as a conflict of values concerning females and the role of the patriarchy in their lives."
(Cassaniti & Sozomenou, 2000, p. 80)

Bashir (2000, p. 67) states that the double standards between the sexes within traditional patriarchal cultures permits males much greater social freedom, independence and educational opportunities whilst placing greater constraints on acceptable behaviour for females. Conflict within families as a result of these issues is considered to have contributed to the development of isolation, identity difficulties, depression and eating disorders in some immigrant young women (Bashir, 2000, p. 68).

Both the findings from this study and the literature indicate that gender is clearly an issue in determining the welfare needs of refugee young people. Girls tend to experience less social freedom and have more responsibilities within the family and are more likely to report sickness. Exposure to a different set of cultural values where alternatives to a patriarchal power structure exist may create confusion and conflict and this may impact on a young woman’s mental health.
The YAMEC teachers have identified some of these gender issues and have modified their program in some cases to accommodate the needs of the girls. In first term, 2000, they ran a girls only swimming program at a privately hired pool. Any classes dealing with human sexuality issues are run according to gender.

6.5 How does the YAMEC program meet the welfare needs of refugee youth?

The YAMEC program provides positive experiences for refugee young people because it incorporates trauma recovery principles (Klimidas & Minas, 1995; Rutter, 1994; VFST, 1998). The following 4 interrelated areas provide a conceptual framework for exploring this question: mental health, integrated service delivery, social connectedness and sense of identity.

6.5.1 Mental Health

The VFST propose the following recovery goals for survivors of torture and trauma which directly address the trauma reactions of anxiety, helplessness and loss of control; loss, grief and depression; shattering assumptions about human existence; and guilt and shame.

"-To restore safety, enhance control and reduce disabling effects of fear and anxiety.

-To restore meaning and purpose to life.

-To restore attachment and connections to other human beings, who can offer support and care.

-To restore dignity and value which includes reducing excessive shame and guilt." (VFST, 1998, Fig.3)
The Victorian Health Promotion foundation define mental health as -

"... the embodiment of social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Mental health provides us with the vitality we need for active living, to achieve goals and to interact with one another in ways that are respectful and just." (Promoting Mental Health, 2000)

They propose the determinants of mental health to be:

- Social connectedness.
- Freedom from discrimination and violence.
- Economic Participation. (Promoting Mental Health, 2000)

The YAMEC program addresses these recovery principles and mental health determinants in many ways.

**The Relationship with the Teachers**

The core element in meeting the welfare needs of the refugee young people in the YAMEC program seems to be the relationships that they establish with their class coordinating teachers. This addresses the third of the VFST recovery goals, that of restoring attachment and connection to other human beings and is also part of developing social connectedness. It takes a long time for students to build the trust required to disclose their current problems or past traumatic experiences and actually ask for help. When they do, they do not want to go to a stranger. The teachers reported that sometimes students would leave the program if a teacher referred them elsewhere. Sometimes if students are referred to TAFE Student Services with a practical problem and the counsellors cannot help them, they come back feeling discouraged. Some students see attending counselling as culturally inappropriate but talking to a teacher is not.
"...it takes a while to build the trust and build the respect with them and I guess mainly we do that by encouraging them, being really positive with them and just giving them the opportunities to say what they have to say, as little or much as that maybe." Cathy (Interview with Teacher C, 31.8.2000)

All of the young people interviewed spoke of the teachers positively. The teachers were described as friendly, helpful, very understanding and very special.

Because of the importance of building a relationship of trust, all of the teachers interviewed thought that the YAMEC program should be staffed by full-time or high time fraction teachers and not teachers working sessionally or on low time fraction contracts. This year they could not hold a camp because there was only one full-time teacher on the program.

"...we feel that it's terribly important that the students have one main teacher and that they don't have too many other teachers." Cathy (Interview with Teacher C, 31.8.2000)

"I think it says a lot about the background of the students, that coming from very disrupted lives now what they really do need is for a settled environment. And therefore the teachers need to be very settled in themselves." Cathy (Interview with Teacher C, 31.8.2000)

The teachers also felt that the institute does not recognize the enormous amount of welfare work which they did with students. There also did not seem to be any structures in place to address compassion fatigue. Most of them received no time allowance for this work and had no formal training in Student Welfare or Mental Health, although most of them had attended professional development on issues concerning refugee mental health.
Routine/Predictability

For refugee students having a regular occupation, a routine and a purpose addresses the VFST’s recovery goals of restoring meaning and purpose as well as restoring safety and enhancing control. Access to education is the beginning of the pathway towards economic participation, which is one of the determinants of mental health. Having a regular timetable and not too many changes in teachers would contribute to enhancing predictability and restoring a sense of safety and security for students.

6.5.2 Integrated Service Delivery

The class coordinators act as advocates and sometimes as unofficial case managers. They try and assist the students if they can or else refer them to an appropriate agency. The referral tends not to work unless the teacher accompanies the student, say to Student Services or the community workers come onto the TAFE campus. This model of helping is in keeping with Lawson and Briar Lawson’s definition of “school-linked services”, where the schools are central participants in the planning and coordination of services, which may be provided by community organisations (Lawson & Briar Lawson, 1997, p. 17).
This type of integrated service delivery or holistic approach is recommended by many authors to help in the recovery process of refugees (Aristotle, 1990; Hepperlin, 1991; Rutter, 1994; Sengaaga Sali, 1998). Educational settings where students can develop relationships of trust seem well placed to coordinate such service delivery. It also meets the VFST recovery goals of restoring attachment and connections to others who can offer care and support and restoring value and dignity to the individual.

6.5.3 Social connectedness/ Freedom from Discrimination

Social connectedness, which is one of the determinants of mental health, includes:

"belonging to a social group or community; living and working in a stable and supportive environment; engaging in a variety of social and physical activities; having access to social networks and supportive relationships; and occupying a valued social position." (Promoting Mental Health, 2000)

The YAMEC program provides students with a sense of belonging, a peer social group where they are accepted and understood, a stable and supportive environment, a variety of social and physical activities such as sports, excursions and trips away, supportive relationships with peers and teachers. Students have the opportunity to experience enjoyment and social connection. This is particularly important for the young people who are living without their families.
Students are treated as valuable human beings by their teachers and accepted by their peers. The YAMEC program provides an environment which is free of discrimination and violence. This is particularly important for students like Ali who have experienced discrimination and felt embarrassed in the secondary school system and the larger society.

6.5.4 Sense of Identity

In a new country young people might experience isolation and disconnection from their beliefs, roles and expectations which may be in conflict with the values of the new culture. They may also be separated from family members, which further challenges their sense of identity as well having to deal with the complications of grief.

The YAMEC program provides an important transitional space for young refugees to develop a sense of identity in this new cultural context.

"An important element to consider also in the assessment of a young person’s mental health and well-being is the extent and quality of their self-esteem. This is integrally bound up with how they believe they are considered and accepted by their peers, their teacher and their school environment." (Bashir, 2000, p. 69)
6.6 Participants' experiences of mainstream schools

All four of the young people interviewed (2 East Timorese and 2 Somali) who had attempted mainstream secondary schooling were unable to cope due to lack of proficiency with English and an inability to complete homework tasks. They all had interrupted or no previous formal education. Other difficulties encountered were: a noisy environment, cost of uniforms, feeling uncomfortable and being made fun of. The teachers reported that students coming into the YAMEC program from secondary schools would have experienced failure.

Farnan (1990) found that mainstream education was considered by young refugees to be insensitive to their needs and that unhappiness is one of the reasons given by young refugees for leaving school early. Chandra-Shekeran (1998) and Burgess and Christodoulou (1995) also report the lack of support for young refugees in mainstream secondary colleges. Rice et al. (1993) suggested that in Australian schools there is generally a need for a deeper understanding of the life experiences of young refugees and the impact of those experiences on their English language ability, self-concept and school work.

As well as addressing trauma recovery principles, the YAMEC program groups students according to their language and literacy needs and these groupings are also age appropriate. YAMEC teachers are sensitive to the mental health and welfare needs of their students and provide social support and referral to appropriate services.
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Implications for the YAMEC Program

The core element in meeting the welfare needs of the refugee young people in the YAMEC program seems to be the relationships which students establish with their class coordinating teachers. A number of authors highlight the importance of building stable trusting relationships which provide social support as vital components in recovery from past traumatic experiences (Herman, 1992; Janoff-Bulman, 1995; Van Der Veer, 1998; VFST, 1998). The YAMEC program should then, be staffed by full-time or high time fraction teachers and not teachers working sessionally or on low time fraction contracts. Having a regular timetable and not too many changes in teachers seem to be important factors in enhancing predictability and restoring a sense of safety and security, important components in recovery from trauma (Herman, 1992; VFST, 1998).

Many YAMEC students prefer to seek help from their teachers rather than other service providers when they are experiencing problems. The advocacy and welfare work carried out by Class Coordinating teachers and YAMEC Coordinators is a legitimate part of the teaching role and appears to require more time than is currently allocated.
Teachers allocated to this program are continuously exposed to the complexities and stress experienced by young refugees. They need to receive professional development which would equip them to support young refugees who might be recovering from torture and trauma. Another important component of professional development would be the facilitation of an integrated service delivery approach to welfare provision. The impact on teachers of working with survivors of trauma should not be underestimated (Stamm, 1995). Regular support and supervision as recommended by Stamm could be part of the YAMEC teachers’ allotments.

7.2 Implications for Educational Planning

Schools have an important role to play in relation to acculturation, language competence and connecting young people to wider social systems (Bevan, 2000). Mental health problems experienced by young refugees may present at school and the school’s response to this may be critical in helping them recover.

Refugee students with disrupted or no formal education are clearly disadvantaged when placed in age appropriate groupings in most mainstream secondary colleges. It would seem that they are again placed in the victim role and experience helplessness and powerlessness, which might well be retraumatizing for them.
Mainstream secondary colleges need to understand the welfare needs of refugee students with disrupted or no formal education and to develop relevant programs. Educational programs for young refugees need to include trauma recovery components as well as catering for their language, literacy and numeracy needs. Stable relationships with few teachers and predictable routines are important. Teachers need to be sensitive to the mental health and welfare requirements of refugee students and be able to provide social support and referral to appropriate services. Teachers need to be familiar with the cultural backgrounds of their students and be aware of the ways in which refugee experiences might impact on student health, their ability to learn and their attendance in school.

Teachers working with young refugees should receive appropriate professional development. Awareness of cultural diversity as well as issues affecting the education of young refugees should be included in teacher training courses and professional development programs. Schools need to establish links with appropriate community organisations in order to fully support their refugee students.

7.3 Implications for Service Access

It seems that to work effectively with refugee youth, service providers need either to develop an ongoing relationship of trust as seems to happen with the Red Cross Case Workers and the East Timorese, or to work in an integrated way with schools or educational institutions such as TAFEs where these relationships already exist with teachers.
Many authors have reported a reluctance of refugee and immigrant young to access medical, mental health or counselling services (Bevan, 2000; & Sozomenou, 2000; Gedi, 2000; Luntz, 1998b; Sengaaga Sali, 1998). Wong (2000) reports that when young people of NESB were asked who they would talk to about their problems, the majority said family, followed by friends and then teachers. Services were low on the list, possibly because of a lack of knowledge about their existence (Wong, 2000, p.91).

In many cultures the concept of “welfare services” or “counselling” is alien (Wong, 2000; Gedi, 2000; (Sengaaga Sali, 1998). Refugees may be fearful or suspicious of government services because of their past experiences. There is a lack of specialised torture and trauma counselling services or mental health services in community languages such as Somali (Gedi, 2000). There is confusion about the meaning of “mental health” and in some families it is considered shameful to admit to problems (Luntz, 1998b). Educational institutions are ideally placed to provide education about these issues and to link young refugee people with appropriate services.
7.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Very little research on refugee youth seems to have been carried out in Australia. Most research has been about identifying needs (Faman, 1999; Luntz, 1998a; Rado et al., 1986), and specific issues such as homelessness (Frederico et al., 1998) and mental health (Krupinski & Burrows, 1986; Rice et al., 1993). Very little outcome-based research exploring educational or community based programs for refugee youth seems to have been undertaken. Longitudinal studies which map the influence of specific programs on the development and well being of refugee youth would give valuable information about the effectiveness of these programs.

7.5 Conclusion

Young refugees are often alienated by the education, social security, transport, legal, hospital and immigration systems. Even with its constraints of staffing, structure and time allocation for student welfare support, the YAMEC program assists young refugees in their recovery from past traumatic events. It does this by: providing relationships of trust with supportive adults who care about them, value them and help them; providing social connectedness; providing a context that is free from discrimination and violence; providing structure and purpose in their lives; linking them to appropriate services and opening educational and vocational pathways. The YAMEC program encourages refugee young people to develop an identity in this new cultural context and assists them to find their place in Australian society.
APPENDIX 1

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

For the purposes of the research questions youth will be defined as persons between 16 and 26 years of age because that is the age range of students in the YAMEC program. The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines youth as persons between 12 and 25 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1998).

In their discussion of Social Welfare in Australia, O'Connor, Wilson & Setterlund (1995) state that welfare services seek to ensure the maintenance of adequate standards and modes of living. They list the following as some of the dimensions of an adequate standard of living:

"... access to the material necessities of life; relationships which meet our social and emotional needs in a non-oppressive manner; an environment within which our needs to be cared for, and to care, are met; opportunities to participate in the social life and decision making of the community..." (O'Connor, Wilson, & Setterland, 1995, p.22)

Welfare needs then would refer to needs which when met, enable individuals to achieve an adequate standard of living.

Ethnicity refers to membership of an ethnic group. Ethnic groups are groups of people who share a culture.

"Culture is the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that are shared within a particular group, recognised by characteristics such as language, locality, skin colour, place of origin etc." (Gunn, 1989, p. 5)

"Ethnic minority" to refer to non-Anglo, non-indigenous Australians (Zelinka, 1995).
“Services” range from crisis responsive and therapeutic to family-related resources and supports. Lawson & Briar Lawson (1997) list the following as services that have been provided at or in conjunction with schools:

"health education and promotion programs, child protection services, legal assistance programs, juvenile justice and police services, recreation and leisure services, violence prevention programs, substance abuse programs, occupational development and job assistance programs, literacy and reading programs, housing, clothing and feeding programs, community economic development programs.” (Lawson & Briar Lawson, 1997, p. 18)
APPENDIX II

Plain Language Statement for Subjects (Students)

I am a Masters of Education student at the University of Melbourne. I am doing a research project as part of my degree. I want to find out about the welfare needs of refugee youth in a TAFE college and I will be trying to understand how the YAMEC program works with young people who are refugees.

I will interview you for about one hour. I want to ask you about your life in Australia and about your studies at TAFE. I am interested in finding out how your teachers, Student Services Staff or other workers from outside the TAFE may have helped you to stay at TAFE. The interview will be audio-taped with your agreement. I will listen to the tape and write down everything that you said. If you wish, I will show you what I have written before I write the final report. I may contact you for a brief follow-up interview in case we don’t cover everything in the first one.

I am interested in learning about your life in Australia and I won’t be asking you about your experiences as a refugee in your country of origin but if there are questions which make you feel uncomfortable during the interview we can stop at any time.

When I write my report I will not use your name or the name of this TAFE. I will use information from all the students I talk to in a final report. As I am only going to interview 9 students, if someone who knows you reads the report they could be able to identify you. The things that you tell me will be confidential, subject to legal requirements.

I will ask you to sign a permission form, agreeing to participate in this project but you can decide that you don’t want to be part of my study at any time by contacting me at this number, 93865746, and I will destroy my records of your interview. Records of the interview will be stored at the university and destroyed after 5 years. Participation in this research project will not lead to any benefits to the participants. If you have any concerns about the way this research project is conducted you can contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, Vic 3010, ph: 83447507, fax: 93476739. 

Researcher: Barbara Mary Reeckman, ph: 93865746
Supervisors: Robyn Betts, ph: 83440974, Desma Strong, ph: 83440976
APPENDIX III

Plain Language Statement for Subjects (teacher)

I am a Masters of Education student at the University of Melbourne. I am doing a research project as part of my degree. I want to find out about the welfare needs of refugee youth in a TAFE college and I will be trying to understand how the YAMEC program works with young people who are refugees.

I will interview you for about one hour. I want to ask you about your role in the YAMEC program and your views on the welfare needs of the refugee youth in the program and how the program caters for these needs.

The interview will be audio-taped. I will listen to the tape and write down everything that you said. If you wish, I will show you what I have written before I write the final report. I may contact you for a brief follow-up interview in case we don’t cover everything in the first one.

When I write my report I will not use your name or the name of this TAFE. I will use information from all the students I talk to in a final report. As I am only going to interview 1 teacher this may have implications for your anonymity. The things that you tell me will be confidential, subject to legal requirements.

I will ask you to sign a permission form, agreeing to participate in this project but you can decide that you don’t want to be part of my study at any time by contacting me at this number, 93865746, and I will destroy my records of your interview. Records of the interview will be stored at the university and destroyed after 5 years. Participation in this research project will not lead to any benefits to the participants. If you have any concerns about the way this research project is conducted you can contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, Vic 3010, ph: 83447507, fax: 93476739.

Researcher: Barbara Mary Reeckman, ph: 93865746
Supervisors: Robyn Betts, ph: 83440974, Desma Strong, ph: 83440976
APPENDIX IV

Consent form for persons participating in research projects

Name of participant:

Project title: Welfare Needs of Refugee Youth

Name of investigator: Barbara Mary Reecman

Name of supervisors: Robyn Betts, Desma Strong

1. I agree to participate in this project. The details of the interview procedure have been explained to me and I have been given a written copy of them.

2. I give the investigator permission to tape the interview with me and if I wish I can request a copy of this interview. I agree to being contacted by the investigator for a brief follow-up interview should the need arise.

3. I acknowledge that:
   (a) the purpose of the interview has been explained to me to my satisfaction;
   (b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied;
   (c) the project is for the purpose of research and program evaluation;
   (d) I have been told that the information I provide will be confidential subject to any legal requirements;
   (e) the size of the study group is only 13 and this may have implications for anonymity.

Signature______________________ Date________________

(Participant)

Signature______________________ Date________________

(Witness to consent)
APPENDIX V

Interview guide for YAMEC students

Tell me about yourself?

Demographic Data and Personal Information (if not answered in previous question)

How old are you?
What is your Country of Origin?
What languages do you speak?
What is your religion?
Did you go to school in your own country?
Did you go to school in another country before you arrived in Australia?
When did you arrive in Australia?
Where did you study before you came to the YAMEC program?
Who do you live with?
How do you support yourself financially?
Tell me about your friends, interests and social activities.

Questions relating to the YAMEC program.
What made you come to the YAMEC program?
How did you hear about it?
What do you like about it? What don’t you like about it?

Future Plans
What are you going to do when you finish the YAMEC program?
How do you think the YAMEC course will help you?
Questions relating to welfare needs

When you are at TAFE, do you worry or think about things that aren’t related to your studies?
Are there things happening in your life that make it difficult for you to study at TAFE?
Are there things that make it difficult for you to concentrate in class?
What sorts of things are problems for you? (eg. financial, housing, family, health, drugs, problems with the law.)

Questions relating to use of services

If you had problems or concerns, who would you talk to about them?
Who has helped you with these problems?
Have you ever used Student Services? Have you found them helpful?
Are there other programs or services at the TAFE, which you go to?
Do you have a Case Manager? Where does he/she work and how does he/she help you?

Which community services do you use? (list services as a prompt)
How have these services helped you?
How did you find out about them?
Do any of the workers come to the TAFE to visit you?

YAMEC teachers and students

What do you think about the YAMEC teachers?
How do they help you?
What about the YAMEC students, do they help you with anything?
Is there anything else you would like to tell me about yourself or the YAMEC program?
APPENDIX VI

Interview guide for teachers at Campus B

YAMEC Program

What do you see as the strengths of the YAMEC program?
What do you consider is successful completion of the program by students?
What factors influence whether or not students complete the course?
What could cause a student to leave the program before completion?
What do you know of the students' plans for when they leave YAMEC?
How do you recruit students?
How do you monitor students' progress, needs, behaviour?
What duties do you perform and have they changed over time?

Student Needs

What percentage of your students are refugees or asylum seekers?
How do they support themselves financially?
What do you see as the main needs of these students?
How are their needs made evident to you?
Are there differences in needs among ethnic groups?
What role does gender, age or refugee experience play in individual differences in needs?
Who do you think they go to when they need help?
What are the things that teachers in the program do for students to assist them with welfare needs?
When would they go to Student Services?
What community agencies and workers are involved with the program?

Which ones come on campus?

How did the on-campus work originate?

Do any of the students have community based case managers?

If you could change anything about the way the program is delivered, what would change?

What aspect of the program do you see as most important for the welfare of the students?

How does the YAMEC program meet the needs of its students?
APPENDIX VII

Interview guide for teacher at Campus A.

What do you see as the main needs of these students?
Are there differences in needs among ethnic groups? (particularly the Timorese)
What role does gender, age or refugee experience play in individual differences in needs?
Who do you think they go to when they need help?
What are the things that teachers in the program do for students to assist them with welfare needs?
When would they go to Student Services?
What community agencies and workers are involved with the program?
Which ones come on campus?
Do any of the students have community based case managers?
What aspect of the program do you see as most important for the welfare of the students?
REFERENCES


