CONSILIENCE IN SOCIAL WORK
Reflections on Thinking, Doing and Being

by

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I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Charles Sturt University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Charles Sturt University or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

I agree that this thesis be accessible for the purpose of study and research in accordance with the normal conditions established by the Executive Director, Librarian Services or nominee, for the care, loan and reproduction of theses.
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Abstract

This thesis is oriented towards social work practice and the inter-relationship of thinking, doing and being. The thesis seeks to apply the concept of consilience to social work by considering the importance of thinking and doing and the use of being (self) in actual practice. Drawing on professional social work practice, secondary data, critical life experiences and critical reflections on them, a model of social work practice is developed and then using a post-facto reflective approach as a methodology, the model is trialled across the five major areas of social work—individual/family work, group work, community work, social work research and social work leadership/management/administration. The thesis is, in part, a response to the call for experienced practitioners to document their own initiatives in practice and reflect upon them in a way that builds better social work practice. Dissimilar to some theses, this thesis firmly aims at practice and practice improvement by articulating the conscious and explicit use of ‘being’ in social work.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS AND THE RESEARCHER

We make the road by walking.
—Freire and Horton

The life process/journey that has lead to this thesis has been a long, personal, engaging and enjoyable one and has had many iteration. I have been struggling with the same questions—thinking that I was alone—but increasingly recognising that these questions are faced by all social workers and student social workers, and acknowledged and reflected upon by many. Among the fundamental tenets of social work are that social work is about client self-determination (Zastrow 2003: 38–40), the person-in-the-environment (Zastrow 2003: 18) and the use of self (Dewane 2005). Among the questions that I have been asking are: how are these three concepts related? Is there a unifying factor to social work among the different aspects of social work (individual/family, group work, community work, social research and social administration)? Is there a unifying practice theory that I could develop and use in my practice across the various aspects of social work? How can social work accommodate increasing theoretical understandings and knowledge without following the fashions and trends of the day that will be replaced by the fashions and trends of tomorrow? How can
social workers avoid the mistakes pointed out in the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, coronial reports, the policies of removal (Stolen Generations) and the eugenics that underpinned some previous manifestations of social work? How do (some) social workers manage client self-determination with that of their role in control? How does a social worker manage individualism and the notion of community? How does the social worker in practice effectively preserve and disseminate knowledge and skills while being open to new discoveries of knowledge that are not simply fashionable? How does social work avoid being differentiated into different ‗camps’ based on the acceptance of different theory and/or practice?

Over more than thirty years of social work experience, I have had the great fortune to have had contact with over 4,000 ‘clients’, a range of employments, many systems, numerous students and have observed political and social changes, humanity and inhumanity, poverty and wealth, health and illness, inequality, violent crime, ‘failing’ families and environmental deterioration and had the privilege of being actively involved in the activities of individuals, groups, communities and systems. For me, each encounter and each iteration of ‘myself’ has been an opportunity for a continuing intellectual journey and to engage with issues that matter to people at a practical level. In different positions, some identified as social workers and others identified with different nomenclatures—some as front-line workers and some as administrators. I have asked the question as to what gives me a continuing identity as a social worker? The more I have seen of the way social work and systems generally can limit the presumed beneficiaries’ struggle for independence and dignity in the face of ‘colonising systems’ and approaches, the more concerned I have become in finding authentic ways to practice that acknowledge the fundamental humanity of all and, as Sack says, values ‘the dignity of difference’ (Sack 2002). Social work practitioners and students of social work struggle with integrating their own personal thinking and doing and being in the
context of the world in which we practice. Human beings are not simply human doings—the sum of activity. Nor are they simply the sum of the person’s thinking. While some would argue from a strictly learning theory perspective that human beings are ‘complex rats’—capable of being trained to perform on the basis of rewards and punishments—I have a more existential view of the nature of humanity and a more expansive view of the ‘environment’. The issues discussed in the thesis are inseparable from an understanding of basic social, political and spiritual values.

PURPOSE OF THE THESIS

Although thinking, doing and being (sometimes referred to by different names) are often referred to in social work literature and practice, the concept of ‘being’ is underdeveloped in social work and how it is applied in practice is often unclear. Fook (1993) argues that what is needed is for social workers to research and document their own specific initiatives in particular situations. It is an invitation and challenge to social workers to develop intervention strategies, not solely at the individual level of intervention, but across all levels and in applied practice environments. This thesis is, in part, an answer to that call and the particular concerns of individuals, communities and/or the organisations within the community being documented. A further significance of this thesis is to pro-socially model the nexus between theory and practice and self (thinking and doing and being). There is a need for social work students and new social workers to be able to think, do and be in ways that ameliorate the early career burn-out; that recognises the entrenchment of poverty, agency and social mores and promotes confidence in actually being able to make a difference in the life of communities and individuals. The thesis aims to develop and document a framework for thinking and doing and being that is flexible, consilient, true to the multi-dimensional nature of social work and above all is practical and apply-able. Consilience refers to “jumping together of knowledge” – that is applying together thinking, doing and being in practice. The concept is more fully defined at pages 75-79. Focussing on this main aim, the main objectives of the thesis are:

1. To develop a practice theory based on the concepts of consilience and thinking and doing and being;
2. To trial the practice theory of thinking-doing-being by demonstrating its application in the social work areas of individual/family work, group work, community development, social research and social administration; and

3. To analyse dynamics of thinking doing and being so as to improve social work practice.

The research questions are:

1. What are the concepts of ‘consilience’ and of ‘thinking and doing and being’?
2. Can a useful practice model based on consilience and thinking and doing and being be developed?
3. How can thinking and doing and being be applied in a variety of practice situations?
4. In practical real examples, how does thinking and doing and being operate and what are the dynamics?
5. How can consilience and thinking and doing and being improve social work practice?

STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

Chapter 1 is an introduction to the thesis, the researcher and the rationale for the thesis. In Chapter 2, terms such as ‘social work’, ‘thinking and doing and being’ in social work, ‘consilience’ and the development of key elements of each are discussed. Arising from this discussion a model or framework for social work practice is proposed in Chapter 3. The highest priority of the model/framework is that it be practical and useful and be centred on people. Chapter 4 considers the methodological issues of the thesis.

Succeeding chapters apply the framework/model proposed here to a variety of practice settings from individual/family work (Chapter 5), through group work (Chapter 6), community work (Chapter 7), social research (Chapter 8) and social
administration/management (Chapter 9). Chapter 10 is a brief summary with criticisms of the practice model and some suggested directions for future development.

**THE RESEARCHER'S RATIONALE**

Researching and writing this thesis involved an idea, a process/journey and an outcome based upon concerns of a practical nature in social work. The idea related to how to ensure that the key social work principles (that of client self-determination, the person-in-the-environment and the use of self with their rich variety of meanings) could be applied. The applications are in the areas of individual/family, group work and community work, research and social administration and take account of economic, political and social forces that shape (at least) the Australian landscape and could be considered as the dominant paradigm and are (arguably) oppressive. These forces included the emphasis on economics, globalisation, the move in the west towards individualism rather than communalism, the emphasis on user-pays principles, changing demographics (that is increasing urbanisation), forces that value specialisation in an increasingly complex world, technological changes, ideological forces that promote evidence-based practice and techno-rational solutions, education that is increasingly driven by the demands of the workplace; and methodologies that rely upon specific and exclusive frameworks of understanding. The desire has been to preserve diversity and uniqueness and call forth consilient responses.

The product is a way of valuing diversity and holding in tension the personal and the political, the individual and the communitarian, the material and the spiritual, the quantitative and the qualitative, the theory and the practice, the art and the science that characterises the business of social work and social work education. Rather than being seen as ‘either/or’ the tensions are to be seen as ‘both/and’ or ‘all/and’; they are to be held consiliently. The thesis is expansive and holds inductive and deductive approaches
in tension. It acknowledges that social workers require a wide range of knowledge
drawn from many disciplines and holding many theories simultaneously. The
uniqueness is in developing and applying a consilient framework that is helpful in
managing the multiple challenges and roles that social workers practice in.

THE RESEARCHER'S NARRATIVE

Kondrat (1999) asserts that most social workers do not recognise the importance of
contextual factors in the formation of their personal attitudes and beliefs. She invites
social workers:

...to tell their own narratives about who they are and how their
own unique stories predispose them to particular ways of
perceiving and knowing. The goal is for social worker
practitioners to understand how the selves they are and the
background they bring to each encounter intersects with the
stories of other social actors to produce particular meanings,
understandings, or distortions. (467)

Fook & Askeland (2007) highlight how professional workplace cultures and helping
cultures impact. They assert that professional relations are influenced by cultural norms
in society; that client identities are constructed on assumptions; that there is pressure for
a task-focused orientation; that we are subject to a culture of ‘objectivity’; that a
culture of ‘proceduralism’ exists; and that self-disclosure which has been frequently
discussed in the literature (for example, Trotter 1999, Hepworth et al., 2002) and may
contain the meanings of sharing feelings/emotions or disclosure of one’s own
experience is often considered with caution and as if experience was lesser than other
forms of knowledge.

the Guided Autobiographical Method as a means of promoting self-awareness and of
understanding personal weaknesses, personal strengths and values which shaped the assessment of life circumstances and of people (Brown 1992b; Goldstein 1973; Hancock 1997; Northen 1995). The sensitising questions from that approach (for example: “what feelings and emotions do you have about events; what were the rules in your family?”) have been used as a guide. I have used this approach with myself and also some clients. I think, therefore, that it is appropriate to disclose my understandings of my personal ‘being’. My own personal journey is extensive and covers an early life disability; understandings of family of origins; university education in social work, public administration and social policy; marriage and family of procreation; theological education and Christian service; travel; work; financial investments; professional associations; and any number of other influences that have significantly impacted upon me. While all of these influences mould the individual and colour the person’s view of the world, I have decided for brevity’s sake to limit these understandings to some general chronological events and my experiences and reflections upon a single issue—Indigenous people—to illustrate both the influences on, and the changes in, myself in relation to ‘Indigenousness’. Williams (1996: 71) describes identity (I use the term ‘being’) as not being a fixed identity but subject to ‘thawing and freezing’ as historical, social and political contexts change.

I was born in 1954 at Dungog in New South Wales (NSW) and am a non-Indigenous male, who has lived the majority of his life in rural and regional New South Wales. I was raised in a middle-class conservative home where we attended Church on a fortnightly or so basis. As a family we moved to Canberra in 1962 and to Corowa in 1964. We were not economically well off and did not own our own home but had a home provided for us by my father’s employer. I had early life health problems. During the 1960s, my earliest experience of Indigenous people occurred whilst on holidays at Coffs Harbour with my grandmother (probably around 1962–4), who
warned me not to go near the ‘darkies’ down at the reserves some kilometres from her home. I would have probably been about eight to ten years old at that time. It was a caution, and had an implication that there was something unsuitable and fearful about these people.

Throughout my schooling, as I look back reflectively, there were Indigenous children and adolescents at the public schools that I attended. They were few in number, and at the time they were simply my classmates along with lots of others. I was not allowed to go to their homes to play but they did come to my home occasionally. I did not distinguish their Aboriginality as a fact until much later in life. I do not know if they distinguished their Indigenousness. In line with the times, Aboriginality was invisible and unspoken. It was a culture of individualism, silence and secrecy. My standard history education at primary and early high school either ignored the original people in Australia or distinguished them as a backward group that welcomed the arrival of English settlers. They had their own particular appeal and were very good with boomerangs. There was no recognition of the original inhabitants or the process of settlement (or dispossession). In some respects it was a background that was reflective of the ‘glorious’ certainties of the early 1960s and the unitary knowledge and values of the times.

The 1967 referendum made no impression upon me as a 13-year-old for whom life consisted of school, hockey and cricket (not necessarily in that order). In 1970, our family moved to Raymond Terrace where I was later Captain of the high school and also the foundation President of the Protect Your Environment (PYE) club, which was a group of school students interested in the environment at a time when the environment was not on the public agenda. We protested against the steelworks in Newcastle, planted trees and undertook beautification work. We walked the road of environmentalism
without any real thought or analysis.

In the early to mid 1970s, while a Sydney University student, I shared a badly maintained flat with an Indigenous man from Western NSW. He taught me a great deal more than he could ever have thought—and more about Indigenous people than my university studies in social work and history. Two instances in particular stand out in my mind. On one occasion, I went to play my guitar and found that it was missing. When I asked my Indigenous friend where it was, he replied matter-of-factly that he had loaned it to his uncle who was playing at South Sydney Junior Leagues Club and needed a guitar. I went ‘ballistic’ that he would take one of the few possessions I owned in the world and give it to someone that I did not know and without my knowledge. About three to four weeks later, I had needed an audio cassette player, and of course being a poor student did not own one. Within a matter of minutes, my Indigenous friend had seen a relative and had obtained a cassette player for me that allowed me to complete the assignments without any concern. It was only then that I realised that I had had a great compliment paid to me. My goods were part of the community and the community’s goods were part of me. It was a lesson that I did not forget in a hurry.

The second incident involved my friend who was a committed Christian and the excitement when he was doing his Bible study to read the phrase that said ‘I am black’ (in the Song of Solomon). He told everybody he met about the significance of the phrase. For the first time I realised that to him, colour discrimination had been a sore point for a long time—a theme on which Loos has recently written in *White Christ Black Cross*. It became an issue of great concern when subsequently his engagement was terminated because he was Indigenous, and his fiancé was not. Her family would not accept him.
During my university years, I became a committed Christian through a local inner-city church. I avoided university Christian groups but was involved in two local inner-city churches, which had both sound Bible teaching and also a commitment to social action and poverty alleviation. At university I was involved in trying to think about the world and to practice social work through a Christian approach. I saw in Jesus someone who was intimately concerned with the individual and someone who was concerned with matters of community and national significance (and eternal significance). It seemed to me that Jesus was the ‘ultimate social worker’ in his capacity to work with individuals, groups and nations. I was drawn to ‘nouthetic’ counselling, the work of Paul Tournier and to approaches by Lawrence Crabb and Jay Adams but found that they did not translate easily into secular environments. The search was for approaches that were consistent with a Christian framework but were usable within contexts that were not specifically Christian or were even a-Christian.

Blamires (1963, reprint 2005) popularised the expression ‘the Christian mind’, which he argued was not a mind preoccupied with religious topics but could think about the most secular topics ‘Christianly’ (or in a Christian way). He argued that the Christian mind was trained, informed and equipped to handle data of secular controversy within a framework of reference which is constructed on Christian presuppositions. His six essential marks of the ‘Christian mind’ were:

1. A supernatural orientation that looks beyond time, beyond earth and to a cosmos fashioned, sustained and worried over by God;
2. An awareness of evil (For a more recent analysis with an overview of evil as dualism or as negation of good, see Peck 1983);
3. A conception of truth that accepts a divine revelation of truth;
4. An acceptance of authority;
5. A concern for the person; and
6. A sacramental approach.

These essential marks were consistent within my own understandings and orientation. David Gill in *The Opening of the Christian Mind* lists a slightly different cluster of six characteristics as being theological (focussed on God); historical (informed by the past, responsible for the present and thoughtful to the future); humanist (deeply concerned for the person); ethical (concerned with goodness); truthful; and aesthetic (appreciative of beauty as well as truth and goodness).

Human beings/persons are both thinking and doing, but they are also aesthetic, have an ethical and truthful dimension and have attitudes towards ontology, teleology and theology and a great diversity in all aspects. Being is inclusive of, but not limited to, thinking and doing. It is fundamental or foundational to thinking and doing.

For the second part of the 1970s, I worked as a Probation and Parole Officer based at Bankstown in Sydney. I married, ran youth groups, took on positions in the Church and had limited involvement with Indigenous people. One of my clients however was an Indigenous ex-Vietnam veteran. Upon returning to Australia he struggled with being treated equally and was shunned by some of those whom he fought alongside. He was on parole and was shot dead by armed assailants when he tried to stop an armed robbery. The poem ‘The Black Rat’ (based around an Indigenous ‘Rat of Tobruk’ from Kevin Gilbert’s *Inside Black Australia*) articulates the feelings and the ‘lostness’ of this man more effectively and coherently than any theory.

For much of the 1980s I worked as a Resident Probation and Parole Officer in the north-west of New South Wales. We had our two children and I undertook studies in
theology and postgraduate studies in Public Management. Although the sites of the infamous Myall Creek Massacre and Slaughterhouse Creek were in the area that my responsibilities covered, little was spoken of it and Stewart’s (2007) narrative/historical novel that would bring substance to the name (Demons at Dusk) had yet to be written.

The proportion of Indigenous people in both community-based corrections and institutional-based corrections was far in excess of that which it ought to have been.

When my wife and I were moving to the north-west of NSW, we went to the local tourist office to collect some information on the town which would become our home.

The tourist officer asked questions about my employment and where we intended to buy housing. He was very clear that there were certain parts of the town that a person in my position ought not to live because of ‘our suntanned friends’. I had no idea what he was talking about being under significant pressure to find housing. We had to buy a house (our first child was expected in two months) and I am the sort of person that takes six months to buy a pair of shoes. That night, as we walked past the local swimming pool, I casually remarked to my wife that there seemed to be a reasonable number of Indigenous children at the swimming pool. She looked at me in amazement, and asked: ‘did you not understand what the tourist officer was saying?’ I had not.

The second incident of the 1980s that significantly stands out for me was a period of approximately three months spent in Tennant Creek. In 1986, living with and working with Indigenous people of four tribal groupings, I found the goodwill, humour, forgiveness and kindness was absolutely appealing. I was fascinated by the different patterns of communication (including a sign language); patterns of decision-making (including the consensus basis); the ‘mock’ disagreements that were choreographed and noisy; the ‘mediation’ approaches that worked but did not involve neutrality and confidentiality; the skin name systems and its regulations; the impact of ceremonies; the deep spirituality; and the humour of making mistakes as an ‘outsider’. Upon returning to
the north-west of NSW, my approach to Indigenous people and corrections changed. Whereas I had previously been committed to a view of corrections that was individually based, where Indigenous offenders were now involved, my approach became much more community focussed, small group focussed and participatory. I was less concerned about individual confidentiality and more concerned about talking with the people that could influence change and using the informal grapevine that worked rather than formal processes that did not work. The development of work collectives, a focus on housing, and group and community approaches were evidence of addressing the issues at a structural level as well as at the individual level.

THE 1990s

During the 1990s, my initial employment was as a Regional Operations Manager for Community Corrections in southern NSW and again the issues of Aboriginal over-representation in community-based corrections and in institutional-based corrections was to the fore. In these years I undertook Master’s studies in Social Policy and an Executive Leadership program from the Department of Corrective Services. I was asked to restructure the Probation and Parole Service in line with the results of the Master’s thesis. By 1993 I had almost twenty years with the NSW Department of Corrective Services (including the four years on a Departmental cadetship combining university and employment). I had completed in excess of 2,400 reports for courts and other releasing authorities, undergone a variety of experiences and had been taught much by the lives and circumstances of clients. The care and control dimensions of social work have been my lived experience. In that capacity, I had operated as a caseworker, Resident Probation and Parole officer (Inverell), an Officer-in-Charge (Bathurst, Wagga Wagga), Regional Operations Manager (Western and then Southern NSW) and acted as a Regional Director (Southern NSW).
Subsequently, I took a position as a Lecturer, and then Senior Lecturer, in social work at Charles Sturt University and fifteen years of teaching social work at a rural University followed. The responsibilities also included some postgraduate teaching and co-ordination of the Social Work and Social Welfare, Correctional Management and Indigenous degrees. Five of the years were in a joint role between the NSW Department of Community Services and the University. The position/role included responsibilities for the integration of latest theory with practice in child protection and community development, leadership of the Best Practice Panel, driving through organisational and cultural changes, professional supervision of mid-level management staff, public representation of the Department at Senior forums and in the academic press, student placements including innovative models that would work for rural and regional NSW, responsibility for social development in the most remote parts of the Region and responsibility for specific projects in the Regional Strategic Plan.

Through the University, I have had the opportunity to do two major research projects with the co-operation and co-involvement of Indigenous people. The first project involved the Binaal Billa Regional Council of ATSIC commissioning competitive research on the issue of local and regional agreements with a focus on ten Indigenous communities and their ten local government councils. The study involved looking at rates, representation, employment and cultural knowledge and producing a blueprint for communities to develop a relationship with local government. This was in recognition that in some local government areas, Indigenous people do not have effective representation, employment or cultural understanding. While the outcomes of the project were very useful for the Indigenous community, the outcomes for me, in terms of education, were outstanding. I undertook the project as co-project leader with a senior gifted academic and with Indigenous colleagues. On the long drive to Coonabarabran, I was reflecting with an Indigenous colleague on the lack of unity...
within the Indigenous community. I indicated that the lack of unity and factionalism meant that the Indigenous community was in a weak bargaining position when it came to dealing with local government and allowed non-Indigenous agencies to ‘cherry-pick’ the solution that the non-Indigenous body wanted. Adeptly, he asked me about my role as chair of a local school council (knowing full well that there was a division over whether the Mother’s Club should be renamed as the Parents Club and also whether big checks or small checks looked best on the school uniform) and whether I was able to deal with multiple viewpoints on an issue. He asked why I expected that there would be one Indigenous view. He asked whether all Christians had the same view on baptism, or the second coming or on pacifism. I had been gently educated and the underlying faulty thinking corrected.

The second major project—also co-project led with a gifted senior colleague—involved the consideration of the development of a regional housing organisation that would have sufficient size and numbers of houses, while retaining community control at a local level. Both projects revealed the depth of poverty in both a material sense and in the understanding of Indigenous realities. Both emphasised how structural realities entrench Indigenous disadvantage. Both were educational for me.

I have had the opportunity to develop two programs of education in social work with Indigenous people. I have been disappointed that neither has been successful. In part, that has been due to not attracting and maintaining the Indigenous staff necessary for the continuation of the program and in part due to the, at minimum, unresponsive non-Indigenous systems that subtly maintain the status quo of structural Indigenous disadvantage. The clash of the academic culture— with its emphasis on individual orientation and achievement, objectivity, competition, adversarial arguments, theory and techno-rational learning—and the Indigenous culture—with its deep spirituality,
communalism and emphasis on relationships—has been profound.

Some of the ten projects that I have undertaken in partnership with Indigenous Communities have profoundly changed me. I have been profoundly affected by the depth and entrenched nature of Indigenous poverty and yet the generosity and acceptance in the community. In a visit to Groote Eylandt as part of a project, I was profoundly moved by the physical beauty of the land and the attachment of the people to it, the laughter and energy of the children, the deep respect for culture and Christianity—and yet profoundly saddened at watching these wonderful children smile, sing, dance and play while I recognised that the future (at least statistically) for them was early child bearing for the girls, incarceration for many of the boys and a very limited life expectancy for both sexes in comparison to other Australians.

In late 2000, I was invited (after two failed attempts at external recruiting) to operate as the Director of Child and Family Services with the NSW Department of Community Services in Western NSW (an area covering approximately 70% of the state’s land mass). I had responsibility for 160 staff, an operational budget of $14 million and a grants budget of $39 million, 14,000 reports of Children at Risk of Harm, 1,000 children in Out-of-Home Care (of which 49.7% were Indigenous) and stalled or urbocentric policy determinations. This position, as with previous positions, required extensive travel and knowledge of the communities of rural inland NSW and provided first-hand extended knowledge of the impact of policy on the lives of individuals and communities. I was asked to renew the secondment after one year but declined after 54,000 kilometres of driving, 33 flights, 127 ministerial responses and an average/monthly work commitment of between 250–260 hours. The role and the position was subsequently divided into two and now three positions.
MY PRESENT BEING

Now, at 54 years of age, I have lived and worked in regional and rural NSW for the majority of my life. I have qualifications in Social Work, Public Management, Theology and Social Policy and have sought consilient approaches to using different frameworks and disciplinary knowledge by valuing the differences for the purpose of enhancing practice. In relation to Indigenous people, mine has been a personal and reflective journey from ignorance to action; from fear to engagement; from a mono-vision to a recognition of the diversity both within and between Indigenous people; and from the privilege/tyranny of education and dominance to the partnership of empowerment with those under oppression. Empowerment means a realigning of power—as Indigenous people take responsibility and learn responsible decision-making, non-Indigenous people will need to let go of power. Emancipatory practice depends (in part) upon a realigning of power and has the aim of setting people free. This has essential resonance with the Christian approach whose aim is to be life giving and life affirming (Clark 1989).

I have a clear commitment to the Christian Gospel, am in a stable marriage relationship, have two adult children, have been an active social worker for over thirty years; and have a commitment to redistributive justice and social justice. For example, as a matter of personal choice and integrity, I will not undertake any research work or practice, except where there are clear, practical and empowering outcomes with individuals and communities. I have an unashamed bias towards the poor and marginalised, largely stemming from the commitments to the social justice requirements (as I understand them) of the Christian perspective. While labels can be deceptive (and self-deception is always possible), the writer has an inclusive, liberal, democratic philosophy, which holds that human life and human dignity are critical to a just and equitable society. Economics, for example, is an important means to an end—but is not
the end itself. Money and economics are tools that are useful social constructs in achieving the ends of all humanity living in a just world that guarantees humanity dignity to all. Human beings are diverse but human rights are rights shared by all people (from the writer’s perspective) because of their humanness/personhood.

I have been heavily influenced by critical social theory and ideas of oppression. Critical social theory refers to a ‘school of thought’ and a ‘process of critique’ (Giroux 1983: 8). A comprehensive and agreed definition of critical theory is elusive. Critical social theorists encompass social workers, philosophers, political activists and those who value critical social theory’s explanatory power (Rubington & Weinberg 1989). The attraction of critical social theory, for me, is its ability to go beyond the public utterances and the public rhetoric and highlight the social and economic relationships that oppress and dominate. There is a moral dimension in critical theory that fits with my own approaches and which is based on fundamental human rights and values including notions of social justice, equity and equality. The critical social theorists espouse individual and community values and seek redress for those who are marginalised. This moral imperative neatly fits with my own commitment to Christian social justice principles and to a social work ethos with an emphasis on action.

Critical theory has five characteristics that resonate with my own sense of being. First, critical social theory assumes contested values, competing social interests and ideologies, a particular approach to power and a recognition that it is individuals and groups, which both shape, and are impacted upon, by others. (Prunty 1984; Cocklin 1992; Dalton et al., 1996). Secondly, critical social theory adopts a social contextual approach that is set within a historic framework (Smith 1993; Chalip 1996; Dalton et al., 1996; Taylor 1997). Thirdly, critical social theory accepts that the structures of any given society are inherently unfair or contestable, constantly changing and that society
creates and maintains power differentials which lead to inequalities (Prunty 1984, 1985) which effectively ensure the maintenance and legitimation of existing hegemonies and the weakening of other competing hegemonies (Cocklin 1992: 252). Fourthly, critical social theorists focus upon dominant ideologies that continue the perpetuation of inhumanity, inequality and injustices (Grimley 1986; Cocklin 1992; Smith 1993; Dudley & Vidovich, 1995). Fifthly, critical social theory appreciates the multi-dimensional nature of social reality and the multi-finality of outcomes for individuals and groups by adopting approaches and seeking to explain the varying influences and relative positions of groups and individuals who are impacted upon by the particular social and/or economic and/or political circumstances.

Closely aligned with the critical social theory perspective, I have been heavily influenced by the work of Freire on oppression which can take a number of forms including structural oppression (economic and political systems favour a dominant group at the expense of a subordinate group); cultural oppression (dominant sets of knowledge, values, behaviours and customs are privileged at the expense of others); and personal oppression (negative impact of personal relationships, attitudes and actions between people). Liberation from oppression is a central concern for myself, social workers, liberation theologists and a host of other disciplines.

In his seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), Freire’s fundamental principle is that the oppressor consciousness tends to transform everything surrounding it into the object of its domination. He acknowledges that the earth, property, production, creations of humanity, humanity itself and time—everything is reduced to the status of objects (1972: 34). Freire (1972: 109) considers that it is necessary for the oppressor to approach the people in order to keep them passive via subjugation and deposit myths that are indispensable to the preservation of the current order and
necessary to build the desired future oppressive order. Freire (1970: 120) nominates some of these oppressive myths.

Freire's central notion of ‘conscientisation’ is not the same as enlightenment. Enlightenment depends upon privacy and reflection whereas conscientisation arises from public and social practices. Freire emphasises that the purpose of all knowledge is action. He rejects the notion that knowledge exists for its own sake but rather accepts that humanity is incomplete and that our ontological vocation is to transform oppressive structures that dehumanise both the oppressed and the oppressor. It is a position that has resonance with my own views of thinking, doing and being. Freire, like Sack (2002), believes in dialogue (Sack refers to it as conversation). Freire (1972b) writes in *Cultural Action for Freedom*:

*Liberation from oppression frequently involves the recently liberated oppressed becoming oppressors. The use of oppressive models and regimes are continued in the absence of alternative liberating models.* (17, 18)

At a clinical, group, community and organisational level, I have often been troubled by the intergenerational nature of social work problems—including the victim of child abuse that becomes an abuser; the child of an alcoholic that becomes an alcoholic; the Lebanese schoolboy calling the Indochinese new arrival a ‘wog’ (personal playground experience); and the organisation that continues to oppress despite changing all personnel. Freire’s insight, for me, has been useful as an explanation of the cyclic and intergenerational nature of some oppressive behaviours and practices. The generational effect of oppression is being increasingly recognised through reports (such as the ‘Bringing them Home’ Report), the continued underachievement of certain groups in education; the cyclic and serial nature of violence and domestic violence; and the trans-generational inability of families to access employment. His insight, with regards to the
continuation of oppression, has a particular resonance for me within the correctional setting and child protection setting. I am troubled by the tragic spectre of those who have suffered with oppressive regimes while in institutions that have a tendency to repeat those patterns when they are (literally) liberated from the institutions. They can become oppressors. Freire's outline of this ‘fear of freedom’ which afflicts the oppressed (and the oppressor) may lead to the desire for the role of the oppressor or bind them to the role of the oppressed. Freire argues that the oppressed internalise the image of the oppressor, adopt his guidelines, myths and his fear of freedom.

Real freedom would require the rejection of the oppressor image and myths and the replacement of the images and myths with views of autonomy and responsibility. Freire argues that freedom is not an ideal located external to the person or an ideal which has become a myth. He argues that it is an indispensable condition for the quest for human completion. This human completion, in my view, is integral to the notion of being and is inseparable from an understanding of a spiritual/existential reality.

Freire (1972) asserts:

*It is only the oppressed who by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors...That contradiction will be resolved by the appearance of the new man who is neither oppressor nor oppressed—man in the process of liberation. If the goal of the oppressed is to become fully human they will not achieve their goal by merely reversing the terms of the contradiction, by simply changing goals.* (32)

A corollary is that the only valid transformation of the state of oppression is where leadership works *with* the oppressed rather than *for* the oppressed. Those who work *for* the transformation of oppression on behalf of others continue the process of objectifying and dehumanising those who are in the state of oppression. Those who work *with* the oppressed in an authentic and genuine way encourage dialogue and
authentic praxis on a human-to-human basis. The change in the nature of oppression begins with the recognition that oppression destroys people. For Freire, the only effective instrument in a ‘rehumanising’ pedagogy is the establishment of relationships of dialogue. This change, not based on violence or control but based on genuine dialogue, offers the potential for new insights, new directions and positive constructive change. Many of the current patterns of domination aim at the control and dehumanising of people such that they are consumers, customers or clients rather than ‘participants’, fellow citizens and human beings. New approaches that stress dialogue, responsibility, and participation involve a shift of the power and control dynamic and the entering into of a genuine partnership. Such an approach has an essentially optimistic (hopeful) view of humanity and reverses the objectification in favour of a view that all people have the capacity to obtain full, insightful humanness.

Unlike Freire, who sees that liberation can only come when the oppressed adopt revolutionary praxis towards the oppressor and thereby form new relationships, which address the central issues of oppression, I believe that another view that still addresses the central issues of oppression is entirely possible. Whereas Freire sees that the oppressed need to take the initiative in the struggle for liberating people (both oppressed and oppressor) to be truly human, I take the view that the initiation for liberation can also come from the oppressors who voluntarily surrender power, status and wealth in the interest of becoming more fully human in the existential and ‘completion’ sense and more free in the liberation sense. It does not have to be the situation that the interests of the oppressors lie in changing the consciousness of the oppressed, rather than the situation that oppresses them. The oppressor can surrender the power and instruments of domination and the accompanying oppressive myths and be part of the process of liberation. The initiative for ‘the new man’ and the initiative for dialogue can come from those with power and authority. Indeed, the heart of the Christian Gospel is based
upon sacrificial giving and transforming praxis. The fundamental message of the Christian Gospel is of a God that exchanges omnipotence in order to identify with the poor and oppressed (incarnation) and to give sacrificially (redemption) in order to transform humanity. In the teleological sense, it is a revolutionary action that transforms all humanity. In a not dissimilar way, the examples of Martin Luther King, John Newton, the evangelical reformers (Fry, Wilberforce, Shaftesbury), Ghandi, Buddha, Bill Gates, Mother Theresa, Vincent Fairfax, Warren Buffett, Fred Hollows, Albert Schweitzer and countless others have used positions of power, wealth and authority and transformed oppressive relationships by surrendering (at least) some of their privilege in the interests of liberation. There are, of course, countless nameless and unrecorded examples of everyday people within my own experience who selflessly transform unjust situations through their commitment to the aged, the disabled, the poor and the oppressed.

My research and community interests have been diverse and have reflected my personal being, the influence of critical social theory and the desire for addressing unjust and oppressive structures that subjugate the ‘voiceless’ and marginalised (for example, two projects on chaplaincies; four projects for the NSW Department of Education; a multi-state, multi-site race and ethnicity project for the Department of Immigration and Multi-Cultural Affairs; a NSW Juvenile Justice Project; an Evaluation of the Family First Program; planning workshops for whole towns and regional organisations; developing Policy and Procedure Manuals for NGOs). I was a member of the NSW Juvenile Justice Collaborative Research Group; a member of the NSW Department of Community Services Research Advisory Council; a member and current President of a University Residential College; a member of a three-person review panel reviewing the Rural Financial Counselling Services (RFCS) for the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) involving 68 separate sites
of rural service delivery Australia-wide, 92 written submissions and multi-level consultation concerning rural and regional Australia in all states and territories.

Throughout much of my education, research and working life, I have been concerned about practice and theory and the coherence with personal and professional beliefs (mine and others). I have considered ‘integration’ and ‘eclecticism’ in the continual search for congruity between personal and professional identity (being), which Fook et al., (1997) assert is the hallmark of the experienced practitioner. I have sought to write on issues of practical benefit to ‘clients’ and students and have sought to reflect upon the nature of, and influence upon, practice. Here, I seek to develop a useful model that can be applied practically. It will be informed by the increasing concerns I have with approaches that in social work are increasingly focussed upon ‘behavioural outcomes’ and also upon the narrowing political and professional consideration that is being given to those functions or approaches that will be quantifiable and measurable.

There has been a convergence and synthesis of ideological, philosophical and technological ideas that are transforming the social reality and continuing oppression—the dysfunctions of which are increasingly borne by those least able to afford them. For example, the technological changes that have occurred with computerisation and were designed to save time and free front-line workers seem, at least in Corrections and Child Protection, to have not enhanced either the amount of, or quality of, time spent with clients but to have increased the time spent in front of a computer giving and recording information for the purposes of accountability. The rise in many areas of risk prediction tools has limited practice wisdom and has established boundaries for social workers regarding acceptable risk. These risk predicting tools are often actuarially and behaviourally based (for example, ‘Behaviourally Anchored’ rating scales such as are used in LSI–R in Corrections or KiDS in Community Services NSW). Similarly, integrated case management and the social work ‘one-stop shop’ have narrowed the
choices available to clients in seeking assistance. In a related way, the move within university education to adopt a problem-based learning approach to social work education has led to a fundamental change: with a ‘focus on the problem’ approach rather than one that focuses on the person. The directions towards specialisation within social work practice can have the undesirable effect of narrowing the concern and consideration to the area of specialisation rather than a more holistic concern for the person-in-the-environment. I have a concern as to how the positivist and rational approach is related to the idealist and intuitive approach in effecting real and sustained change with persons-in-their-environment. Rogers (1967), for example, wrote:

_The origin of the conflict [is] between the logical positivism, in which I was educated, for which I have a deep respect, and the subjectivity oriented existential thinking which...seemed to fit with my therapeutic experience._ (Cited in Everitt et al., 1992: 19)

I share the conflict created by the dichotomy and I am driven towards the fulfilment of human and spiritual qualities that value the positivist approach and are non-oppressive. Paulo Freire and Myles Horton wrote the book _We Make the Road by Walking_. They assert that you set your sights on a destination beyond the horizon and then make the road by walking. There is a certain resonance with theology, idealism and social work practice. My destination is a just and fair world where people, in all their diversity, become fully the human beings that they are able to be. This thesis is a record of parts of my journey. Just as the personal journey in relation to Indigenous people has been one of revelation and discovery, so the journey towards enhancing social work practice is one of revelation, discovery, reflection and action involving thinking, doing and being.

In this thesis, I am both subject and object, the data and the researcher of the study. Fook & Askeland (2007) write:
We assume that knowledge is at least partly created by people, through interaction and dialogue in the social and political context. Individual people are in this sense also researchers of their professional practice, in that they must collect and process knowledge in order to act in a meaningful way within their context. The role of personal and emotional experience is therefore as important in framing knowledge, as our cognitive abilities and behaviours, since the whole person is the research instrument. This means that personal and emotional experience is as crucial as food for learning and change...yet to draw on personal experience in order to gain general knowledge is not traditionally acknowledged as scientifically acceptable. Further, it is not recognised that what new knowledge we are able to take into possession depends on our personal experience, opinions, values, and emotions. (527)

My intent is that this reflective journey results in a practice model that is practical, consistent with the basic tenets of social work, useful for social workers, liberating for those with whom we work and that we can indeed make the road by walking.
In this chapter, terms such as ‘social work’, ‘thinking’, ‘doing’, ‘being’ and ‘consilience’ and the development of key elements of each are discussed. This chapter links thinking and doing to theory and practice in social work and argues that thinking, doing and being are all necessary for social work practice. It illustrates that thinking (theory) and doing (practice) are often dichotomised or separated into component parts. It argues that there needs to be consilience between the two and that consilience occurs in the person of the social worker (the being). The chapter discusses “being” in an
attributive way more than a philosophical way and focuses on virtues. It draws upon work done by the philosopher/theologian CS Lewis (1960; 2001) and a range of social work writers. The concept of ‘consilience’ is then discussed and contrasted with that of ‘reductionism’ as it relates to knowledge.

WHAT IS SOCIAL WORK?

Central to this work is social work. The nature and definition of social work is contested. The purpose of this thesis is not to enter into the historic and contested debate but rather to take, as the starting point, the current definitions and ideological position as expressed by the Australian Social Worker’s peak body—the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW).

The AASW (2008) advertise on their website the following:

*Social work is the profession committed to the pursuit of social justice, to the enhancement of the quality of life and the development of the full potential of each individual, group and community in society. Social workers pursue these goals by working to address the barriers, inequalities, and injustices that exist in society, and by active involvement in situations of personal distress and crisis. This is done by working with individuals towards the realisation of their intellectual, physical and emotional potentials, and by working with individuals, groups and communities in the pursuit and achievement of equitable access to social, economic and political resources.*

It is interesting that the focus here is upon the intellectual, physical and emotional potential while the spiritual/existential is overlooked. A careful reading could lead to a view that there are different objectives when working with individuals (development of full potential) and when compared with working with groups and communities (equitable access to resources).

The IFSW (2008) website also provides a definition of social work:
The social work profession promotes social change, problem-solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the point where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.

A useful commentary on the development of this definition and a number of critical issues related to social work is provided by Hare (2004). The principles of the IFSW include human rights and human dignity and the organisation’s website declares that:

Social work is based on respect for the inherent worth and dignity of all people, and the rights that follow from this. Social workers should uphold and defend each person’s physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual integrity and well-being.

According to the IFSW this means:

1. Respecting the right to self-determination. Social workers should respect and promote people’s right to make their own choices and decisions, irrespective of their values and life choices, provided this does not threaten the rights and legitimate interests of others.

2. Promoting the right to participation. Social workers should promote the full involvement and participation of people using their services in ways that enable them to be empowered in all aspects of decisions and actions affecting their lives.

3. Treating each person as a whole. Social workers should be concerned with the whole person, within the family, community, societal and natural environments and should seek to recognise all aspects of a person’s life.

4. Identifying and developing strengths. Social workers should focus on the strengths of all individuals, groups and communities and thus promote their empowerment.
The concentration on ‘human behaviour theories’ and ‘social systems’ in the definition is problematic and narrow and could be limiting (see later in this chapter). Both the AASW commitment and the IFSW definition could be criticised on the basis that they have the social work profession as the core consideration and that to an extent the client and environment are the context of social work rather than its raison d’être or essence.

The profession rather than its service has centrality. The humanness of the social worker (their being) may become subjugated to the principles of social work and the means (the profession of social work) overtake concern for the very purpose of social work (liberation and well-being of ‘clients’).

Social work has a personal and political element. In both the literature and common parlance and perceptions, social workers can be perceived as vocationally-oriented ‘altruistic’ servants (Robison & Reeser 2000: 204) or accused of policing the poor, stabilising an unjust society and subjugating the people that they claim to help (Priven & Cloward 1971; Margolin 1997; Michielse 1990). Social work is derived from a range of traditions and theoretical influences. Mullaly (1997) refers to the progressive and conventional constructions of social work. Conventional social work is associated with the professional tradition ascribed to Mary Richmond (Margolin 1997) with its origins in the medical model, diagnosis and treatment (Margolin 1997). It is associated with deviance, illness and personal inadequacies (Rose 2000), places an emphasis on therapy and individual adjustment (Specht & Courtney 1994) and is regarded by some as oppressive (Orton 2004). The progressive/radical tradition owes much to the work of Jane Adams who refused the title of social worker (Margolin 1997); and refused the title ‘clients’ in favour of ‘neighbours’ (Margolin 1997). This tradition is embedded in progressive education, which has an emancipatory agenda and employs structural analysis to discover and change the source of social problems (Ife 1997; Mullaly 1997; Polack 2004). A theme common to most progressive social workers is the elimination of
discrimination, inequality and oppression (Dietz 2000, Dominelli 2002b; Mullaly 2002) through political action (Langan & Lee 1989). (For a fuller and slightly different discussion on the social work professions and their origins see Hare 2004: 410–414).

The AASW commitment and IFSW definition include both the conventional and progressive approaches to social work. As a word of caution, the use of dichotomies distorts reality by focussing on the polarities rather than the graduated continuum between two end points. In the complexity of practice, the conventional and progressive/radical/structural approaches are more likely to be on a continuum and possibly complementary rather than opposite and polarised. A different conceptualisation that involves a continuum may be seen from table 2.1:
Table 2.1 Ideological Approaches to Social Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLITICAL IDEOLOGY</th>
<th>CONSERVATIVE</th>
<th>LIBERAL</th>
<th>SOCIAL DEMOCRAT</th>
<th>ANARCHIST–LIBERATIONIST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THEORY</td>
<td>Consensus</td>
<td>Consensus</td>
<td>Pluralist</td>
<td>Structural/Conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIEWPOINT</td>
<td>Individual Pathology</td>
<td>Interaction between the individual and society</td>
<td>Interaction between the individual and society</td>
<td>Structure of society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAUSE OF PROBLEMS</td>
<td>Individuals are imperfect, Disorganisation inevitable</td>
<td>‘Accidental’ disorganisation Amenable to change</td>
<td>‘Purposeful’ disorganisation of power competing interests, amenable to change</td>
<td>Inbuilt advantage for the ruling class, disorganisation inevitable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATURE OF PROBLEMS</td>
<td>Malfunctioning of people as individuals or in families, groups and communities</td>
<td>Tendency of organisation to be ignorant and unresponsive to people’s needs. Plus people’s failure to present their interests and use existing resources</td>
<td>Inequalities in the distribution of power and resources, leading to the disadvantage of some groups of people</td>
<td>Oppression entrenched in all societal institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBJECTIVES OF CHANGE</td>
<td>Personal Change</td>
<td>Personal and Social Change</td>
<td>Social Change</td>
<td>Social and Personal Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Better adjusted and less deviant people; more integrated, self-supporting families, groups and communities</td>
<td>More appropriate, adequate and better coordinated services plus people better educated and motivated</td>
<td>Re-allocation and redistribution of resources combined with rights for disadvantaged groups</td>
<td>Removal of authoritarianism from social institutions and personal relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METHODS OF CHANGE</td>
<td>Focus on personal pathology in counselling, case work, group therapy etc., and on stimulating self-help through community development</td>
<td>Conventional social casework, information and advice, community development, self help, participation, social planning, service development, community organisation</td>
<td>Welfare Rights and advocacy, negotiation and bargaining. Advocacy, social planning, pressure groups, community action</td>
<td>Radical Therapy Libertarian self-help alternatives, direct community action, industrial deviancy and situational ethics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Wel 106, Charles Sturt University 1998
The table illustrates the different political, ideological influences relating to theory, viewpoints, the determination of the source of the problem, the nature of the problem, the objective of change and the methods of change that can be adopted. However within the definition of social work, one does not need to be aligned with any particular conceptualisation and there is no a priori reason why one cannot or should not operate at any point across the table.

Lundy (2004: 54) provides a useful non-linear model for consideration in Figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.1 Organising Framework for Social Work Approaches**

![Organising Framework for Social Work Approaches](image)

Source: Adapted from Lundy (2004: 54)
The two axes of subjective/individual-objective/structural and conflict-order allow social workers to operate as the circumstances and situations determine. The ‘client/neighbour’ may desire a change within her/him/themselves to accommodate a ‘better life’ or may desire structural change to transform his/her/their life. There is no a priori reason why a social work practitioner cannot operate across the spectrum created by the two axes and the varying theoretical, political and ideological positions. However, this model is also a model that has the social worker and the nature of the intervention as the focus and the ‘client/neighbour’ as the object of the social work approaches.

The nature of social work is such as to be involved in all facets of individual, community, group, institutional, national and international life at both a macro, mezzo and micro level. Social workers work with individuals and groups and communities and social and other service systems in an environment. Zastrow (1994: 25) conceptualises the environment as having the person/group/community at the centre of a range of systems that include the family system, the education system, the goods and services system, the religious system, the employment system, the political system and the social service system. Zastrow’s conceptualisation is far from exhaustive but does encapsulate the multi-dimensional world to which individuals and humanity is at the same time the crafter and the crafted. The ‘person-in-the-environment’ concept (I prefer ‘participant-in the environment’ as it allows for groups and communities and not individuals only—see Chapter 3) recognises the dynamic interplay between the individual person and the wider environment. The person is both the object of the environment and the contributor to and shaper of it. Zastrow asserts that social workers work at the micro level (working on a one-to-one basis with individuals) at a mezzo level (families and groups) and at the macro level (working with organisations, communities and seeking change in statutes and social policy). While sociologists may be primarily concerned with understanding
the person in their environment, the social worker is additionally interested in the person (group/community)-in-the environment and change. The social worker, in addition to understanding the person-in-their-environment, has the additional step of promoting action and change.

Social work theorists often regard social work as being defined by its value base as evidenced by documents such as the AASW’s *Code of Ethics*. Fook et al., (2000), Witkin (1998: 484) and other social theorists hold that values and ethics form the foundation of professional social work. Earlier attempts to define the nexus between social work theory and practice (Meyer 1983 cited in Payne 1997) have described the activities of social workers based on practice wisdom which can result in formulaic and prescriptive outcomes. Other writers (for example, Payne 1997 and Healy 2005) consider that agencies have been co-constructing social work theory and practice through practitioner reflexivity. This process is dynamic, creative and avoids formulaic approaches. Weeks (2000) states:

*An enduring theme in all models or theories for social work and human service practice is the social context and its influence on people and families...Theorising the extent of the influence of history and external forces on persons in families versus the extent of individual responsibility or ‘agency’ is highly contested terrain.* (125)

Lewis & Balzac (2007: 143) note the disjunction between theory and practice and the difficulty of students and early career social workers in reconciling their personal commitments with agency and client expectations. These can lead to disillusionment with social work, a perception that social work is ineffective, and the experience of stress as a result of seeing structural inequality and poverty (Lewis & Balzac 2007: 141). They note the disjunction between altruistic notions of helping based upon an amorphous concept of social justice and the realities of working with complex,
entrenched and often involuntary clients. They also flag the tension between care and control that occurs in stressful and under-resourced working conditions with low professional status and in an organisational context that frequently limits the autonomy of social workers (136–137). Petrovich (2004) describes the situation as follows:

*Not only are social work students expected to master the diverse theories and applied skills, but they are also expected to use their educational experiences to promote social justice, empower the oppressed, heal the wounded, and celebrate diversity—and to do so with integrity, self-awareness, and respect for all persons. Furthermore, social work clients are often disempowered, voiceless, and troubled, with few resources and complicated crises, and social work professionals struggle to help them amid the often disheartening realities of discrimination, social stigma, and funding cuts. Social work students who enter the profession full of idealism and altruistic motivation can become vulnerable to a loss of confidence due to the human suffering they face on a daily basis and the complex sociocultural and political contexts of their work.* (429)

Hawkins et al., (2001) note that employment for beginning social workers is primarily multi-disciplinary but that social work does not have ownership of a defined body of knowledge but draws from many fields (Ife 1997). Van Soest (1996) maintains that social work educators must ‘not only provide knowledge…but help students translate that knowledge into actions designed to facilitate social change’ (201).

These writers articulate issues that have been of considerable concern to me over many years of personal reflection first as a beginning social worker, then as an experienced social worker and student supervisor, as a social work manager and subsequently as a social work educator. I have wanted to ensure that students and new career social workers and experienced practitioners in new situations had a simple and accessible framework or model for practice that was capable of appropriating new and developing knowledge, that was not wedded to one singular theoretical view or paradigm, was respectful of all forms of knowledge, was focussed upon outcomes and
could be operationalised justly, fairly and collaboratively with clients rather than imposed. It needed to acknowledge that social work and the practice of social work is complex. It involves consideration of the individual/family/group/community within a complex, diverse and ever-changing eco-socio-political environment. Social work has a commitment to action and the pursuit and maintenance of human well-being and social justice.

Social work is also under challenge. Broadly, in Australia, psychology (‘the scientific study of behaviour and thinking of organisms’—Meyer et al., 1991: 1) has developed around scientific/empirical knowledge with a concentration on thinking and behaviour. Other disciplines (political science, medicine, law, occupational therapy, case management, diversional therapy, physiotherapy, speech therapy, theology and so on) have narrow bodies of knowledge drawn from specific areas that results in specialisations. In the human service field, there are workers that operate at the level of action with limited or no bodies of formal knowledge. They act intuitively and responsively (for example, self-help groups) based on his/her own life experiences. Social work, by contrast, is broad, holistic and action-oriented. It encapsulates knowledge from a variety of disciplines including knowledge about the individual, knowledge about groups and communities, knowledge of the society, knowledge of ethics, commitments to human rights and social justice, processes of how to get things done and the social worker’s life experiences (being). This plethora of influences, knowledge and aims are both its strength and its weakness. It is a strength for social work in that the whole person in the environment can be considered. It is a weakness in that it can lead to the tensions described by Petrovich (2004). As I have reflected upon the definitions of social work and its highly commendable aims, the depth and breadth of social work practice and the very contested nature of its work, I have considered that social work requires a capacity for thinking, a capacity for doing and a quality of being.
Social work is about thinking, doing and being. I have over many years developed and used the phrase:

As a social worker:

If you think, and don't do—you are useless;
If you do, and don't think—you are dangerous;
Fundamental to thinking and doing is being.

The essence of social work involves the appropriate use of the mind/brain (thinking, theory), action (doing) and the appropriate use of the self (being). Social workers think, do and are. Reflecting on these, I have become concerned for the following critical issues which impact upon the holistic practice of social work:

1. In the literature and social work education, the inter-relationship of thinking and doing and being are often considered as separate and disjointed entities with few clearly articulated models for holistic inter-relating.
2. Theory and practice are frequently ‘either/or’ with social workers either being ‘too theoretical’ or ‘too practical’ or being too ‘clinical’ or too ‘community’ oriented.
3. The consideration of being (self) is under-developed or neglected.
4. While client self-determination is a fundamental principle of social work, many models of social work practice and much practice reality is that clients (I prefer ‘participants’) are the objects of change and have little real determination of their future.
5. Certain types of knowledge (usually empirical or scientific knowledge) are valued over other types of knowledge.
6. In the plethora of theory and knowledge available to social workers, the
tendencies are towards unthinking eclecticism and reductionism. I argue that
these are to be replaced by an understanding of consilience.

Thinking, doing and being, through the process of consilience, are capable of
appropriating new methods, knowledge and understandings while also providing a
platform and continuity with history and social movements against which new
information, new challenges and new approaches can be considered.

THINKING AND DOING AND BEING

What is Thinking?

Gough (cited in Cotton 1991):

> Perhaps most importantly in today’s information age, thinking skills are viewed as crucial for educated persons to cope with a rapidly changing world. Many educators believe that specific knowledge will not be as important to tomorrow’s workers and citizen as the ability to learn and make sense of new information. (1)

The nature of thinking is contested. Despite Alvino (1990) developing a glossary of
thinking skills terms, there is no universal agreement in the use and definition of these
terms. Bloom’s Taxonomy, despite some rethinking (Anderson 1999), categorises
thinking skills from concrete to abstract—from knowledge and comprehension, through
application to analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The last three are considered higher
order skills.

Thinking skills are a set of basic and advanced skills and sub-skills that govern a
person’s mental processes. These skills consist of knowledge, dispositions, cognitive
and metacognitive operations. ‘Cognition’ is considered to be the mental operations involved in thinking; the biological/neurological processes of the brain that facilitate thought. ‘Metacognition’ is the process of planning, assessing, and monitoring one’s own thinking and is considered the pinnacle of mental functioning whilst ‘transfer’ is the ability to apply thinking skills taught separately to any subject.

While the study of cognition and thinking is a field of its own, for the purposes of this thesis, the term ‘thinking’ involves both process and content. My purpose is to look for the key elements that will be useful for practice. These key elements of thinking are summarised and categorised into process and content in Table 2.2 as:

### Table 2.2 Key Elements of Thinking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROCESS</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>Existing Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Reflection</td>
<td>Existing Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic/Logical thinking</td>
<td>Existing understandings and frameworks including personal and professional knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateral/Creative thinking</td>
<td>Contextual issues related to both general matters (paradigms, rules, legislation) and specific matters (this client, this community, this problem, these strengths)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

Of critical thinking, Heron (2006) says:

*The ability to think critically would appear to be a defining feature of competent social work practice. Yet the way practitioners develop critical thinking and how it is taught and assessed within educational establishments is unclear.* (209)

Critical thinking is a process of determining the authenticity, accuracy, or value of something. It is characterised by the ability to seek reasons and alternatives, perceive the total situation, and change one’s view based on evidence. It is sometimes called
‘logical’ thinking or ‘analytical’ thinking.

Critical thinking consists of mental processes of discernment, analysis and assessment. It includes all possible processes of reflecting upon real or imagined possibilities in order to form a solid judgement that reconciles the evidence with common sense and the set of known circumstances. Critical thinking, according to Brookfield (1987: 1), involves a process of ‘calling into question the assumptions underlying our customary, habitual ways of thinking and acting and then being ready to think and act differently on the basis of the critical questioning’.

According to the University of New England (2008), critical reflection is the process of analysing, reconsidering and questioning experiences within a broad context of issues. The process of critical reflection may be divided into a number of dimensions which address the different activities and levels of reflection in Table 2.3.

### Table 2.3 Levels of Reflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIMENSION 1</th>
<th>Comprehensive observations aiming for accuracy and breadth; these observations are made through specific frameworks (for example, personal background, theoretical orientation, systems).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DIMENSION 2</td>
<td>Comprehensive descriptions of observations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIMENSION 3</td>
<td>Making meaning of what has been described.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIMENSION 4</td>
<td>Adding depth and breadth to the meanings by asking questions about, and relating meanings to, a spectrum of personal and professional issues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Systemic thinking is a social approach using systems theories to create desired outcomes, or change. It is an approach to problem solving that views certain ‘problems’ as a part of the overall system. Solutions to the problems may lie within or outside of the system and focusing on the problems may only further develop the undesired
element or problem and negate possible solutions. Logical thinking classifies the structure of statements and arguments, both through the study of formal systems of deduction and inference and through the study of arguments. Logic is also commonly used in argumentation theory and is a step-by-step and convergent approach to thinking (Cox & Willard: 1982). It is closely related to reasoning. Reasoning is the mental process of looking for reasons for beliefs, conclusions, actions or feelings. Human beings have the ability to engage in reasoning about their own reasoning through introspection and self-reflection.

Inductive reasoning moves from the particular to the general while deductive reasoning moves from the general to the particular. It can be represented in the following way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEDUCTIVE (SCIENTIFIC)</th>
<th>INDUCTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td>Tentative Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test</td>
<td>Observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Creative (often termed ‘lateral’) thinking is a novel way of seeing or doing things that is characterised by four components: fluency (generating many ideas); flexibility (shifting perspective easily); originality (conceiving of something new) and elaboration (building on other ideas). De Bono (1985) defines lateral thinking as methods of thinking concerned with changing concepts and perception. Lateral thinking is about reasoning that is not immediately obvious and about ideas that may not be obtainable by using only traditional step-by-step logic. It is a divergent approach. He characterises
thinking under six ‘hats’ which allow for consideration of facts and data (white hat), emotions and intuition (red hat), logical negative approaches (black hat), positive and optimistic thinking (yellow hat), creative thinking (green hat), and process control thinking (blue hat).

For some social workers, the choice is either deductive or inductive reasoning and between critical thinking/critical reflection/systemic/logical thinking or lateral/creative thinking. In this thesis, inductive and deductive reasoning, critical thinking/critical reflection/systemic/logical thinking and lateral/creative thinking are considered as complementary—in a powerful partnership—that leads to better theory building and wiser and better practice. Social workers require thinking that is both inductive and deductive as well as divergent and convergent. Divergent thinking uses the creativity (lateral approaches) to play ‘what if? ’—establishing multiple scenarios and ideas to consider as hypotheses. Convergent thinking uses sound reasoning and common sense to analyse possibilities and to select the hypothesis with the most potential based on a set of criteria for expected outcomes. These skills (and others) enable social workers to assess unfamiliar scenarios, to generate plausible options for action, evaluate client capacity and arrive at well-reasoned and defensible judgements (Crisp et al., 2004; O’Hara & Webster 2006).

Adams et al., (2005) use the term ‘complexity thinking’ to argue for a process of:

...revisiting ideas through reflection and critical thinking and doing which enables us to re-evaluate them in the light of our developing practice and reading about practice, as our understanding of those ideas become deeper and refined. (6)

It is somewhat artificial to separate the process of thinking and the content of thinking, for while thinking is a process, thinking is also bounded by content. Put simply, thinking is always about something. In social work, the content (or object) of
the thinking may include existing knowledge and theory (for example, psychological or political theory), existing understandings and frameworks (for example, understandings about violence, bonding and attachment), contextual matters (for example, is it a matrilineal or patrilineal society or neither?), practice wisdom (for example, what has worked in this field before and under what circumstances?) and personal and professional insights (what do I personally and professionally bring to this situation and what are the professional/organisational imperatives?). It may also include the logical extension of a particular course of action including short- and long-term probable or possible consequences. For example, if we do this, is it a precedent with short- and long-term implications? It will necessarily involve thinking about the potential rewards and potential consequences and an assessment of the probability of their occurrence and the severity of their occurrence. This has elements of risk-predicting philosophy but is different in that it is both an intuitive and systemic assessment rather than only an actuarial assessment. The content component of thinking also recognises that the subject matter of the thinking may not be entirely and accurately known, nor strictly logical, correctly sequenced and that human judgements by human beings will be required.

Thinking in social work has both process and content features and is a key requirement for effective and reflective social work.

What is ‘Doing’?

Critical and lateral thinking leads to a consideration of reflective practice and the roles that social workers take in their employment and in their actual practice.

The ‘doing’ of social work varies from practice situation to practice situation and from client to client. The roles of social workers have been variously defined. Standard and well-regarded undergraduate texts cover much the same areas but categorise them under different headings. Hepworth, Rooney & Larsen (1997: 27 based on Lister 1987)
highlight the roles of social workers in the following diagram (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2 The Role of the Social Worker

Source: Hepworth, Rooney & Larsen (1997: 27)

The ‘doing’ of social work involves a set of skills and abilities and the demarcation between being and doing is not at all clear. There are some core social work and helping skills such as empathy, warmth and genuineness (Rogers 1961) that are more attributes of being than actual doing skills. Carkuff (1987) adds concreteness, immediacy and confrontation. Egan (2001) identifies attending, listening, probing and effective challenging. Marsh & Doel (2005), in relation to task-centred practice, consider thirteen elements: mandate, problem and goals, goals, exploring problems, focussing problems, refining goals, time limiting, recording agreements, tasking and task roles, reviewing, ending and evaluating, and continuing.

The ‘doing’ of social work then involves listening, questioning, curiosity, unobtrusive observation, mediation, negotiation, arbitration, the use of genograms, ecomaps and culturegrams, timelining, alliance forming, information gathering, information dispensing, reframing, refocussing, encouraging, use of differing methods and any other skill that proves useful (and legitimate).
Others have a different list of the ‘doing’ skills that are required. Mowbray (1996) for example itemises the desirable skills of community/social workers which includes an emphasis in research and planning, communication and education skills, organisational skills, management skills, interpersonal skills, political skills, skills that cross infrastructure provisions, local and regional planning and a range of other practice skills. The DiNitto Centre from the University of Texas (2008) lists 66 social work related skills. The ‘doing’ of social work is diverse.

The reading of any of these lists highlights again the practical inseparability of the thinking and doing and being concepts. It also highlights a significant gap and problem that social work encounters. The doing skills are largely (but not exclusively) process-oriented rather than being specifically ‘outcome’ or even objective oriented. This can lead to the criticism of social work that it is about process rather than producing tangible outcomes that can be measured and quantified. In practice some social workers develop ‘social contracts’ to specify goals and objectives with clients while others use case management as a means to ensure ‘outcomes’. Among non-social work administrators and for early career graduates this focus on processes of ‘doing’ can lead to the questioning of the value of social work when measured against outcome criteria.

Among the plethora of social work doing skills, Zastrow (2003: 13–15) refers to the activities of social workers under headings of Enabler, Broker, Advocate, Empowerer, Activist, Mediator, Negotiator, Educator, Initiator, Co-ordinator, Researcher, Group Facilitator and Public Speaker. While there are many approaches used by social workers including conflictual (Mowbray 1996) and situational/ eclectic (Lazarus and Beutler 1993) approaches, Zastrow highlights the roles and systemic perspective that many social workers adopt. As the purpose of this thesis is a practical one, I will utilise Zastrow’s roles primarily as it is relatively simple, easily applied, widely used as an
undergraduate text and is well understood by undergraduate and early career social workers (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4  Zastrow’s Primary Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENABLING</td>
<td>Involves helping to articulate their needs, clarify and identify problems, explore solutions and develop capacities to deal with future problem-solving more effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BROKERING</td>
<td>Involves linking individuals and groups with the services or personnel that they need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADVOCATING</td>
<td>Involves information collection arguing for the correctness of client's needs and requesting and challenging institutional decisions which limit or deny services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPOWERING</td>
<td>Involves social workers developing the capacity of clients to understand their environment, make choices, take responsibility for those choices and to influence their life through the organisations and environments in which they live.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTIVISM</td>
<td>Is concerned with social justice inequality and deprivation and seeks to bring basic institutional change by shifting power and resources to disadvantaged groups. It may involve confrontation, conflict, negotiation, community organisation and mobilisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIATING</td>
<td>Involves intervening in disputes between parties in order to help them find compromise, reconcile differences and reach contractual or covenantal agreements. Mediation involves remaining neutral and making sure that both parties in a dispute understand their positions by clarifying, recognising mis-communications and helping the parties present their case clearly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEGOTIATING</td>
<td>Is somewhat like mediating, and brings together those who are in conflict over one or more issues in order to arrive at a compromise and mutually agreed solution. A negotiator may be aligned with one side or the other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATING</td>
<td>Involves information giving and teaching new and adaptive skills. Initiating calls attention to a problem or a potential problem and involves the social worker recognising the likely outcome and consequences in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COORDINATING</td>
<td>Involves bringing different components into focus. Often now referred to as case management, coordination involves ensuring that there is no duplication of services or conflict in objectives or where there is conflict between objectives, that the conflict is managed effectively.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**RESEARCHING:**
Involves seeking out appropriate information, evaluating that information, applying it to practice settings, assessing the merits and shortcomings of interventions or of services. Researching can be at an individual level (for example, researching a client’s health situation) or at the mezzo or macro levels.

**GROUP FACILITATING:**
Involves leading others through a group experience with a therapy group, education group, a self-help group or many other forms of groups.

**PUBLIC SPEAKING:**
Involves informing others of the availability of services or advocating the development of new services. This public speaking may be an interagency meeting, in the press, on radio or television, at forums, conferences or in small networks.


Zastrow (2003: 13) recognises that the ‘doing’ roles listed above identify some, but not all the roles adopted by a social worker. ‘Doing’ in social work refers to what social workers do/perform with the range of activities being well captured through social work roles and skills.

**What is ‘Being’?**

As noted, separating ‘being’ from thinking and doing is a somewhat artificial and contentious undertaking. Buddha is attributed as saying: ‘we are what we think—all that we are arises with our thoughts—with our thoughts we make the world’. For Buddha, ‘being’ and ‘thinking’ are inseparable. Descartes (*Meditations on Philosophy*, 1641) says:

*...This alone is inseparable from me. I am—I exist: this is certain; but how often? Now it is plain I am not an assemblage of members called the human body; I am not a thin and penetrating air diffused through all these members, or wind, or flame, or vapour, or breath, or any of all the things that I can imagine; for I supposed that all these were not, and, without changing the supposition, I find that I feel assured of my existence.*
Carroll (2007) says:

*The enigma of being confronts all humans. It does so whenever another walks in the door. We take in the presence: the person opposite is more than his or her attributes. Stripping away the colour of the hair, the age of the face, and whatever we know of the life story, there remains this ethereal concentration of being. In the place of empty space, a charged field of some kind of force manifests itself. It is a field with its own phantasmal shape. It lives more as a distillation or essence than as a character or personality. Behind each of these existential forms lies the big presence...*(1)

For the purposes of this thesis, while the term ‘being’ incorporates thinking and doing, it is more than either or both. We are, at the very least, what we think and do. But human being also involves emotion, physical characteristics, values, spiritual and existential understandings, aesthetics, relationships, memory, experience—which may or may not necessarily be reflected in thinking and doing. Being involves recognising that humans are both shaped by and shapers of the environment—physically, socially, ecologically and spiritually. Being involves concepts of personhood and the self. The use of self is not a new concept in social work. Hedyt & Sherman (2005) say:

*For a concept that most consider basic to the field of social work, however, the search of the current literature reveals less than expected. As documented by various authors (Lee 1983; Specht & Courtney 1994; Leiby 1997; Jacobson 2001), the shift in social work from its early emphasis on social reform to its current emphasis on clinical practice also appears to have shifted the focus from the conscious use of self at multiple levels of intervention to self awareness within a one-to-one helping relationship. *(26)

Research has found that virtually all therapeutic approaches are equally effective
(Smith, Glass & Miller 1980). The essence of therapeutic success, at least in the clinical setting, is a good working relationship between clinician and client (Frank 1982; Marziali and Alexander 1991; Camilleri 1996; Garvin 1997; Brown 1992a). Integral to establishing and maintaining such a relationship is the use of self in the application of any specific approach or technique (McConnaughty 1987). Marshall (2005: 115) writing about programmes for sex offenders argues for less detailed treatment manuals which reduce treatment programmes to psychoeducational processes and for establishing a proper balance between specifying procedures and allowing sufficient flexibility for the therapist to use his/her influence to maximise treatment outcomes. Strupp (as cited in Edwards & Bess 1998: 91) asserts that ‘the person of the therapist is far more important than his theoretical orientation’. Hubble, Miller & Duncan (1999) note that in the therapeutic setting that outcome variance is related to the strengths and resources the client brings (40%), the therapeutic relationship that is developed (30%), client expectation and capacity for hope (15%) and the technique or model employed (15 %). Writing in relation to family therapy, Flaskas (2004) says that ‘the therapeutic relationship rated barely a mention in the first thirty years of family therapy theory’ (14).

Understanding the self or ‘being’ of the social worker (and the ‘client’) is clearly important. Interestingly, the concept of the use of self is not applied to ‘clients’ or others involved with social workers. The self is conceptualised in different ways throughout the social work literature. Dewane (2006) says that the ‘use of self is a concept that is universally accepted yet equally ambiguous’ (543). Muran et al., (2001) provides an analysis of the term ‘self’ while Dewane (2006: 544) operationalises the use of self under five headings: use of personality; use of belief systems; use of relational dynamics; use of anxiety; and use of self-disclosure. Davies (1994) describes a worker’s self as ‘an identifiable person…her idiosyncrasies…her height, her age, her sex, her
ethic origins, her temper, her energy, her prejudices—these are the qualities she has to work with, for better or worse’ (174–5). Heydt and Sherman (2005: 25–6) argue that the self is an instrument and in fact the primary instrument that a social worker has to facilitate change. They say that the conscious use of self purposefully and intentionally used allows for:

...his or her motivation and capacity to communicate and interact with others in ways that facilitate change...the skilled worker is purposefully making use of his or her unique manner and style in relating to others and building positive helping relationships with clients is fundamental to social work practice. (25–6)

Others focus on the process of the self. England (1986) explains:

The worker's choice will be guided—to an extent—by his formal learning of relevant knowledge, ideology and philosophy, but the specific processes will be one which is intuitive—They may reflect this learning but his perception is likely to be as much influenced by his previous colloquial learning as by his professional education. (29)

Cournoyer (2000) says, ‘...because social work practice involves the conscious and deliberate use of oneself, you become the medium through which knowledge, attitudes and skills are conveyed’ (35).

The social worker’s self acts as a filter. Yan and Wong (2005), drawing on Kondrat (1999), use the social construction principles and assert that the social worker's self can only be understood in relation to others. Social work then becomes a site where the social worker and others negotiate and co-create new meanings and relationships.

Discussion of the social worker's use of self has predominantly focused upon the therapeutic relationship (Coady & Wolgein 1996; Edwards and Bess 1998; Elliott 2000; Reupert 2006). Jacobson (2001) notes:
...although key to therapeutic practice, such efforts to ‘know oneself’ have not been emphasised as a foundation to non-clinical social work activities, such as income maintenance work, employment training, child welfare, or nutritional support. (55)

Exceptions include Lee (1983) who describes the importance of self when working in a school and Hedyt & Sherman (2005) who analyse the importance of the social worker's use of self at a micro, mezzo and macro levels and, while they acknowledge the importance of the use of self in therapeutic settings, they also urge the examination of the use of self as a group therapy facilitator, agency director or grassroots community organiser.

Literature on the use of self is widely located (O’Connor et al., 1997; Payne 1997; Hepworth et al., 1997), variously defined but rarely delineated to identify aspects of the self (Zabrycki 1999). It is often focussed upon personal experience and values. Fook (1996) adopts a different perspective in linking the use of self to the intuitive, inductive and subjective and encourages social workers to develop skills of reflective practice that will legitimate experiential learning and practice.

Self and personhood need to be considered. Social work is concerned with the person-in-their-environment (Zastrow 2003: 18–19; Gibelman 1999). Any consideration of the self should include the nature of personhood—that of both the social worker and the client. That, of course, will vary enormously from client to client, social worker to social worker, group to group and community to community and will be influenced by age, gender, education, language, mental capacity, beliefs, philosophies, skills, socio-economics, motivation and commitment and a range of other considerations. In order to not establish oppressive practices and to value diversity, the client’s self is a very necessary consideration in the thinking and doing of social work as it hinges upon the very ‘being’ of the client. Sack (2002) says:
Selznick articulates the idea which is compelling—moral equality is the postulant that all persons have the same intrinsic worth. They are unequal in talents, contribution to social life and in valid claims to rewards and resources. But everyone who is a person is presumptively entitled to recognition of that personhood. (206)

Arnd–Caddington & Pozzuto (2006) assert that the term ‘use of self’ has developed from the recognition of the importance of the relationship between a social worker and the client and state that ‘over time the concept of relationship has evolved into the term “use of self” ’ (109). The term ‘use of self’ has been applied to honesty and spontaneity (Davies 1994), to genuineness, vulnerability and self-awareness (Edwards & Bess 1998), mindfulness of one’s belief system and judicious self-disclosure (Dewane 2005). These can be criticised as the self as an object. Constructionist psychotherapies would address the self as non-concrete and non-continuous (Gergan 1999; Lax 1996). Gergan, for example, says: ‘the concept of the self as an integral, bounded agent is slowly becoming untenable’ (1999: 202). Lax considers the self as a product of interacting with others. Arnd–Caddington & Pozzuto (2006) citing Mead (1934) argue that:

The self has a character which is different from that of the physiological organism proper. The self is something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process. (135–6)

‘Symbolic Interactionism’ (a phrase coined by Blumer 1969) which views the human self as an initiating actor who continually adjusts behaviour to the actions of others is a valid perspective continued by Pierce (1960), Cooley (1992), Goffman
(1961), Becker (1963) and more lately by Denzin (1989). While, in my view, the self is social, I would argue that it is more than just social.

There seems to be ample evidence arising from the human genome project and many other sources to indicate that the self (being) is both a continuing entity and one that is shaped by environmental influences. The philosophical and practical debate over nature and nurture has relevance here. It is questionable as to whether the self is non-continuous and whether it is entirely different from the physiological organism as conceived by Mead. It seems to me that the self is both present at birth and malleable by the environment. It also seems that the physiological organism is subject to development and decay and that in a similar way the ‘self’/‘being’ is subject to development and decay.

Ontological questions (ontology as the branch of metaphysics that deals with the nature of being) have been at the heart of philosophy for centuries and are considered by the vast majority of human beings. Kant’s distinction between the phenomena (appearances that inhabit our consciousness) and noumena (the world that lies behind the appearances) has great significance for social work practice as has the assertion that the enlightenment moved from a theocentric model to an anthropocentric model (for a full discussion see Hamilton 2008). The nature of humanity, human potential, the criteria for human well-being and the processes to maximise that well-being are multiple thesis issues in themselves and the subject of debate, philosophical consideration and enquiry that are far too expansive for this thesis with its emphasis on social work practice. The nature of the relationship of one human being to another human being (whether created or evolved or both or neither) has profound implications on the sense of being. If, for example, humans derive their ‘being’ from a ‘Great Other’—that is—they are at least co-constructed by environmental influences, intrinsic
biological influences and the influence of the ‘Great Other’, then ‘being’ is much more
than biology and socialisation and involves theology (the systematic study of the
existence and nature of the divine and its relationship to other beings).

In this regard, I consider all human beings (persons) to have a constituency that is
physiological/organic, mental/emotional, social/relational and spiritual/existential (not
in the narrow Christian sense but in the more expansive sense of ontological
existentialism) and is slightly different to the IFSW principles, which acknowledge:
‘Social workers should uphold and defend each person’s physical, psychological,
emotional and spiritual integrity and well-being’. My understanding of human ‘being’
may be summarised in figure 2.3:

Figure 2.3 Understanding the Human Being

Source: Author

This conception of ‘humanness’ or ‘self’, ‘personhood’ or human ‘being’ has the
varying components (physiological/organic, mental/emotional, social/relational and

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spiritual/existential) as interrelated and interdependent. The loss or reduction of any capacity in any of the intersecting circles may impair, but does not negate, the humanness or the personhood.

My schema needs some justification. With the exception of some epiphenomenalists, few would argue against human beings having a physical/organic component. Conversely, some may reduce being to a physical/organic entity only by reducing the human being to a set of chemicals combined in the form of the human body/biology with 99% of the mass of the human body made up of the six elements—oxygen, carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, calcium and phosphorus. This reductionist view would deny the mental/emotional, social/relational or spiritual/existential component to humanness. Such a view seems to be extreme, untrue and not consistent with any understanding of social work.

Few would argue that human beings do not have a mental/emotional component although there will be considerable debate as to whether the mental/emotional is the same as the psychological component (the IFSW recognises psychological and emotional) and where the limits of the brain/mind continuum or dichotomy are. Some differentiate between the brain and the mind. To an extent the body–brain/mind dichotomy is a form of substance (or Cartesian) dualism of immaterial minds (mental substances) and material substances (physical things). The brain and the mind, for some, can causally interact but they are different entities, with different properties and are knowable in different ways. Wilson (1998) would propose that the advances in brain research and understanding would result in a unity of knowledge based upon a scientific explanation. But the physical study of the brain may not answer the issues that exercise the mind and account for morals, ethics, beauty, music, love, sacrifice and the consciousness that make human beings.
Few would argue that humanity has a component that is social/relational although interestingly, this is absent from the IFSW principle quoted above. Human beings are generally social and relational and few live in isolation to families or communities. It seems to me that it is a priori true that human beings are social/relational. It seems that the ‘social’ is an essential feature of social work.

The most contentious area is spiritual/existential. While the IFSW helpfully acknowledges the spiritual, Peck (1983: 4) says: ‘for the past three hundred years there has been a state of profound separation between religion and science’. Hare (2004: 416) discusses bio-psychosocial factors but does not discuss spiritual/existential factors. In Western social work, there has been a denial of the spiritual for some considerable time although consideration of Existentialism has been at least acceptable. For example, Zastrow’s well used text The Practice of Social Work is in its eighth edition. All editions, until edition seven, did not include a chapter on spirituality and very scant reference to Existentialism while the last two editions have a chapter on spirituality in social work. The terms ‘spiritual development’ (the search for transcendental meaning), ‘faith development’ (the development of a belief in divinity) and ‘development of religious understandings’ (‘individual progress towards propositional networks of the values, creeds and practices of organised religion’) (Thompson & Randall 1999) have different meanings but are often used interchangeably. The summary of research in this area (Marler & Hadaway 2002) shows that the vast majority of people regard themselves as spiritual and/or religious. The Australian Community Survey (1998) indicates two-thirds of Australians claim that the spiritual life is important to them with 33% claiming to pray or meditate at least weekly, 74% believing in God, a higher power or a ‘life force’, with 40% accepting conventional Christian beliefs in the life, death, resurrection and divinity of Jesus. Yet the social work literature has relatively little specifically written on the faith development of practitioners, students or clients. Few
Australian social work education courses have subjects/units specific to the area of spiritual/existential. At the practical level, while NSW Child Protection legislation (Child Care and Protection Act 1998) requires that a child’s spiritual development be considered at all times and their own religious preference be accommodated, my own research (through supervising a student placement) of twenty longitudinal cases (2003) indicated that the child’s religious denomination was not known to the caseworker or even recorded on the file (despite it being on the assessment sheet) in 85% of the randomly selected sample.

Spiritual/existential growth and decay includes consideration of fundamental questions such as what is the purpose and meaning of life? Who am I? Why am I here? What is my future? What constitutes right and wrong? How can I act rightly? Why are there bad things in the world that happen to me and others? (See for example, Canda & Furman 1999). Thompson & Randall (1999), modifying Fowler’s stages of faith development, suggest stages in faith development that move from the primal/undifferentiated faith (Infancy) through Intuitive-Projective faith (typically the pre-school years), mythic-literal faith (early school years), synthetic-conventional faith (early adolescence), individuated-reflective faith (late adolescence/early adult years), conjunctive faith (adulthood) and finally universalising faith (adulthood).

It needs to be noted that any discussion of the spiritual/existential will also be influenced by the social/relational. Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu contrasted the Western and African notion of being human by setting the popular view of Descartes—‘I think—therefore I am’—against the Sotho and Nguni phrase (ubuntu-botho) that can be translated as ‘I am because you are; you are because we are’ or ‘a person is a person through other people’ (Allen 2006: 346).

There are of course very many ways to conceptualise human beings/persons.
Lazarus (2006) proposes BASIC ID (Behaviour, Affect, Sensation, Imagery, Cognition, Interpersonal relationships, and Drugs/biology) in his multimodal therapy approach. As neat and inclusive as the classification is, I think that it continues to overlook the spiritual/existential component of humanity that includes a sense of morality, beauty, love and selflessness.

Dangers lie in not valuing all four elements of the schemata. Calley (1974)—quoted at the start of this chapter—reduced human beings to pieces of flesh and ideology. Others may reflect their own times and see persons as customers, consumers or economic agents and thus privilege one aspect of being. Ross Gittens (2003), the economics editor for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, states:

*Homo Economicus*—the person who inhabits the economists’ models—bears only a passing resemblance to you and me. The economists have seized on a few aspects of human nature and assumed (because it makes their models easier to play with) that this is all there is to us.

*Homo Economicus* is an approach to reducing human beings to fit a particular model (in this case economics). The danger of the approaches that reduce human beings to (say) a set of economic principles, a set of ideologies, a set of chemicals, a set of symptoms or a set of genes is that people are reduced from the fullness of their being by a unitary model or explanation. In practice, there have been many approaches that were reductionist and oppressive rather than diverse and empowering by privileging one element of being above others. (For example, see Nakata 2007 and the ‘evidence’ from scientific experiments of perception that was used to substantiate continuing disempowerment of Torres Strait Islanders).

The terms ‘being’, ‘self’, ‘identity’, ‘integrity’ and ‘character’ are sometimes used interchangeably in different contexts. Confucius is attributed as saying: ‘to be able to
practice five things everywhere under heaven constitutes perfect virtue...[They are] gravity, generosity of soul, sincerity, earnestness, and kindness’. Steare (2006: 35–6) identifies the qualities of integrity as prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance, trust, hope, love, excellence and respect. It is to be noted that these qualities do not, of themselves, define ‘being’. A person who lacks (say) fortitude or who lacks (say) temperance does not cease to be a person. In that way, integrity and character may be part of a person—but they are not the essence of a person or even essential for being. Sack (2002) warns: ‘It is the belief that those who do not share my faith—or my race or my ideology—do not share my humanity. At best they are second-class citizens. At worst they forfeit the sanctity of life itself’ (44). ‘Being’ is complex and changing. The physical entity of a human being changes over the course of one’s life and the body is in a constant state of renewal and decay. Mental/emotional capacities change with time and circumstances and are subject to growth and decay. Social/relational aspects of being change with time and circumstances. Spiritual/existential understandings change with time, reflection and events. Being is not static for either the social work practitioner or the ‘client’ groups with whom s/he is working. McBeath & Webb (2002) summarise their position:

This article argues that in a complex sociopolitical world, social work ethics need to recast the moral identity of the social worker in terms of virtue ethics...Virtue theory emphasises the priority of the individual moral agent who has acquired virtues commensurate with the pursuit of a revisable conception of the good life—the well-being of all in a defined community. The virtues are the acquired inner qualities of humans—character—the possession of which, if deployed in due measure, will typically contribute to the realisation of the good life or ‘eudaimonia’. The role of the virtuous social workers is shown to be one that necessitates appropriate application of intellectual and practical virtues such as justice, reflection, perception, judgement, bravery, prudence, liberality and temperance This ‘self flourishing’ worker, in bringing together the capacity of theoretical and practical action makes possible a hermeneutic or interpretive praxis best appraised in dialogue with fellow practitioners and clients. With a social work remit increasingly routinised by accountability, quality control and
risk management there is an emphasis on regulation and duties. This has produced the culture of following approved or typical processes resulting in defensive forms of social work wholly uncongenial to the development of human qualities likely to promote social workers engagement in critique and revision of what counts as best practice. In sum, our core proposition is that social work practice and education, to fit an unpredictable non-linear world, should develop means by which professionals nurture the virtues. This would reflexively enhance social work practice. (1015–16)

While McBeath and Webb list eight virtues, there are other lists of virtues. Seligman (2002: 132) and researchers involved in the positive psychology movement identify twenty-four virtues that they divide into six groupings in Table 2.5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE:</th>
<th>Creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COURAGE:</td>
<td>Bravery, persistence, integrity, vitality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMANITY:</td>
<td>Love, kindness, social intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUSTICE:</td>
<td>Citizenship, fairness, leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEMPERANCE:</td>
<td>Forgiveness and mercy, humility and modesty, prudence, self-regulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANSCENDENCE:</td>
<td>Appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humour, spirituality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Seligman (2002: 132)

Eight virtues can be elicited from Buddhism’s Noble Eightfold Path (right viewpoint, right values, right speech, right actions, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right meditation). In his book *Mere Christianity* the philosopher and arguably the most widely read Christian theologian of the twentieth century, CS Lewis, refers to seven virtues—four of which he calls pivotal or cardinal virtues—and three as theological virtues (2001: 71–3). The cardinal virtues (also known as the four classical Western virtues and were listed at least by Plato) are prudence (by which Lewis means...
practical commonsense and having the ability to think about what you are doing and what will come of it); temperance (by which he means going to the right length and no further); justice (by which he means fairness including honesty, give and take, truthfulness, keeping promises); and fortitude (by which he means courage). The three theological virtues are (2001: 113–129) charity (by which he means love in the Christian sense that includes forgiveness and that sense of doing the best for someone else); hope (by which he means the continual looking forward to the eternal world—not as a form of escapism but as a means of giving direction and purpose); and faith (by which Lewis means holding on to things that your reason has accepted in spite of changing emotions and feelings). Justice, prudence and temperance are common to both McBeath et al., and Lewis and bravery and fortitude seem to encapsulate the same ideas. Liberality, reflection, perception and judgement can be enfolded under Lewis’s theological virtues which has the added dimension of incorporating the theological.

Being is here considered to encompass the physical/organic, mental/emotional, social/relational and spiritual/existential. These also involve aspects of thinking and doing. Being also involves the virtues (I have selected the CS Lewis virtues as I have used these in a checklist type way over many years). I have decided to use the term ‘being’ as the term ‘being’ is more inclusive of a wide range of perspectives and allows for a focus on the totality of the person or entity (individual, group, community) as well as carrying the connotation of a shared humanity. It has that sense of the ‘essence’.

Frank (1995) says ‘to be is to wrestle with God’ (182).

**How are Thinking, Doing and Being Related?**

Social workers come from many diverse backgrounds, are influenced by many theories and approaches, practice in many settings and often practice professionally in an environment of ambiguity. Donald Schön (1987) says:
In the varied topography of professional practice, there is high, hard ground overlooking a swamp. On the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves to solutions through the application of research base theory and techniques. In the swampy lowlands, messy, confusing problems defy technical solutions. The irony of the situation is that the problems of the high ground tend to be relatively unimportant to the individuals or society at large, however, great their technical interest may be, while in the swamp lie the problems of greatest human concern. The practitioner must choose: shall he remain on the high ground where he can solve relatively unimportant problems according to prevailing standards of rigor, or shall he descend to the swamp of important problems? (1)

Schön’s view, in this quotation, creates a dichotomy—research-based theory or messy confusing practice. This binary decision-making does not need to be that stark. Social workers need to be reflective practitioners. There may be compromises needed between research-based theory and client empowering practice. There is a certain plurality or eclecticism as social workers operate in the reality of what is, while pursuing the hope of what is possible, and knowing the ideal of what can be.

One of the commonly used undergraduate texts in social work—Compton & Galloway (1984)—says:

Theory is not concerned with doing, but seeks to answer questions of why and under what conditions. A theory is a coherent set of general propositions or concepts used as principles for explanation for a class of phenomena—a more or less verified established and accepted explanation accounting for confirmed or confirmable phenomena and their inter-relationships. (91)

Both Schön and Compton & Galloway establish a chasm between theory and practice, between thinking and doing. There is little recognition of the importance of being. Most social workers use the term ‘theory’ to mean ideas that influence them as opposed to things that they do in practice (Payne 1997: 36). For some, theory and practice can lead to ‘an integration of self, theory and practice in a way that is dynamic,
sharpening our view and understanding of factors that influence the way we think and behave towards others' (Maidment & Egan 2004: 14). According to Coulshed (1991), theory should:

...provide guidance towards more effective practice, giving a measure of confidence so that we do not feel totally at the mercy of our working environment; if we build on and record effective strategies and techniques, then we build transmittable knowledge by directing others to what is common and regularly occurring in human experience. (Cited in Trevithick 2000: 28)

Every attempt to try to make sense of the world or particular events constitutes a theory...'[if]... it goes beyond the descriptive to include explanations of why things happen' (Trevithick 2000: 15).

Social workers need theory that elucidates and explains, is ethical and socially just and will be useful in guiding practice. Social work texts often consider practice theories sometimes called theories to practice (Howe 1987: 166; Poulter 2005: 200) and theories for practice. Practice theory is a framework for what the social worker actually does (practice/application) and can be generalised across a number of client situations. It helps organise information collected about the client situation and links assessment, intervention and action. Theories for practice are drawn from a range of formal theories and disciplines (social and behavioural sciences, ethics, progressive education and so on) that helps the social worker to make sense of a specific client situation as well as plan and predict relevant issues and interventions. Theories for practice may be drawn from many sources. These may include psychological theories (such as psychoanalysis, rogerian, RET, behaviourism, neuro-linguistic programming, adlerianism, gestalt and so on); sociological theories (including structuralism, feminism, postmodernism and so on); ethical approaches (such as utilitarianism, kantianism, rights-based approaches and so on) and from sources such as humanism, elitism, rationalism, capitalism, theories of
State, economic/political or spiritual sources and many others.

The social work knowledge base draws from propositions borrowed from, or remarkably like, those of psychology. It also borrows propositions from fields such as sociology and social anthropology and even political science, theology, management and economics. Some propositions explain how to do certain things in casework, group work and community organisations. Others are methods, techniques and attitudes clearly derived from the fields of administration, statistics and social research and some are propositions about how to do things derived from progressive education. Some propositions that relate to ethics and professional behaviour are drawn from classical and modern philosophy. Some propositions and knowledge are drawn from the natural sciences and from the environmental sciences. More contentiously, some propositions also are drawn from theological and spiritual understandings (Zastrow 2003: 309).

Within social work two quite distinct streams seem to have developed. One stream seems preoccupied with theory and models, while another stream is heavily focussed upon practice and intervention in the ‘real world’. There seems, at times, to be a dichotomy between theory and practice, between the ‘thinking about social work’ and ‘the doing of social work’. To some extent, the discussion over theory and practice has the pivotal point as to whether one perceives practice and theory as an ‘either/or’, or whether the perception is that the relationship between theory and practice is constructed in a way that is ‘both/and’. Two attempts to bridge this dichotomy include those related to systems theory and the use of reflective practice. To make sense of the vast array of theories for practice, social workers often adopt a systems and/or ecological approach. Compton & Gallaway (1999) describe systems as:

...a whole, a unit, composed of people and their interactions...Although a system should be viewed as a constantly changing whole that is always in process of
movement towards its goals, its parts are assumed to interact in a more or less patterned way within a more or less stable structure at any particular point in time. Within a system, something is always going on, and that something is not ‘random’; it is an effort to achieve the system’s goals. (124)

The principles of General Systems Theory include that humans live in an open system; humans function as individuals and as community members; individuals must be viewed in the context of their immediate relationship groups (for example, family) and within the context of the social environment; human interaction is not a choice; and individuals do not live in isolation. General Systems Theory provides a representation of human social systems (groups, communities and organisations) that are constantly interacting with each other.

I have numerous criticisms of systems theory including that causal relationships are difficult to establish; that the assumption of a common goal, evolutionary purpose and positive focus is problematic; that practice experience indicates that different parts of systems may be symbiotic or parasitic with different parts of the same system working against subsystems; that the goal may be ‘negative’ or destructive for the system as a whole; that in some situations positive outcomes can only be achieved by negative means; and that systems theory has no commitment to social justice and can be considered mechanical and amoral.

The emphasis on the importance of reflective practice in social work is relatively recent (Napier 2006). Central to the notion of reflective practice is the recognition of the importance of our developing a holistic understanding of knowledge and self—an understanding that encompasses both rational and the irrational responses to learning and practice encounters (Boud 1990; Schön 1983). Fook (1996) and Drury–Hudson (1997) highlight the need to move towards a more integrated model of viewing various forms of knowledge and personal experience. Reflective practice is one process through

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which this better integration and understanding can be developed in that it offers an alternative model for knowledge construction, which is closer to the complex and diverse realities of social work practice. Reflective practice involves drawing on past experience, reflecting and monitoring in the present and using it to inform and improve future actions (Boud 1990). It requires the bringing together of professional knowledge and skills and practice wisdom in a process that involves reflection in action. Developing reflective practice enables social workers to integrate intellectual understanding and emotional awareness. This is achieved through a process of continually bringing into consciousness the values, beliefs, emotions and knowledge, which have been created through past experiences and which inform current practice. It is this ability that enables a social worker to minimise the negative impacts these may have on their current practice, and to act in a purposeful informed way (Fook 2003; Ruch 2002). Papell (1996) says:

*Social work learners must perceive situations which they confront in their practice and recognised that their perceptions are filtered through their own thinking and knowing processes, through their emotions and feeling processes and through the way they themselves integrate and regulate their own doing and behaving. Knowing the self is more than knowing how one feels. It is knowing how one thinks and acts.* (Cited in Ruch 2002: 203)

Critical reflection involves doing and thinking but has a less clearly articulated emphasis on being. The model, in its simplest form, identifies the relationship between theory and practice and being in Figure 2.4:
In the model, practice and theory are inter-related processes—not ‘either/or’ but ‘both/and’.

If social work is fundamentally about thinking and doing and being, then to neglect any of the three is to be fundamentally untruthful to the ideals of social work. The social worker that thinks but does not do is limited in terms of practical outputs, while the social worker that does, but does not think, is potentially dangerous. To the classic conception of social work as thinking and doing, I would contend that there is a fundamental third requirement—that good social work is a fundamental interplay between thinking, doing and being. It is a complex relationship between thinking and being, being and doing, doing and being, and being and thinking.

Payne (2005: 5) details the various approaches to current social work theory. He describes how the term ‘theory’ covers three possibilities: ‘models’ which describe what happens in practice and may assist in structuring and organising material in a complex
situation; ‘perspectives’ which express values and views of the world; and ‘explanatory theories’ which explains why actions result or identify causes and effects. Payne strongly argues for the social construction of social work and warns against defining social work merely through mechanical and practical processes (Moren 1994). In a position aligned to mine, Payne argues that all practice is influenced by formal and informal theories (I prefer the terms explicit and implicit) which combine perspectives of what social work is, the client’s context and environment and a contested view of the nature of socio-economic and political relations. I would extend from Payne and argue that these are reflected through the being of the social worker. Payne (2005: 10) maintains that there is a discourse between the three perspectives of social work (reflexive-therapeutic, socialist-collectivist and individual-reformist).

The reflexive-therapeutic views aim to promote, develop and maintain wellness for individuals, groups and communities and are referred to by Dominelli (2002b) as therapeutic helping approaches. The interaction between the social worker and the client is one of mutual influence and the development of new understandings and increased personal power by the client as s/he/they respond to, modify and embrace the environment. This idea of ‘helping’ is foundational to many of the ideas of social work.

Socialist-collectivist views have been called transformational (Pease & Fook 1999) and emancipatory (Dominelli 2002b). Acknowledging notions of oppression, this approach acknowledges the contested nature of social and political relationships and seeks to alter those relationships through concepts of social justice, equality and statements of rights.

The individual-reformist views which Dominelli (2002b) reflecting Davies (1994) calls maintenance approaches, aims to maintain people, groups and communities during difficult times and assist them in recovering stability. It is part of the liberal or rational
economic political ideology, which is based on personal freedom within a market-based economy, where intervention occurs for minimal times to ameliorate changes in the social or market relationships. This view is encapsulated in the approaches to structural adjustment and short-term case management and is different from the reflexive-therapeutic view in that it aims to restore or develop a new homeostasis within an existing set of accepted structures.

Payne summarises his position with the following diagram (Figure 2.5):

**Figure 2.5  Payne’s Discourse on the Nature of Social Work**

![Diagram](image)

Source: Payne (2005: 10)

He locates individual workers (A, B, C, D) at various points of the triangle. This depiction recognises individuals will be located differently depending upon the worker’s dominant personal discourse, agency ideology, client, environmental and socio-political considerations. These Payne (2005) refers to as ‘Arenas of Social Construction’. He names them as the political-social-ideological arena, the agency-professional arena and
the client-worker-agency arena and argues that they mutually influence each other. He helpfully proposes the following diagram (Figure 2.6):

**Figure 2.6**  Payne’s Arenas of Social Construction of Social Work

These approaches or arenas are helpful in maintaining diversity and recognising the interdependence and mutual influence between the discourses and between the arenas. But they also tend to create specialisations rather than develop the view that an individual social worker can be individual-reformist, reflexive-therapeutic and socialist-collectivist in any given situation. Payne (2005) produces his own summary table of alternate reviews of social work theories (44) and group work theories (47) and then models of community work and macro-work (49). Each is useful for practice—but not exhaustive or comprehensive. It summarises a range of previous social work classifications.

Poulter (2005) argues that there are four paradigms created that are based on the dual assumptions made with respect to the issues of freewill and determinism and consensus and conflict. This is schematically depicted in Figure 2.7:
To these he argues that there is a fifth paradigm, which he calls the heuristic paradigm for social work practice. This is schematically represented in Figure 2.8.
My problem with this schema is that it tends to place social work at the centre of the orthogonal dimensions with the implication of moderation and conservative approaches. It also schematically commits to the use of certain theories (constructivism and so on) and excludes the use of others. There is no reason why the heuristic paradigm could not be totally overlaid on the existential, functionalist, humanist and structuralist. This would enable insights and knowledge to be drawn from any of the four paradigms and would enable the social worker to bring being (through the heuristic paradigm) to the practice of social work.
Social work is socially constructed (Payne 2005: 18). The practice of social work is interdependent upon clients, worker, agency, ideology, environment and context. Practice is constructed in a contested environment and adopts methods and approaches, models, perspectives and explanatory theories that are also contested. The social construction of social work is constantly changing in response to changes in clients, the environment, the agencies and the workers. In connecting theory to practice and practice to theory, Sheafer et al., (2000) says:

*In order to perform effectively, the social worker uses a combination of art and science. It is recognised that a worker brings certain intangibles to the practice situation that affect process and outcome—the art encompassed in building relationships, creative thinking, compassion and courage, hopefulness and energy, using sound judgement and committing to appropriate values. At the same time, the social worker must combine his or her artistic abilities with the profession’s knowledge and scientific base. Without art, the knowledge base is of little value. But without knowledge, the art is of limited effectiveness. The social worker merges his or her art and science into a practice framework.* (52)

There is debate over whether social work is art or science. This thesis, like Sheafer (2000) argues not for ‘either/or’ but ‘both/and’. Lymbury (2000), Parton & O’Byrn (2000) and Healy (2005) write of the complexities of social work practice and the unpredictability of people, situations and environments in which social workers practice. Crisp et al., (2004) notes the increased focus on risk prediction through the logical deductive analysis of objective data, central policy determination and increased targeting of those identified as most ‘in need’ or most ‘at risk’. There are moves to develop risk assessment tools (in Child Protection, LSI–R in Corrections and so on) at the expense of clinical intuition. However, while there is a strong move towards evidence-based practice (for example, the Cochrane Institute), where evidence that is ‘practice wisdom’ is of a lesser order in value to empirically testable research, it remains important that for many social workers and more especially their clients that
science not overshadow (or even subjugate) art. An approach that values all experience (clients and workers), multiple ways of knowing and all insight (both science and art) is required.

Art and science, artistic abilities, the profession’s knowledge and scientific base are encapsulated in the thinking and doing and being of the effective social worker. More than (just) a commitment to knowledge/thinking and more than (just) a commitment to a set of activities/doing, the effective social worker is an artist/scientist whose being impacts upon the situation. The consilience of art and science that develops into a practice framework is not ‘either/or’ but ‘both/and’ combining and going beyond the aggregation of art and science. It is consilience that offers the opportunity for social work to develop the relationship between thinking and doing and being into practice.

**What is Consilience?**

Wilson (1998) defined ‘consilience’ as ‘literally a jumping together of knowledge by the linking of facts and fact-based theory across disciplines to create a common groundwork for explanation’ (8). However, the term was coined by the Anglican Priest/philosopher and scientist William Whewell in 1840 in his publication *The Philosophy of Inductive Science*. It is interesting to recognise that Whewell was both philosopher/priest and scientist. For him and many others, the sharp distinctions between the arts/humanities and science, between the observable material world and the metaphysical world and between inductive and deductive reasoning and faith either did not exist or were held in tension.

It is necessary to discuss differing views of consilience, the nature of knowledge and the relationship of different forms of knowledge. The original Greek concepts of intrinsic orderliness and unity were to some extent overtaken by the rise of scientific methodology with its consequent increasing fragmentation of knowledge and the
development of specialised branches of knowledge. So powerful was the scientific method, that other forms of knowledge and insight and the consilience of knowledge had been lost. CP Snow’s *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (1993) attempted to bridge the gap between the cultures of the sciences and the humanities. In Barfield’s *Worlds Apart* (1971), he creates a fictional dialogue between a professor of history, theology and ethics and a professor of the physical sciences where the aim is to find an approach to modern problems that reconciles the diverse views of reality that are assumed by different academic disciplines. Joined later by others to form a symposium, the question at the heart of the symposium was whether the sheer bulk of human knowledge demands an ever-increasing specialisation and whether that means that human beings are losing sight of the wholeness of life. It is a critical question for social work.

In *Consilience and the Unity of Knowledge*, Wilson maintains that the arts, the humanities and the sciences have a common goal; to give a purpose to understanding the details, and to ‘lend to all enquirers a conviction far deeper than a mere working proposition, that the world is orderly and can be explained by a small number of natural laws’ (1998: 2). This view of consilience however is one that I do not agree with as it presupposes ‘a small number of natural laws’ and may be the antithesis of diversity. In many ways, Wilson is opposed to the postmodernist view which he characterises as a ‘truth for me’ and ‘truth for you’. I think that Wilson’s version of consilience arises from a belief that all truth can, in principle, be attained by the reductionist methods of science. In many ways he is an apologist for natural sciences and despite his claims to the contrary, he does not give equal respect to the insights and advances arising from the arts, imaginative or social sciences as truths. Consilience is the converse of reductionism. Wilson’s view seems to oppose the ‘truth for me’ and ‘truth for you’ into a consideration that there is one truth not terribly dissimilar to Dawkins approach in *The
Selfish Gene. But there is no *a priori* reason why you cannot have ‘truths for us’—many truths arising from many sources—some of which may be shared truths. In systems theory as applied to social work, for example, the concept of ‘equifinality’ involves many different starting points that end in the same place. The alternate concept is ‘multifinality’ where a common starting point results in many different ultimate outcomes. Equifinality may be viewed as reductionist (many becomes one) while multifinality celebrates that one can manifest itself in many. Hamilton (2008: 86) speaks of a universe and multiverses.

Acknowledging diversity means that there may be multiple truths arising from either singular or multiple sources. That view does not, of course, necessarily lead to postmodernism but is rather an acknowledgement of diversity. Sack (2002) writes:

> The glory of the created world is its astonishing multiplicity: the thousands of different languages spoken by mankind, the hundreds of faiths, the proliferation of cultures, the sheer variety of the imaginative expression of the human spirit, in most of which, if we listen carefully we will hear the voice of God telling us something we need to know. That is what I mean by the dignity of difference...The world is not a single machine; it is a complex interactive ecology in which diversity—biological, personal, cultural and religious—is of the essence. (21-2)

The author agrees with Gould (2003) who says:

> Wilson revived Whewell’s forgotten word and extended its meaning far beyond the original authorial intention into a scheme that Whewell himself had strongly rejected—for Wilson wished to incorporate the humanities into the topmost sciences of a singular reductionist chain, thereby achieving a ‘unification of knowledge’ under an empirical rubric, whereas Whewell regarded the humanities (particularly moral and religious reasoning) as a set of logical and inherently separate ways of knowing. Serious attention to all members of the set may well unify our mental lives by forging a consensus of values and results. However, such a consensus could only emerge from independent contributions, knitted together by serious and generous dialogue among truly different, and equally valid,
ways of knowing, each responsible for a swatch on wisdom’s quilt, with the swatches abutting and infringing in gorgeous complex patterns of interaction. The unification cannot occur...by Wilson’s strategy of establishing a single efficacious way of knowing for all disciplines, based on the methods and successes of science, and ultimately devaluing the ‘humanities’ not for any intrinsic difference from other factual domains, but for the status as the most complex empirically study of all. (255)

Gould (2003) states:

*The intellectual beauty of Whewellian consilience lies largely in the thrill, even the eeriness, of what fashion calls an ‘aha’ experience—the sudden conversion of confusion into order, not by systemic, stepwise, deductive sequences of logical extensions from existing hypotheses followed by predictions and tests, but rather by an immediate insight that we usually cannot reconstruct in our own psyches because the consilience hits us all at once from the blue, leading us to emote ‘Omigod—all these unco-ordinated facts that have tortured me for years in their miscellany do cohere after all’—the ‘jumping together’ that Whewell called consilience. (257–8)*

To some extent, the issues of art and science in social work, thinking and doing and being and their interrelationship to knowledge, mirrors the wider debates that are occurring as to the nature of knowledge and that which constitutes knowledge. Stephen Jay Gould, Richard Dawkins and EO Wilson are leading protagonists of the debate. In many science and social science fields there is a philosophical reductionism that contends that complex things can be reduced to (and explained by) simpler and more fundamental things. In this way complexity can be broken down. Within the concept of reductionism there is ontological reductionism (all existence is broken down into a small number of basic substances), theoretical reductionism (new theories are refinements of older theories but developed in greater detail), scientific reductionism (all phenomena can be reduced to scientific explanations) and linguistic reductionism (everything can be described in a core limited language). This has led Dennett (1995) to coin the phrase ‘greedy reductionism’ which condemns reductionism that tries to
explain too much with too little. Knight (1990) says:

The reductionist method taken to its logical conclusion by the intellectual heirs of Newton builds a gigantic edifice of technical knowledge on evermore limiting types of ‘pinhole perceptions’—be it through an eyepiece of a microscope in one direction of magnitude or that of the telescope in the other. They are essentially ‘one-eyed’ observations of the ever more remote that can only be explained in ever more mathematical and abstract ways. Indeed in the modern state of the art of electron microscopy and radio astronomy there is no longer any direct human observation but the computerised interpretation of mathematical data collected and recorded by electronic sensors. The whole process is one of the dehumanisation of perception. (219–220)

In contrast to the reductionist and ‘one-eyed observations’, Bryson (2003) provides a timely reminder of the enormous diversity of the earth and the enormous complexity of all life and the universe and concludes by saying:

If this book has a lesson it is that we are awfully lucky to be here—and by we, I mean every living thing. To attain any kind of life at all in this universe of ours is quite an achievement. As humans, we are doubly lucky of course. We enjoy not only the privilege of existence, but also the singular ability to appreciate it, and even in multiple ways, to make it better. (423)

Consilence requires the jumping together of knowledge. In social work, as in other fields, what constitutes knowledge and what are its sources is highly relevant and contested. Most textbooks (for example, Monette, Sullivan & De Jong 1998) offer four sources of knowledge:

- Traditional knowledge: This is connected to culture and is rooted in custom, habit and history and includes ‘old wisdom’ and ‘truths’ handed down from generation to generation.
- Experiential knowledge: This is gained through first-hand experience.
• ‘Common-sense’ knowledge: This is based on a sense of what is right or wrong and the ability to ‘know’ what to do and make practical decisions.

• Scientific knowledge (or empirical knowledge): This is based upon empirical, observable and measurable data of both a qualitative and quantitative nature (Babbie 2001; Monette et al., 1998).

To these, writers such as Durst (2004) would add Spiritual/Sacred knowledge.

Hudson (1997) has a different construction of knowledge from five sources:

- Theoretical knowledge: is expressed as concepts, frames of reference, schemas and presented as an organised view of phenomena to enable the professional to explain, predict and describe.

- Empirical knowledge: is derived from research that involves systematic gathering and interpretation of data in order to document and describe experiences, explain events, predict future states or evaluate outcomes.

- Personal knowledge: is developed through an inherent and spontaneous process outside a person’s immediate consciousness and largely based on instinct or feeling. Includes intuition, cultural common sense.

- Practice wisdom: is knowledge gained from the conduct of professional practice by working on different problems and issues that are often not formalised and recorded in writing.

- Procedural wisdom: is reflected in policy, legislation and organisational rules and guidelines, within which the profession must function and whose guidelines often require discretion and judgement in their application to a practice situation.

These constructions and origins of knowledge are useful. They illustrate that knowledge emanates from different sources, different ideologies, different worldviews and are
linked. McMurray et al., (2004: 10) discuss two different worldviews—the objective view, which seeks the discovery of laws that govern patterns of behaviour among elements, people and the cosmos—and the subjective view, which seeks to understand what people do to create their worlds and how they make sense of them.

Nakata (2007) writes of and critiques knowledge and academic disciplines from a Torres Strait Islander perspective. He writes:

"My experience as an Islander and the analysis and understandings I derive from these, my family’s, and the collective Torres Strait Islander experience have enabled me to hold one tenet...This is the idea that Islander experience—however ignorant of historical fact; or however ignorant of the context of events; or however much it derived from popular memory—are grounded in something that is significant to the way that we have historically viewed our predicament and have enacted our lives. This experience continues to shape our ongoing responses and it cannot simply be re-explained or re-interpreted by informed, educated or expert people outside our communities. To do so is a negation or denial of our experience and our understanding of our position as we confront alien—and alienating—practices and knowledge." (8)

Nakata (2007) warns:

"However, educating ourselves has also meant running the risk of blindly taking on the knowledge and practices that have served to keep us in a subjugated position. We lose some of ourselves in the process, for educating ourselves via these institutions to overcome our subordinate position brings the risk of submerging or erasing those elements of our own lifeworlds that define us as a distinct group—the Torres Strait Islanders." (9)

In a similar way, Trudgen (2000) illustrates the impact of different worldviews and different cultural knowledge based on remote northern Australian Indigenous people. He illustrates the clash of worldviews (103–111) and the impact of failing to understand the multiple sources of knowledge on individuals and communities from an Indigenous
perspective. The ‘value’ or ‘weight’ given to the different types and sources of knowledge in social work is a particularly important issue. The consilient approach to social work uses all sources of knowledge and applies these through the thinking and doing and being framework.

It is necessary to consider the relationship of consilience to integration and eclecticism. Hollanders (1999) notes the confusion in the literature over the meaning of the terms ‘integration’ and ‘eclecticism’ and Norcross & Goldfried (2005) consider that these terms are almost synonymous. Theoretical ‘integration’ has been defined as ‘the combination of two or more pre-existing theories selected on the basis of their perceived commonality, into a single reformulated theoretical model with greater comprehensiveness and explanatory value than any one of its component theories’ (Farnworth 1989: 95; Johnson 1979; Elloitt et al., 1985). Theoretical integration has serious difficulties including being precise as to what is being integrated— whether it is propositions or concepts, at what level integration occurs and the sequential causal order (Hirschi 1979; Bernard et al., 1996; Akers 1994; Barak 1998).

Lanier & Henry (2004: 344–350) summarised integrative theories. Some have argued that by combining theories we lose more than we gain (see Akers 1994; Barak 1998; Robinson 2004). Those engaging in integration have often done so in order to arrive at central anchoring notions in theory, provide coherence to a bewildering array of fragmented theories, to achieve comprehensiveness and completeness, to achieve scientific progress or to synthesize concepts or propositions. Integration, as described above, is reductionist in that it seeks one or a set of common parameters, concepts or propositions. Consilience, by contrast, seeks to impose no reduction of theories but to hold those elements of any theory that are useful for practical outcomes and subject only to the considerations of thinking, doing and being.
Eclecticism has been (I think very unfairly) characterised as lazy and atheoretical. Katsumata (2007: 1) refers to eclecticism as the ‘most basic attempt to achieve mutual complementarity between constructivism and rationalism’. Among the common criticisms of eclecticism are misconceptions that the position is a hodgepodge of disconnected facts, largely torn from context, unrelated to a unified theoretical structure, lacking perspectives, unsupported by valid theoretical models, and barren to research. Scott (2005), for example, says:

Eclecticism connotes the coexistence of conflicting doctrines as if there were no conflict, as if one position was not an explicit critique of the other. The aim is to ignore or overlook differences, to create balance and harmony, to close down the opening to unknown futures that (what came to be called) ‘theory’ offered some 20 to 30 years ago. Eclecticism is not only conservative but restorative; it seeks stability and reconciliation, not innovation. (114)

Keenan (2006: 387) identifies four types of eclecticism: common factor eclecticism (Norcross & Goldfried 2005: 9); technical eclecticism (2005: 8); theoretical eclecticism (2005: 8); and assimilative eclecticism/integration (Messer 1992: 151). Other writers refer to methodological eclecticism (Burton 2005; Priola 2004; Potter 2003), systematic eclecticism (Raines 2004), self-conscious eclecticism (Makinda 2000), prescriptive eclecticism (Lazarus 1990), pragmatic eclecticism (Callery 1990), developmental eclecticism (D’Andrea 1994) and analytic eclecticism (Katzenstein 2005).

Phillip (1979) writes that:

Theorists in social work have consequently concerned themselves with attempting to rescue social work from confusion by proposing means by which this new theoretical eclecticism can be transformed into a set of coherence practices. (83)

Rychlak (1985: 351) writes of two types of eclecticism: one that relies on
recognition and appreciation of alternatives and the other that seeks to limit the theoretical generation of alternatives. Eclecticism can enrich understanding by developing alternative formulations or limit the alternatives and promote theoretical amalgamations.

Lazarus & Beutler summarise the issues (1993):

Unsystematic eclectics and theoretical integrationists attempt to meld disparate ideas into harmonious wholes. They desire to construct a superordinate umbrella and build a coherent framework by blending the best elements from different theories. The main problem here is that, on close scrutiny, even theoretical tenants that seem to be interchangeable among different theories, often turn out to be irreconcilable (Lazarus 1989b; Messner & Winokur 1981). Moreover the uncertain relationship between theories and their applications provides an unsupported basis for the development of more effective theories...In contrast, technical eclectics select procedures from different sources without necessarily subscribing to the theories that spawned them; they work within a preferred theory but recognise that few techniques are inevitably wedded to any theory. Hence they borrow techniques from other orientations, based on the proven worth of those procedures (Dryden 1987).

(381)

Poulter (2005) refers to ‘reflective eclecticism’. He says:

Reflective eclecticism is therefore of an essentially different nature from eclecticism, and the successful application in a particular case of what may seem to be a mélange of theories, gains its coherence through the underlying practice theories of engagement, collaboration and assessment—these three practice theories are usually not dignified with the formal title as theories, but they are basically humanist and existentialist concept systems that give us a secure basis in skills, methods and values and thereby enable us to integrate a range of more formally recognized theories into our practice. (Cited in Payne 1997: 200)

Despite the confusion and criticisms of eclecticism, the evidence points to it being a significant approach—at least in interpersonal work (Garfield & Kurtz 1975; Norcross,
Prochaska & Gallagher 1989; Warner 1991). Hollanders (1999: 405) reports that as many as 87% of counsellors use ‘non-pure form’ approaches of some kind in their work. Livingstone’s (2005) survey found that the most popular therapeutic orientation was eclecticism while Norcross et al., (2005) surveyed 187 eclectic clinical psychologists of which 50% claimed to have previously adhered to a different theoretical orientation. Despite the theoretical criticisms, eclecticism seems to be the choice of practitioners. Wilshaw (1997) argues for ‘an honourable position of eclecticism’ (15). Regarding practice realities, Peck says (1983):

"Physicists are no longer disheartened to look at light as both a particle and a wave. As for psychology, models abound; the biological, the psychological, the sociological, the sociobiological, the Freudian, the rational-emotive, the behavioural, the existential and so on. And while science needs the innovators, who will champion a single new model as the most advanced understanding, the patient who seeks to be understood as wholly as possible would be well advised to seek a therapist capable of approaching the mysteries of the human soul from all angles. (4)"

While the problem with unsystematic eclecticism and integration is in the combining of disparate philosophies and theories into a coherent unifying theory when the elements themselves that are combined are not arising from the same philosophical origin and may be critiquing each other, consilience requires no such combination. Indeed, it recognises that there are underlying differences, and values those differences as different ways of knowing and understanding. Birch (2007) in Science and Soul argues that there is an objective and subjective reality and that subjective experience cannot be defined in empirical terms. Michael Heller, scientist/cosmologist/Catholic priest and winner of the 2008 Templeton Prize for Science, said ‘...what can be more important than science and religion? Science gives us knowledge and religion gives us meaning. Both are prerequisites of the decent existence’ (Velasquez–Manoff 2008).
Consilience needs to be considered as a process of understanding diverse theoretical orientations and diverse participant understandings and then applying the best of those theoretical positions and understandings through appropriate thinking and doing and being. The purpose is not to have a central anchoring notion or a singular theory but to apply the most useful theory and understanding to the situation as jointly determined by both the social worker and the ‘client/participant’.

Rather than seek a singular integrated theory, I am arguing for the consilience of theory and practice and the consilience of thinking and doing and being. It is not a question of ‘either/or’ but ‘both/and’ or ‘all/and’. It is a question of consilience of complex diversity rather than ‘greedy reductionism’. The Latin proverb *cave ab homine unius libri* can be translated ‘beware the man of only one book’ (see Gould 2003: 249).

Abraham Maslow says: ‘if the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail’. These may be appropriate warnings against developing a singular, integrated approach, which is reductionist of the complex and diverse realities. As indicated in the first chapter, social work, like many disciplines is susceptible to theoretical and ideological fashions, dominant paradigms and can be captured by other interests (economic, political, social) that have current dominance. Consilience offers an opportunity for an approach that is fully human and able to draw upon the insights and creativity and knowledge of the arts and the sciences and use inductive and deductive approaches with a fundamental recognition of the dignity, worth and diversity of human beings. It recognises that we are both object and subject to ourselves (Hamilton 2009: 69). It recognises that scientific realism is the ‘philosophy of the subject that forgot to take account of himself’ (Schopenhauer 1969: 13) while transcendental idealism is able to ‘stumble unawares out beyond the objects of experience into the fields of chimeras’ (Kant in Hatfield 1997: 67–8). While Schopenhauer warned that ‘all philosophers have made the mistake of placing that which is metaphysical, indestructible, and eternal in
man in the intellect’ (Schopenhauer 1960: 495), consilience offers the opportunity to consider knowledge that is generated in the rational consciousness and the intuitive and creative as different ways of knowing and being.

SUMMARY
While it has been necessary to consider the nature of ‘knowing’ and distinguish consilience from integration and eclecticism, the main aim of this chapter has been to discuss the concepts of social work, thinking and doing and being and their interrelationships, and consilience. To this end, it has presented a conceptual and theoretical understanding of social work and pointed out that ‘being’ is a neglected aspect in social work knowledge. Both the social worker’s and the participant’s ‘being’ is significantly compromised by often emphasising thinking and doing but with less concern for their concept of ‘being’.

Consilience has been defined as the “jumping together of knowledge”. A contrast has been made between Whewellian consilience as defended by Gould with the reductionist consilience proposed by Wilson. The thesis favours Whewellian consilience as consistent with social work’s focus upon diversity.

Other discrete concerns have been identified. Social workers constructs their practice in ways that leaves the ‘client’ as the object of social work action and the recipient of services. While there is tacit recognition of the ‘client’, the emphasis fits more with the approach of working for rather than with clients.

A consilient practice model of social work will need to apply the key features of thinking and doing and being, be consistent with social work principles, take seriously the being of the ‘client’ in all their aspects, have a serious consideration of outcomes and social work objectives and work with rather than for clients.
By employing a consilient approach, this chapter proposes a simple, practical model of social work that can be used by many different social workers in many different environments and can be applied to the five main areas of social work practice—individual/family work, group work, community work, social research and social administration. It will assist in drawing together different knowledge bases and different understandings. The model is described as PEOPLE (participants, environment, objectives, processes and labour and evaluation.)
PRINCIPLES IN THE MODELLING

I am attempting to develop a practical model that describes what happens in practice and may assist in structuring and organising vast amounts of material and knowledge in complex situations. In this respect, it is a ‘practice theory’ rather than a theory for practice. The model is based on the following principles:

1. To place a priority on participants (at the individual/family, group and community level) in line with the fundamental recognition of participant self-determination and as a counter to the imposed and oppressive nature of some social work interventions. This is in recognition of the fundamental nature of social work and the values espoused by the profession in its codes and in its definitions. This priority upon the human aspects rather than techniques or theories respects the being of the participants and ensures that their use of self is appropriate and acknowledged. It counters the tendency to impose solutions and approaches. This priority also sets up the pattern of sharing power through dialogue or conversation.

2. To ensure that the participant’s (whether individual, group, community) environment is carefully considered jointly by both the social worker and participant. The joint nature of the assessment of the environment may show possibilities and resources not immediately apparent to either or both the participants and the social worker. These first two principles enable the processes of engagement, collaboration and assessment to have a concrete expression. Rather than developing a social contractual basis for the relationship, these two principles allow for a covenantal relationship to develop (see Sack 2002: 151)

3. To ensure that ‘theories for practice’ and any information, approach or perspective can be drawn from a wide and diverse range of disciplines that are most efficacious for the situation. This is in line with the consilience perspective that respects diversity and uniqueness and does not commit to one theory or perspective that fits
the current knowledge base or the ideological or philosophical approach of the agency or practitioner. Consilience understands that theories and models may arise from different philosophical and theoretical traditions. Consilience, rather than the commonly portrayed unthinking or a-theoretical eclecticism or the quasi-integration that reduces available options, values all sources of knowledge and multiple perspectives.

4. To be outcome and impact focussed in order to counter the view that social work is ineffective and directionless. However, the outcomes and impacts are those determined by the participant and social worker in a joint process rather than theoretically or programmatically determined outcomes.

5. To be practical and usable across social work settings. This is for the purposes of ensuring that social work as a profession is not fractured into individual work, group work, community work, social research and social administration with adherents to each. Rather than re-visit the fracturing of the profession into distinct expressions of the profession, the purpose here is to build a way of thinking that a practitioner can take across any of the expressions of social work keeping him/her mindful of the way any of the expressions of social work can aid the participant in their environment and the development of social work.

6. To be consistent with the purposes and ideals of social work and draw where appropriate from existing work and knowledge. Much social work conforms to the above principles and this work builds upon a very strong knowledge base. For example, the work on engagement, assessment and collaboration is essential to the first step of the practical model. Outcome studies which focus upon the relationship between the participant and the social worker are useful in this practical model and are consistent with the ideals and purposes of social work espoused in Chapter 2.

In the practice of social work, models can be an aid in guiding thinking and doing and
being. Models have their limitations, however, and the overrating of a model is a serious error, which can lead to very poor social work theory making, analysis and poor practical outcomes. It is acknowledged that the proposed model does not get away at all from social workers, their managers or their participants having to make decisions. Nor should it. The proposed model is bounded by the ‘being’ of the social worker and the participants (individual, group or community) and requires a range of thinking approaches and a range of practical skills.

Any practical model must be mindful of economic, environmental, political, social and spiritual factors and be accountable for its actions and interventions. To be true to social work ideals it must be inclusive and ensure that the participant’s worldview is acknowledged and valued.

The proposed model, identified by the acronym PEOPLE (Figure 3.1), attempts to create a practical, information-accessible matrix of factors that can be used to guide informed, rational, logical and creative decisions on action and activity. It seeks to access existing information, eliminate irrelevant data, tease out key features and take into account other variables and alternative resources. No attempt is made to give a weighting to various elements of the model, but rather to give a view of the elements so that judgements can be made. The thrust of this model is to be practical, giving a guide to decision-making in real time-limited situations.
Figure 3.1 A Pictorial Representation of the PEOPLE Model
UNDERSTANDING THE MODEL: THINKING AND DOING AND BEING

This is a process that occurs at all points of the model.

Thinking

For the purposes of this model, the key elements of thinking are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROCESS</th>
<th>Critical Thinking</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical Reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Systemic/Logical thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lateral/Creative thinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>CONTENT</td>
<td>Existing Knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Existing Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Existing understandings and frameworks including personal and professional knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contextual issues related to both general matters (paradigms, rules, legislation) and specific matters (this client, this community, this problem, these strengths)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Doing

For the purpose of this thesis the key social work ‘doing’ are:

- Enabling
- Brokering
- Initiating
- Empowering
- Activism
- Mediating
- Negotiating
- Educating
- Co-ordinating
- Researching
- Group Facilitating
- Advocating

Being

For the purposes of this practical model, I will use the cardinal and theological virtues proposed by CS Lewis (see Chapter 2). The cardinal virtues are (1989: 113–129):
1. Prudence (Practical commonsense and having the ability to think about what you are doing and what will come of it);
2. Temperance (Going to the right length and no further);
3. Justice (Fairness including honesty, give and take, truthfulness, keeping promises); and
4. Fortitude (Courage).

The theological virtues are:
1. Charity (Love in the Christian sense that includes forgiveness and that sense of doing the best for someone else);
2. Hope (The continual looking forward to the eternal world – not as a form of escapism but as a means of giving direction and purpose); and
3. Faith (Holding on to things that your reason has accepted in spite of changing emotions and feelings).
I am choosing to use the term participant. The term ‘client’ (like person-in-the-environment) has connotations of ‘individualism’ (in the tradition of Mary Richmond) and can set up unhealthy divisions between individualistic therapeutic social work and other expressions of social work. According to the Collins Dictionary, ‘client’ is defined as ‘a person or company that seeks the advice of a professional’. This definition is one that creates power relationships. The definition of ‘customer’, meanwhile, as ‘a person who buys’ seems not to be an appropriate description of most social work practice and is contrary to the social work ethos. The term ‘partner’, however, defined as ‘ally or companion’ has a great resonance with the origins of (say) the English probation service with its emphasis on being ‘a friend of the Court and a friend to the offender’ but has legal connotations and some modern connotations of an intimate relationship. I considered the use of the term ‘party’—defined as ‘a group of people associated in some
activity’ but it also has some legal connotations. I considered the use of the term ‘neighbour’ following the lead of Jane Adams—but that had a historic legacy and also set up the possibility of unhealthy divisions with therapeutic social work. I needed a generic term and in the absence of a better term decided upon ‘participants’ for its neutrality and connotations of mutuality.

The participant (whether individual, community or group or society) has a range of physical/organic characteristics. These include appearances (including, but not limited to, physical appearances, territoriality, haptics (the study of touch), kinesics (the interpretation of body language), proxemics (the measurement of distance between interacting people), chronemics (the study of the use of time), artefactual and olfactory cues) which are communicated verbally and non-verbally and actively and/or passively. The physical considerations of the model may include considerations of biological, physiological, and biosocial theories. Consideration of the physical may include research and understandings about chromosomes, the central nervous system, endorphins, the role of neurotransmitters, the role and function of DNA and the setting (as with a group or community). The physical component also includes health and developmental stages (for individuals, groups, communities and society). The consideration of only physical characteristics without consideration of other factors leads to a position that is hard determinism and opens the way for the devaluing of human beings to the point where the spectre of eugenics and/or discriminatory practices is open.

The participant has a range of emotional/mental characteristics which include, but are not limited to, intelligence, the capacity to think and to reflect, the capacity to express and control emotion, their past experiences, mood, willingness and motivation. The participant (whether individual, group or community) may have a range of limiting
and/or enhancing self-talk. The participant will often have theories for describing and/or analysing and/or explaining behaviour and attitudes. These may or may not be articulated and may or may not be well developed.

The participant will have an understanding of the social/relational and will have an appreciation of the extent and depth of connectedness to family, school/employment, recreational and other facets of life. They may have an appreciation of art, music and culture. They may or may not have well-considered and articulated values and ethics. They may have well-established patterns of social interactions and may or may not understand the impact of relationships and activities that are shared with others. They may or may not be connected to community, social or political processes and may or may not have views in relation to the acceptance of differences, cultural and ethnic factors. The participant may or may not be able to critique his, her or their ‘place in the world’ and the influence of the world upon him, her or them.

The spiritual/existential factors will involve the notions of identity and the sense of being. There will be consideration of hope and optimism, consideration of the sense of aesthetics, consideration of the sense of purpose, understandings of religion and consideration of ontological and existential issues. The participant may or may not have a well-articulated position on these issues. Groups and communities have a sense of the spiritual and existential. Lean (1995) evidences the importance of the spirit in community work.
Like the participant, the social worker has a range of physical and organic characteristics that influence the interaction. These include appearances (including, but not limited to, physical appearances, territoriality, haptics, kinesics, osculesics, pupillometrics, proxemics, chronemics, art factual and olfactic cues), which are also communicated—both verbally and non-verbally and actively and/or passively. The physical considerations of the model may include considerations of the social worker’s biological, physiological and biosocial understandings and theories. Consideration of the physical may include research and understandings about chromosomes, the central nervous system, endorphins, the role of neurotransmitters, the role and function of DNA and the setting (as with a group or community). The physical component also includes health and developmental stages (for individuals, groups, communities and society).
The social worker will have a wide range of emotional/mental characteristics which include, but are not limited to, intelligence, the capacity to think and to reflect, the capacity to express and control emotion, their past experiences, mood, willingness and motivation. The social worker will also have a wide range of formal theories upon which to draw that may prove helpful.

Emotional/mental theories will include, but are not limited to, psychoanalytic approaches (for example, Freud, Jung and so on), trait-based theories (for example, Allport 1964; Cleckley 1941; Eysenck 1977 and Sutherland & Shepherd 2002); behavioural learning theories (for example, Pavlov 1906; Skinner 1971); social learning and modelling theories (Bandura 1977); cognitive theories (for example, Piaget cited in Mussen 1983; Kohlberg 1969; Clark et al., 1999) and the ecological psychological theory expounded by Levine & Perkins (1987).

Social process theories can arguably sit in the overlap between emotional/mental and social/relational. Sutherland’s Differential Association Theory (1947) involves both learning (mind/emotional) and the social environment (social/relational). Akers, a social process theorist (1998), is a good example in combining the operant conditioning of Skinner with Sutherland’s differential association and who perceive an intimate connection between the complexity of the emotional/mental and the social environment.

The social/relational aspect of human beings may include understanding of theories for practice including control theory (Hirschi 1969; Akers 1994) with its emphasis on bonding, and labelling theory (for example, Lemert 1967; Becker 1973; Goffman 1961; Young 1971; Braithwaite 1989). Also included in the social/relational is social ecology (including the Chicago School), with its emphasis on design ecology (that is designing societies/communities to avoid social and relational problems—Jeffery 1971; Newman 1973; Taylor & Harrell 1996), critical ecology (with an emphasis on local institutions
and organisations—Gill 1977; Markowitz et al., 2001) and integrated and systemic ecology (which attempts to integrate ecological, biological, social learning, and cultural theories—Vila 1994).

The social/relational must also include a consideration of society. Here the social worker may draw on the insights of Durkheim (1895) or Merton (1968) in relation to anomie or Agnew’s (1992) General Strain Theory. They may draw more widely upon the approaches of Marx in his critique of capitalism, or from feminism (which may be sub-categorised into liberal, radical, Marxist or socialist feminism). The social/relational may also include theories for practice from a very wide range of sources that may help in discerning and understanding the practical situation.

Consideration of the social/relational will involve the social worker making some assessments as to the participant’s connectedness to and within society, the breadth and depth of the connections, the helpfulness or otherwise of the connections, the participant’s (and social worker’s) acceptance of difference, the satisfaction of the connectedness, cultural and ethnic values, living conditions, political and community features.

The spiritual factors for the social worker will involve the notions of identity and the sense of being. There will be consideration of hope and optimism, consideration of the sense of aesthetics, consideration of the sense of purpose, understandings of religion and consideration of ontological and existential issues. The social worker ought to have a well-considered position on these issues.

THE INTERACTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The individual/family/group/community participant and the social worker participant bring different perspectives to the interaction. The individual/family/group/community
participant brings the lived experience and the unique characteristics of their situation. The social worker participant brings a range of different experiences and theoretical training and practical wisdom and the reflective approaches to the situation. The attempt is not to overpower either of the participants, nor necessarily to construct a single view of reality, but to accept the diverse views that each brings. Rather than being client-centred, this approach is relationship-centred with each of the participants bringing particular aspects of being, thinking and doing to the relationship and establishing a dialogue towards a purpose. The interaction is not dependant upon co-equal contributions (for I would argue that that is never possible) but recognises the dignity of differential contributions and the fundamental humanity of the participants.

The participant and the social worker are in a process of engagement, collaboration and assessment (Poulter 2005). These operate at all stages of the model but are particularly relevant here. The participants, having established a relationship based on their human experience of thinking, doing and being, move to consider the environment and the objectives that are desired.
THE ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

Figure 3.4 The Scan Box

A key component of social work is considering the person (participant)-in-the-environment. In the model, the participant and the social worker jointly scan the environment and consider the current realities (the presenting issue, other issues, geographic considerations, willingness of others and capacity of others), the resources that are available (this will include the current state of knowledge, the social worker’s and participant’s skill base, legitimate activities of the social worker and participant, finance, sources of referral, supervision and support available, time available, technological aids) and the opportunities and threats that the environment poses.

Both the participant and the social worker carefully note the gaps and inconsistencies that exist in knowledge, understanding and resources and whether these gaps will render involvement and solutions impossible.
Social workers undertake their functions, roles and activities within a context. Cheers at al., (2005) have developed eight domains of practice. Their ‘Domain Theory’ is useful as a checklist to ensure that all aspects of the environment are considered. The concept of practice domains is a development of Bauman’s concept of liquid modernity (Bauman: 2000, 2001). Cheers’s domains apply to the social worker. I have sought to use them as the basis of the environmental scan. The ‘personal’ domain to which Cheers et al. refer is adequately covered in my model by the specific concern for the participant and social worker participant. Indeed, my model places a priority on the persons involved. The ‘practice wisdom’ domain (this is the unique application of the social worker’s knowledge and skills through a reflexive process that enables each unique situation to be acted upon in an individualised and appropriate way) in the Cheers et al. model can also be subsumed in the social worker participant part of the model being developed here. Cheers et al. separate the ‘society’ domain (this reflects the current values, beliefs and morals of the wider society and includes capitalism, acceptable behaviours, dominant ideologies and so on) and the ‘structural’ domain (this is the current institutions, laws, procedures protocols and current social work practices). This is a somewhat arbitrary separation and the two can comfortably be subsumed under the ‘societal’ domain for the purpose of considering the participant-in-the-environment. In a similar way, the ‘community’ domain (this reflects the current values, beliefs, history and local stories of the unique particular community) and the ‘geographic’ domain (this reflects the physical, economic, ecological and infrastructural basis of a community) can comfortably be subsumed within the ‘community’ domain.

For the purposes of my practical model the domains are:

1. The Society Domain: (This reflects the current values, beliefs and morals of the wider society and includes capitalism, acceptable behaviours, dominant
ideologies and so on and current institutions, laws, procedures protocols and current social work practices).

2. The Community Domain: (This reflects the current values, beliefs, history and local stories, physical, economic, ecological and infrastructural basis of the unique particular community).

3. The Agency Domain: (This encompasses the agency ideology, current beliefs, philosophies, relationships, commitment, skills and socio-economics and stage of the organisation).

4. The Professional Domain: (This encompasses the professional social work knowledge, skills, ethics and values and the degree to which they are implemented).

5. The Practice Field Domain: (This is the specific field or fields of social work practice, such as corrections or child protection, that may require specific knowledge and skills).

Some important reflections on this useful listing need to be made. First, the domains reflect the current situation. They are subject to change and are, in fact, always in a state of change. Some domains change very slowly and incrementally (for example, the ‘society’ domain accepts the notion of the social contract or the privatisation of public assets). Others may change rapidly in response to catastrophic external events (for example, the ‘community’ domain may change quickly as a result of the loss of a meatworks in a single-industry town; or the ‘society’ domain may change as a result of changes in the law or procedures).

Secondly, social work practitioners and participants may identify more strongly with one or other of the domains. For example, a given practitioner may identify strongly with the ‘professional’ domain with its emphasis on participant self-determination—but
on the issue of abortion or euthanasia may identify more strongly with the ‘agency’
domain or the ‘society’ domain. Cheers et al. refer to this by the terms ‘domain
location’ and ‘domain alignment’.

Thirdly, I have considered the ‘personal’ domain quite separately. In part, the
‘Domain Theory’ focus is upon the social worker, whereas I wish to emphasise the
importance of both the social worker and the participant and their personal domains.
This is to emphasise the importance of the participant’s involvement, their participation
in the social work activity and the high value placed on the participant-social worker
relationship.

Cheers et al. discuss the ways in which the framework helps practitioners:
Modifying their comments in the light of this model I would argue that:

1. The conceptual framework allows the participant and social worker to both
deconstruct and reconstruct their lived experience and to make some sense of
both his/her/their experience, within the wider constraints of the society and
other considerations.

2. The framework allows the participant and social worker participant to engage in
the dynamic process of working through the conflicts and tensions between the
domains and within the domains. There may be conflicts, for example, between
the ‘professional’ domain or ‘agency’ domain and the ‘society’ domain and the
‘community’ domain.

3. The framework is a tool that assists the participant and social worker participant
to adjust their thinking and doing and being and to begin the process of adjusting
the other domains to maximise the benefit to participants.

4. The framework increases the likelihood that the participant and social worker
participant will undertake an analysis of their circumstances and situations.
5. The framework allows for a more holistic assessment that encompasses the macro environment, the mezzo environment and the micro-environment.

The conceptual framework of the domains fits in neatly with traditional social work concepts such as ‘the person (participant)-in-the-environment’ and ‘multi-dimensional approaches’. The practice domains provide a structured approach without the rigidity of a prescriptive approach. It provides a useful set of concepts in dealing with complex and multi-dimensional practice and the flexibility to use the concepts in a creative way. Importantly, it is a framework that allows for the consilience of thinking, doing and being.

In scanning the environment, critical thinking/critical reflection, systemic/logical and creative/lateral thinking are all applied. Lateral thinking is required in relation to considering the alternatives that may be present. Many of the theories for practice that are applicable to the participant and social worker also apply to the environmental scan. In particular the social learning theories, theories of state and community theories are applicable. They are required to be used in a consilient way—jumping together those matters that make sense and have coherence and rejecting those theories that do not fit the realities.

THE OBJECTIVE/S

In considering objectives and to avoid the situation where social workers and particularly the participant consider that social work is all process and has few outcomes, I had initially used the acronym SMART—drawn from studies in Public Sector Management studies. However, in reviewing the use of the acronym, the following options were found (see www.projectsmart.co.uk/smart-goals):
Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely
Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound
Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Relevant, and Timely
Specific, Measurable, Appropriate, Realistic, Time-Bound
Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Tangible
Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented, Time-based
Specific, Motivating, Achievable, Rewarding, and Tactical

Their use depended in part on the disciplinary origin. In considering this for the purpose of social work, I have decided to use **Specific, Motivating, Actionable, Relevant and Timely**. This has been in order to place the priority on human objectives and activity rather than on a concept external to people. Thus any social work objective must be specific, motivating, have a priority of action, be relevant (and by implication realistic) and be timely. This usage of the acronym allows for the continuing change that is part of being human (whether developmental or degenerative change) and there is a sense in which we will always be ‘becoming’ rather than ever having ‘arrived’. An objective in one situation may be to develop greater insight or in another to retard or postpone degeneration. The objective will be situation specific in the light of the participants’ contributions and the environmental scan. For example, the mutually agreed upon objective for one alcoholic may be complete abstinence while for another it may be a reduction of usage to still hazardous levels. For one community, the objective may be growth and development of infrastructure while for another community the objective may be to assist adjustment to a reality of loss of services and infrastructure due to population decline with a degree of dignity and understanding of the grief and
The participant and the social worker jointly decide the objectives. It is here that the issues of client self-determination and the social worker’s responsibility and even the social control focus are clearly articulated. There may be conflict over goals that require consilient approaches that enable creative and empowering solutions within the environmental parameters or the dictates of the agency or society. There may be sub-objectives or milestones or steps to the objectives. The objectives may be tangible outcomes; they may be process-oriented; or they may be a simple re-framing of the issue that allows for a different conceptualisation.

PROCESS(ES)/LABOUR

The process(es)/labour elements of the model arise from the participant and social worker’s being and thinking, from the environmental scan and from the objectives that have been jointly decided upon.

Both process and labour, as terms, may have pejorative connotations. They have been chosen deliberately and in the knowledge that both can be misunderstood and maliciously re-interpreted. I have used the terms to convey the consilience that is needed between process and labour in social work. Social work is not entirely process oriented nor is it simply labour oriented but rather a thoughtful use of different processes and an appropriate expenditure of energy and effort by both participant and social worker. This is to counter the claims that social work is ineffective and relies upon talk. I wish to convey that assisting in cleaning a house, going with a participant to a job interview, personing a barricade, teaching a skill, initiating a fresh approach or reframing a problem (and many other examples) are significant social work labour.

Drucker (1981) described management as ‘getting things done through people’ and neatly encapsulated the three distinct schools of management (‘getting…done’ as the
process school of management; ‘things’ as the outcomes school of management or Management By Objectives; and ‘through people’ as the human relations school of management). Social work needs an equal emphasis on process and labour.

This element of the model involves two steps that require all forms of thinking and a consideration of the ‘doing’ of social work. This element requires the development of strategies and methods and the consideration of alternative strategies and methods with the consideration of the likely utility and probability of the methods and strategies being useful in achieving the desired outcomes. Preferred strategies and methods are decided upon, and then allocation of responsibility for implementation occurs. This element involves critical thinking/critical reflection/systemic/logical thinking as well as lateral and creative thinking that can generate possibilities and alternatives. It requires the input of both the participant and the social worker participant.

The selected strategy and the selected methods are then implemented. There will be some strategies that will be appropriate in some situations and others that will not be possible given the limitations of the participant, the social worker, the environment (the limitations may arise from any of the domains) or the objectives. But creative and unusual approaches will also be possible. The model is not prescriptive about the methods and strategies but allows for them to be implemented as the circumstances determine.

Having thoroughly engaged, collaborated and assessed the participants/social worker and the environment and having decided upon the agreed objectives, the process and labour element of the model involves both the social worker and the participant implementing the agreed strategies chosen and labouring separately and together on items in order to achieve the objectives. The model is not prescriptive about the ‘doings’ that the social worker undertakes. Nor is it prescriptive of the labour and process
undertaken by the participants. It will vary from situation to situation—with some participants being able to (say) advocate for him(her)self while others will not. Some participants will need the social worker to enable or initiate while others will require different ‘doing’ skills from the social worker.

EVALUATION

The values and forces that shape the social work environment also shape the evaluation of social work. There are difficulties related to calculating the impact of social work. These include:

- When individuals, governments and agencies pursue incompatible goals and policies;
- The fact that some programs and activities have primarily symbolic value;
- That there is a vested interest in ‘proving’ that programs/actions have a positive effect (that is, that they work);
- When approaches which solve the problems of one person/group in society may create problems for another group;
- That people may adapt themselves in ways which render social work impact useless;
- The fact that societal problems have multiple causes and a specific social work action may be devised to correct only some causes or may create further problems;
- That the solution to some problems may require approaches which are more costly than the problem;
- That the political system and individuals do not use completely rational decision making processes;
- That the impact of social work is assessed against standards or criteria promulgated by those in authority rather than participants and can be inherently conservative.
and promote the maintenance of the status quo. This entrenches inherently conservative ‘top-down’ approaches; and

- That social work is subverted by forces or values opposed to the social work (that is, it is subject to manipulation).

While these are very real considerations, evaluating for results can be as simple as asking the participant. In individual work, assessment is sometimes done by scaling techniques (1–10), while other measures may be behavioural change or attitudinal change, time out of gaol, a new job, a new program, a submission, greater access to children or many other matters related to the objective.

Evaluation can be considered from a range of views related to purpose, context and time horizons. Evaluation, as the name implies, involves judgements and valuations about different facts or perspectives. Owen (2003) says that the purposes of an evaluation include: enlightenment; accountability; program improvement; program clarification; program development; and symbolic reasons (for example, funding or auspicing body requires an evaluation). Evaluations need to take account of the context, design limitations (for example, budget, ethics, educational levels of respondents and so on), the process undertaken and the anticipated and/or serendipitous outcomes. Legitimate foci of an evaluation are the planning, programmes, policies, organisation, individuals and processes. Evaluations and managerial judgements assess the efficiency and effectiveness of practices and processes for achieving improved outcomes in systems for participants. ‘Effectiveness’ refers to the achievement of some goal, if possible, at minimum cost, but above all successfully. ‘Efficiency’ refers to an input-output relationship, that is, optimisation—obtaining maximum satisfaction for a given outlay of resources. Drucker (1981), in discussing why service institutions do not
perform, says:

*It is effectiveness and not efficiency which the service institution lacks. Effectiveness cannot be obtained by businesslike behaviour as the term is understood—that is, by greater efficiency. To be sure, efficiency is necessary in all institutions...But the basic problem of service institutions is not high cost but lack of effectiveness. Some are very efficient, but they tend not to do the right things.* (132)

Key considerations in all evaluations are: appropriateness (the extent to which the objectives and priorities match the needs of the participants and the goals of the organisation); effectiveness (the extent to which the intervention outcomes match stated objectives); and efficiency (objectives are achieved at reasonable cost and in a reasonable time).

Evaluation is sometimes seen as the end of a linear process—conceptualised in the following way:

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Assessment ➔ Intervention ➔ Evaluation
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This linear conceptualisation is unhelpful. Evaluation needs to be built-in at each point of the process. Goals need to be framed with evaluative impact as a factor. Inputs, processes and outputs (sometimes called outcomes) ought to be subject to evaluation. A more helpful model modified and used extensively by the writer is Figure 3.5.
FEATURES OF THE MODEL (PEOPLE)

The model recognises the centrality of human beings. It begins with the participant and the social worker participant rather than beginning with abstract theory or inappropriate actions. The model utilises the dynamic interplay of participants within their environment and creates the opportunity for a social worker and participant to jointly scan the environment, determine goals, decide upon strategies from a competing array, jointly action the preferred strategy and consider impact/outcomes. There is agreement upon process and there is a jointly allocated responsibility for implementation and the responsibility for outcomes. At each point of the model the various components of thinking and doing and being are used. The model is not prescriptive as to content and
allows both participant and the social worker participant to bring their varying
being/thinking/doing to the issues at hand. The model is flexible and allows content and
theories to be implemented at various points. The proposed model puts the priority on
the relationship between the participant and the social worker.

THE RELEVANCE OF CONSiLIENCE TO HUMAN DECISION MAKING
AND THE MODEL
At various points, the model involves social workers and the participants making
decisions on both the information to be collected and considered and approaches to be
adopted. Social workers make important contributions to decisions in relation to the
lives of human beings and communities. In general these decisions are made on the
basis of one of three competing approaches.

Scientific or actuarial-based models employ predominantly empirical research
findings using deductive and structured thinking. Hart (1998) outlines the limitations of
actuarial approaches by explaining how they tend to exclude crucial case-specific or
idiosyncratic factors; they tend to focus on relatively static factors that are immutable
and lead to passive predictions or defensive practice; they may exclude critical factors
on the basis that they have not been proved empirically even though those factors may
be logical; and they tend to optimise a specific outcome over a specific time, in a
specific population leading to non-optimal decisions when applied in different settings.

Social worker judgement and consensus approaches also have limitations as they
rely upon the intuition and the summation of the judgement of the social worker or of a
panel of experts. Consensus approaches in practice are often related to a caseworker-
supervisor or case conferencing where a consensus arises from sharing different
perspectives. Stewart & Thompson (2004) summarised some of the literature on human
decision making and identified biases including a confirmatory bias which often prevents practitioners considering evidence impartially; the illusory correlations which can lead to two events being seen as being related when they are not related; and the practitioner's tendency to place too much emphasis on the unique characteristic of the case. The criticisms of this approach also include the capacity for ‘groupthink’ to develop, the power differentials that may impact upon decisions, the ‘expertness’ of those involved and whether consensus is reached. In addition, the consensus approach that relies upon experts can overlook case-specific factors and can exclude the participant by replicating an oppressive expert panel-participant dichotomy.

Doyle & Dolan (2002) discuss a third-generation approach. This approach attempts to bridge the gap between the scientific-actuarial approach and the judgement-consensus practice approach. The emphasis is on developing evidence-based guidelines or frameworks that promotes systemisation and consistency and yet are flexible enough to account for case-specific influences and the context in which actions are conducted. Douglas et al. (1999) refers to this approach as ‘empirically validated, structured decision-making’ and Hart (1998) refers to it as ‘structured clinical judgement’. The potential in this approach is to either avoid or moderate the criticisms of each of the previous approaches or to take on the worst features and criticisms of both approaches. This ‘third generation’ approach can be considered as a synthesis of the other two approaches.

Consilience would accept that the two different approaches (analytic/scientific and judgement/consensus) are two different ways of knowing and that each should be held simultaneously and valued rather than synthesised or integrated into one approach. Tomison (1999) and Saunders & Goddard (1998) critique the ‘either/or’ debate between actuarial and consensus/judgement approaches (as related to child protection) and
suggest that the different approaches were complementary. I prefer to consider them as consilient in order not to appropriate the negative features of each approach into the complementary whole. It is better, in my view, to appreciate the criticisms of both approaches and hold them in tension rather than to consider two flawed approaches as creating a positive whole.

Human beings use deductive reasoning or intuitive reasoning or a combination of both. Analytic reasoning has the advantage of being clear and explicit about how various conclusions are reached. Intuition on the other hand is associated with creativity, imagination and imagery. Many social workers rely heavily on intuitive skills (Farmer & Owens 1995; Thorpe 1994). In making judgements, participants and social workers take mental shortcuts (heuristics). Kahneman et al., (1990) describe the social world as ‘overwhelmingly informative’. If the participant and social worker were perfectly rational, they would consider all relevant evidence before reaching conclusions or making judgements. Perfectly rational people may find judgements based on analytic thinking are expensive both in time and effort. There is a cost/benefit problem and, as a result, a time problem. Therefore, most people generally prefer to find ways of simplifying reasoning by taking shortcuts but in the process risk higher levels of error or develop patterned or habitual biases. This leads Hammond (1996) to say that:

*Intuition is a hazard, a process not to be trusted, not only because it is inherently flawed by ‘biases’ but because the person who resorts to it is innocently and sometimes arrogantly overconfident when employing it. (88)*

Kahneman et al., (1990) state that intuition can lead to ‘large and persistent biases with serious implications for decision-making’ (464).

Given the ‘overwhelmingly informative social world’, social workers and their
participants tend to be selective in the information they seek and use—and the way they select this information is important. But the analytic and critical thinking skills can be too time consuming and require perfect information to make reasoned and correct decisions. The dilemma facing many social workers in the practice reality is whether to act on the basis of the imperfect evidence available and use intuitive thinking, or wait for perfect information applied to a reduced number of variables through an analytic thinking process. The proposed model encourages both types of thinking and can be applied differentially depending upon the contextual (for example, time) and environmental factors (for example, workload, competing priorities). The consilience of thinking/doing/being is central to developing better but realistic practice.

In the practice of social work in real situations, and in this model, often there will not be ‘perfect information’ and the conditions required for actuarial/scientific decision-making. Of necessity, there will be a consilience of both actuarial/scientific decision-making and intuitive/consensus decision-making. This represents an imperfect and flawed approach to practice—but the most feasible and defensible one. The social worker is responsible for bringing knowledge (including traditional knowledge, experiential knowledge, commonsense knowledge, scientific knowledge and sacred/spiritual knowledge) and current contextual approaches while the client contributes their own unique situation and understanding of that situation (and may contribute their experiential knowledge, traditional knowledge and so on). This, to use Freire’s term, allows for ‘consciensation’. The model creates the conditions for the social worker and the participants to critique each other and to arrive at a decision that is owned and enacted by both having due regards to the parameters in which the decisions were made.
SUMMARY

This chapter has developed the practice model and expanded upon the elements of that model. The model’s elements have been articulated as a practice framework that incorporates the social worker and the participant’s thinking, doing and being using the model based upon physiological/organic, mental/emotional, social/relational and spiritual/existential dimensions. The model has recognised the practice theories of engagement, collaboration and assessment and has given significant weight to the relationship between the participant and the social worker participant. Jointly, an environmental scan is undertaken using a modified version of Cheers et al’s domains. In the light of the participants-in-the-environment, objectives are jointly established that are specific, motivating, actionable, relevant and timely. The next stage of the model involves processes and labour where the various strategies and alternative strategies and methods are considered and where the tasks are assigned and labour undertaken. The final stage of the practice model is evaluation. At all stages of the model, the social worker and the participant are involved in holding thinking and doing and being consiliently rather than seeking integration or synthesis.
CHAPTER 4

THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

As to methods there may be a million and then some, but principles are few. The man who grasps principles can successfully select his own methods. The man who tries methods, ignoring principles, is sure to have trouble.
—Emerson

Let us be resolute in prosecuting our ends, and mild in our methods of so doing.
—Aquaviva

This chapter outlines the main methodological approach employed for this thesis. Methodology embodies principles which underpin the conduct of a study. Methodology is as much an explanation of the why of research as the how of research. The purpose of research methodology is to assist in the understanding of the enquiry process rather than simply the product of the study. Methodology is distinct from ‘methods’ used in a study. Methods are, according to Cohen & Manion (1989: 41), the techniques and procedures used in information gathering and processing. The methodology influences the ways of understanding and explaining the world and of knowledge creation. I would
also argue that different methods arise from different assumptions, perspectives and disciplinary traditions.

Often researchers will adopt one method or a group of associated methods in a way that reduces complex variables to more easily studied and (often) quantifiable entities. The choice of one method or a few methods may be reductionist and is contrary to the diverse needs and circumstances of people in their environment, and contrary to the reality of the diverse and complex nature of human and social interaction. While established methods are used, to be consistent with the purpose of the thesis, it is necessary to use the methodology and methods that are emancipatory and as much determined by the subject matter and by the participants.

The overarching framework for this thesis is reflection on thinking and doing and being as it applies to the practice model across a range of participants in social work practice. The post-facto reflective analysis is undertaken on the researcher’s practice with individual/family work, group work, community work, social research and social administration. It needs to be noted that much research methodology and methods are driven by ‘top-down’ approaches. The researcher’s practice in the five areas was driven by the consilience of ‘top-down’ approaches and participant-centred approaches.

Generally, social work practice in each of the areas is undertaken from the perspective of those in the macro environment. In line with the concept of consilience, there was an endeavour made to ensure that participants were active in framing the methods and the interventions as suggested in the model. Consilience involved the ‘jumping together’ of ‘top down’ and ‘bottom up’ approaches.
METHODOLOGY

The Positivist Methodology of Research

The ‘scientific’ or positivist methodology is one approach that can be used and adds value to enquiry. This method—with its emphasis on the development of experimental and control cohorts of individuals or communities—has some limitations when applied to social work. There is often no comparable group of individual or communities to study. Setting up a research approach that is positivist and scientific would require matching individuals/communities and holding all other variables as constant. It is also simply not feasible to consider individuals/communities as unchanging entities. The scientific paradigm itself neatly avoids the whole question as to the way in which knowledge is constructed within the ‘natural’ and ‘social’ phenomena. While the scientist may believe in a cause-effect relationship, the social scientist looks at actions, which are described in value-laden terms and sometimes may not be related to the cause-effect relationship. The vocabularies of action are substantially underpinned by value assumptions. Practice also involves complex and diverse human beings in real situations of distress, and their needs and concerns have priority over the demands and rigour imposed by a strictly ‘scientific’ research methodology.

There are very significant problems with a positivist paradigm applied to social phenomena. Guba & Lincoln (1989) speak of a ‘positivist’ approach to research and the ‘constructivist’ approach. They say:

Convinced that there exists one single, true reality, driven by natural laws, open to discovery and harnessed by the methods of science, positivists reject all relativist views of which constructivism is one, as not only seriously in error but pernicious and repugnant. Advocates of such a view, they feel, rank but a notch above conmen and snake oil salesmen...on the other hand the relativist constructivist, while not agreeing with positivist formulation, can nevertheless accept it as one of many possible constructions. The constructivist may find the positivist
Guba & Lincoln (1989) make five significant criticisms of the scientific/positivist paradigm, which can be summarised as:

1. Positivism ‘context strips’ subjects of research who are decontextualised and objectified.

2. The scientific or positivist paradigm has an over-dependence on numerical and quantifiable data which are presented as ‘scientific variables’. The difficulty with this perception is that the concentration on the numerics tends to negate other forms of knowledge. The almost inevitable consequence is that ‘what cannot be measured cannot be real’. The dependence on quantifications excludes other non-quantifiable matters.

3. The non-negotiable nature of scientific findings leads to a scientific claim that a positivist paradigm can provide more information about the way things really are.

4. The scientific or positivist paradigm tends to suggest an exclusiveness of solution and all alternatives must be incorrect.

5. Positivist paradigms claim that science is value-free. Nevertheless there is significant evidence to suggest that science, far from being value free, is essentially a moral enterprise where the values are taken as given and are a priori true.

The positivist paradigm, empirical approach and scientific method seek to find ‘truth’ that is unaffected by the identity of the researcher (Fine 1992). The researcher's position involves a stance of scientific objectivity and personal detachment. The positivist demand for researcher anonymity has been widely criticised (Myrdal 1969; Scholte

Schrijvers (1993) has argued that the failure to acknowledge the subjectivity of those being researched reinforces patterns of domination and silence. The positivist paradigm has been criticised for not making explicit the position of dominant groups (Fine 1992; Bordo 1990). The positivist paradigm represents the dominant ideologies of Western society with its emphases on rationality, objectivity, unobtrusiveness, empiricism and rigour that preserves the status quo and perpetuates the dominance of the dominant groups. Foucault argues that the positivist paradigm's notions of truth are used for the purposes of regulation and control (Foucault 1980).

The positivist paradigm may reproduce and reinforce the patterns within our society that have furthered the marginalisation of various populations (Fine 1992). This approach, by itself, may be in conflict with the philosophical underpinning of social work, which has a focus upon social justice and a change-intention that seeks to alter the basic character of societal relationships to reflect social justice and human rights. Some aspects of social research lend themselves to scientific experimentation while others do not. The positivist paradigm, within a consilience model, is valued for the insights that it brings but it is also considered as one approach to be balanced by other approaches and paradigms.

The Interpretivist Methodology of Research

The interpretivist paradigm is sometimes referred to as the qualitative, narrative or ethnographic, or the social scientific paradigm. This research practice stance focuses upon revealing the voice of the people being researched and their interpretation of their own experiences. Borrowing from the humanist tradition, this qualitative approach
directs attention to the individual’s interpretation of the world. The approach commences with the reality of the people’s lives (Dixon 1993).

The qualitative paradigm has moved away from some of the demands for objectivity, rationality, empiricism and quantitative measurement. Nevertheless, the qualitative paradigm has been criticised for its positivistic tendencies (Keat 1971; Bhaskar 1979) and that the methodology of the natural sciences has been applied unproblematically to the social sciences (Keat 1971). A major criticism of the paradigm is that it has attempted to put rigour into its research design in order to make its own research more valid. By doing so it has adopted many of the principles of the positivist paradigm. The qualitative paradigm is therefore criticised also for the misrepresentation and control of those involved in the research (Roman 1992; Harding 1986, 1987; Dixon 1993).

Although the meanings people attach to their experiences are considered important to critical practice (Carr & Kemmis 1986; Fine 1992), the uncritical acceptance of the voice of those involved in the research is also problematic (Harding 1986, 1987; Roman 1992). The uncritical focus upon the subject or individual may also shift attention from the structural determinants of injustice, oppression, disadvantage and personal pain.

Some critics are wary of the potential of the interpretivist approach to degenerate into a pluralist approach to political practice that is both cynical and impotent (Fraser 1989). While this degeneration is a real concern, of equal concern is the framework that would deny diversity and/or narrow voices to a single voice. The individualistic research focus may deny the collective voice. Individualisation in research (hearing the voice; focussing upon exceptionality) is the goal that the critical researcher wishes to pursue but in so doing risks losing the collectivism often needed for action and change. Given the dangers of degenerating into a pluralist approach on the one hand and the
denial of the collectivist voice on the other, the notion of consilience could be implemented to ensure that these dangers would not prevail. To counter the dangers of cynicism and impotence, a healthy focus upon participant approaches and a commitment to praxis minimises these dangers but does not, of course, entirely eliminate them.

Equally problematic is the manipulation of the voices of those involved. The voices can be used for the telling of the researcher's own story (Fine 1992; Fabian 1992, Opie 1992). This criticism is often levelled at feminist and critical social researchers/practitioners in relation to oppressive practices. In the search for a defining theme, there may be a suppression of voices unlike their own (Flax 1990). Dixon (1993) argues that the focus on individual experience is inadequate for social work change strategies. Ethnography affirms a social world that can be gazed upon but not necessarily challenged or transformed. It can be argued that the interpretivist paradigm limits research to cultural description, a presentation of voice and an outsider’s interpretation of the other's categorised world. It can be argued that the change of social structures and resource distribution, which are central issues for social work practice, cannot be accomplished by an individualistic or ethnographic approach.

**An Alternative Methodology**

Critical theorists working across a variety of theoretical and political traditions have repeatedly challenged traditional ways of knowing and describing the world. (Freire 1974, 1988; Foucault 1980; Oakley 1981; Berstein 1983; Habermas 1984; Jagger 1983; Duelli-Klein 1983; Lather 1986; Argyris 1987; Haraway 1988; Bawden 1991; Fine 1992; Roman 1992; Schrijvers 1993). While it has been argued that critical theorists lack a unity of theory, regarding the nature of oppression and the means of societal transformation, there is a unity amongst groups as diverse as critical theorists, liberation
theologians and structural social workers in the rejection of the subject-object dualism of traditional researchers.

There has been a call for the development of alternative research paradigms, which allow for the reconceptualisation of the relationship between theory, practice and research (Fook 1996). Attempts have been made to develop an approach to social work that unites practice, theory and research. The call has been for the participation of research subjects in the process of theory building, knowledge production and the development of action strategies and solutions to problems (Piele 1993, 1994a; Stringer 1996). Incorporated also within this paradigm is a plethora of action, reflective and experiential approaches (Piele 1994b).

An Indigenous Alternative Approach to Research

Foley (2003) says:

*Indigenous postgraduate students can become frustrated by being forced to accept Western ethnocentric research methodology that is culturally unacceptable to the indigenous epistemological approach to knowledge.* (48)

In his paper, which examines the need for an Indigenous epistemological approach, he discusses the Western discourses and Western theories that have assisted (and at times inhibited) the renaissance of indigenous approaches to knowledge.

Rigney says (1997):

*Indigenous people are at a stage where they want research and research designs to contribute to their self-determination and liberation struggles, as it is defined and controlled by the communities. In privileging the first perspective models of indigenous qualitative research methods, we not only provide processes to keep their indigenous identities and knowledge’s safe, but also provide space for hope and the potential of moving forward to the realisation of a non-colonial research future.* (3)
He explains that Indigenous people see, think and interpret the world and the world’s realities in differing ways to non-indigenous people because of their experiences, history, cultures and values (8).

Weber–Pillwax (2001: 49–50) identifies six research principles for Indigenous research:

1. All forms of living things are to be respected as being related and interconnected.
2. The source of a research project is the heart/mind of the researcher, where the unselfish motives in the researcher ensure benefits for everyone.
3. The foundation of Indigenous research lies within the reality of the lived Indigenous experience and are grounded in real people as social beings rather than the world of ideas.
4. Any theories developed or proposed are based upon and supported by Indigenous forms of epistemology.
5. Indigenous research is grounded in the integrity of Indigenous people and communities and therefore cannot undermine the people or communities.
6. The language and culture of Indigenous peoples are living processes.

Rigney and Weber–Pillwax would seem to be suggesting that thinking and doing and being for Indigenous people may be different from those of many non-Indigenous people.

I engaged with communities where the Indigenous population is significant and in one study, Indigenous people are the majority of the community. The studies chosen
reflect both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives. The research has attempted to adhere to the principles and the growing body of literature in relation to Indigenous research. I am not Indigenous and where the Indigenous community has been consulted and contacted, I have worked in conjunction with Indigenous local people with and on behalf of Indigenous people. There are some roles that are not appropriate to non-Indigenous people and some access to traditional, and particularly spiritual, knowledge that is inappropriae or denied to people of the wrong gender, kin, totem or skin. The principles articulated by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) in relation to research in Indigenous communities and the consultation protocols adopted after consultation with peak Indigenous bodies by the NSW Department of Community Services have been used as the guiding principles when becoming involved with local Indigenous communities. The colonising impact of research and practice has been a serious consideration where Indigenous people are involved.

Research may be most perniciously biased by the thinking and doing and being of the researcher when they are hidden from those being researched or even from the researcher. Value explicit research is more honest research in which the researcher expresses and clarifies his/her own thinking and doing and being. The research approach adopted here that is consistent with consilience needs to accept views of knowledge and understandings from positivist, interpretivist, alternative and Indigenous perspectives.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY USED IN THIS THESIS

Participatory Research Approach and Critical Reflection

The methodological approach primarily used is participatory research and critical
reflection. The rationale for this approach is its consistency with the conceptual framework and intent of social work and the recognition of consilience with respect to useable knowledge. It recognises diversity. It places the emphasis on thinking/doing/being, the relationship of the participant and the social worker and is applicable at least in the environmental scanning, objectives formation, process and labour and evaluation phases of the model.

Participatory research is an important methodology of knowledge production. Participatory research is about people, power and praxis (Finn 1994). It is an approach to research which takes seriously the critiques of traditional research methodologies that are inherent in critical theory. It links the process of enquiry to the lives of people (Stringer 1996). The participatory research method often involves a process of repeating cycles of assessment, planning, acting, and reflecting. At the core of this research approach, is a collaborative process between the researcher and the people in the situation that involves the exploration of thinking/doing/being. It is a process of critical enquiry, has a focus on practice, and is a deliberate process of reflective learning (Argyris et al., 1985).

The acknowledgment of, and the quest to transform power differentials are central to the practice of participatory research (Hall 1992). Participatory research challenges top-down only approaches to knowledge production and promotes new relationships in the research process (Brown & Tandon 1983; Fernades & Tandon 1981; Labrador & Serra 1987).

Participatory research should be an empowering process that contributes to improved quality of life and change-orientated individuals/groups/communities. Participatory research is people-centred (Brown 1985) rather than (arguably) technique-centred or method-centred. Participatory research challenges practices that separate the
researcher from the people and recognises the importance of local knowledge and experience (Finn 1994). The researcher joins as a committed co-participant in a process of co-learning. This approach contextualises research in terms of the current socio-political conditions encapsulated in the society, structural and community domains and that contribute to the situation (Fernades 1989; Freire 1970, 1973). On this issue, Freire (1970) articulates the concept of conscientisation as the process of learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions and take action against oppression.

Participatory research is about praxis. Praxis is the interaction of reflection and action that guides critical enquiry (Freire 1970; Lather 1986, 1991). It links the personal and the political contexts of thought and action (thinking and doing). Participatory research is collectivist and produces both change and knowledge. Hall (1992: 17) suggests that because of its constructivist epistemological position, participatory research has no ‘methodological orthodoxies, no cookbook approach to follow’. It is not a set of tools, techniques and methods (Brown & Tandon 1983).

The use of different methods is very much determined by the context, the people involved and the objectives. The only criteria Hall (1992) offers for choice of method, is that the approach should be selected on the basis that it has the potential to draw out knowledge and analysis. Critical knowledge development within participatory research calls for a creative blend of traditional methods of enquiry and new approaches (Finn 1994). Social work is more than knowledge and requires action and change.

The principles of participatory research include: a reversal of learning (learning directly on the site and face-to-face gaining from local, physical, technical and social knowledge); learning rapidly and progressively (using conscious exploration, flexible methods, taking opportunities, improvising, cross-checking); offsetting biases (by being relaxed, listening rather than lecturing, probing rather than passing on to the next topic,
being unimposing instead of important, seeking out the least powerful people, and learning their concerns and priorities) optimising tradeoffs (between quantity, relevance, accuracy and timeliness); triangulating; seeking diversity (in terms of seeking variability rather than averages and described as the principle of maximising the diversity and richness of information); and facilitating investigations (analysing, presenting and learning by people so they present and own the outcomes and also learn).

The methods used in participatory research can include, but are not limited to: secondary sources (such as files, reports, maps, articles and books); key informants; semi-structured interviews; groups of various kinds involving group interviews and activities; transect or community walks (systemically walking with people through an area observing, asking, listening, discussing, identifying different zones, different technologies, different problems, different solutions, different opportunities); timelines (chronologies of events, listing major remembered events, trend analysis, people’s accounts of the past and accounts of how things used to be; ethnobiographies: participatory diagramming; wellbeing and wealth rankings; analysis of difference (especially by gender, social group, wealth/poverty, occupation and age); and stories, portraits, and case studies (such as a household history and profile, coping with a crisis or how conflict was or was not resolved).

Participatory research approaches may involve major research paradigm shifts including: from closed to open; from individuals to groups; from verbal to visual; from counting to comparing; and from extracting knowledge to empowering people.

A critical reflective method is employed as the main research method for the thesis. Watson & Wilcox (2000) argue that reflection is an essential step in the lifelong process of learning from professional and personal experience and that the reflective practitioner learns to attend to ordinary everyday experiences in a manner which informs practice.
They offer two reflective reading methods. The terms ‘reading’ and ‘texts’, in line with contemporary philosophy, denote the systems of meaning and extend beyond the written documents to include interpretations and experiences. The first reflective reading method, in the hermeneutic tradition, invites practitioners to read their stories of practice by examining how to make sense of their experience through narrative. Watson and Wilcox (2000) propose the process of ‘first round impressions’ (Ritcscher 1995: 11) ‘zooming in’ and ‘zooming out’ (Watson 1998). The second method, in the hypomnemata tradition of the Greeks (see Gore 1993; Foucault 1983) encourages practitioners to read their conventions of practices by examining how we order our experience through particular strategies, approaches and routines. This method has three steps: drawing together a collection of data that represents routine, day-to-day aspects of professional life that constitute conventions; annotating or reflecting upon these conventions (which can include, considering the origins of the conventions, the purpose they fulfil, the relationship to personal philosophy, the importance of the convention and those included or excluded by the convention); and reassembling the data in new and different ways that may challenge the conventions and lead to alternative constructions.

By reviewing the literature on critical reflection (Schön 1983; Watson & Wilcox 2000; Fook 1997), and in light of the thesis objectives, the researcher has developed and employed the following framework for reflection at Figure 4.1.
Watson and Willcox (2000: 66) raise the question of who should do the reading and suggest that it can be done alone or with professional colleagues. Both are entirely appropriate. However, I contend that in the context of social work, participatory research and in the light of the PEOPLE practice model, the reading also involved collaboration with the actual participants and in that respect may represent a new, or at least, a refined method of research. Reflective practice is shaped not only by individual practitioner reflection and collegiate reflection but by the reflection of those equally and intimately involved as participants. This refinement also offers a helpful (but not infallible) corrective to the social worker practitioner’s blindness to their own conventions and that of their profession.

**Sources of Data**

The main sources of data for the thesis are the readings of my practice experiences relating to individual/family work, group work, community work, social research and social administration. These essentially included my artefacts (see Watson & Wilcox 2000) such as selected case notes, diaries, letters, memos, general notes, minutes, research and evaluation reports, professional discussions, theoretical understanding gained from secondary sources, and my recollection of practice and critical incidents. I
have systematically organised the data according to practice areas and read them a number of times. Participants’ reflections include comments, interviews, formal reports and assessments, evaluations of the process and collaborative work on issues. Table 4.1 identifies sources of data.

Table 4.1 Sources of Data for Thesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRACTICE AREA</th>
<th>SOURCES OF DATA FOR READING</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY WORK  | ● Fifteen years correctional experience  
|                         | ● Case notes  
|                         | ● Case plans  
|                         | ● Timelines  
|                         | ● Ecomaps  
|                         | ● Written reports  
|                         | ● Evaluations  
|                         | ● Case conference notes  
|                         | ● Workers’ conference notes  
|                         | ● Professional discussions  
|                         | ● Interviews  
|                         | ● Court reports  
|                         | ● Theoretical understandings gained from secondary sources  
|                         | ● Practice memories, critical issues and critical incidents  |
| GROUP WORK              | ● Twenty years of practice experience in corrections  
|                         | ● Formal study in corrections  
|                         | ● Formal group work training  
|                         | ● Three groups of ten participants/group of the ‘Successful Parole Program’  
|                         | ● Verbatim transcription of comments  
|                         | ● Notes  
|                         | ● Group plans  
|                         | ● Timelines  
|                         | ● Written reports  
|                         | ● Prisoner evaluations  
|                         | ● Session notes and outlines  
|                         | ● Workers’ notes  
|                         | ● Professional discussions  
|                         | ● Interviews  
|                         | ● Reports from correctional staff  
|                         | ● Participant’s verbal self reports  
|                         | ● ‘Face-o-gram drawings’  
|                         | ● Reports, understandings gained from secondary sources  
|                         | ● Practice memories, critical issues and critical incidents  |
| COMMUNITY WORK          | ● Twenty-five years experience of rural communities  
|                         | ● Formal community development studies  
|                         | ● Australian Bureau of Statistics data  
|                         | ● Police and hospital data  
|                         | ● Relevant theory  
|                         | ● Previous community mappings  
|                         | ● Interviews, focus groups  
|                         | ● Reading of data collected from school groups  
|                         | ● Meetings with key stakeholders  
|                         | ● Analysis of financial data  |
- Unobtrusive observations
- Transect walks
- Review of a photo competition
- Review of a young peoples video
- Community participatory diagramming
- Review of a CD produced by young people
- Four ethnobiographies of local former ‘drinkers’,
- Family first projects on ‘Paint’n’play’ and ‘sustainable books’ and a review of the three community service booklets and the training program for the community

<table>
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<tr>
<th>SOCIAL RESEARCH</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relevant theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Previous community profiles of 10 communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviews with 10 General Managers (or Shire Clerks) from local government and some elected representatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review of the Department of local government and the local government association information on Indigenous people</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contact with and information from the Indigenous employees of local government network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature review on Indigenous employment strategies relevant to local government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of the legislation in relation to local government in NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An understanding of the prevailing rating structure and the operation of the Grants Commission as it affected local government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus groups of Indigenous residents in the 10 communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading of data collected from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC)—Binaal Billa Regional office meetings with key stakeholders in each of the communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-depth discussions with Indigenous and non-Indigenous community workers and agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of financial data relevant to the Councils and the Aboriginal communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unobtrusive observations (undertaken in the key community gathering places—schools, hotels, churches, reserves, clubs and so on)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transect walks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Content analysis of local media coverage of Indigenous and local government issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of local histories</td>
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<td>Community participatory diagramming</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visits to local museums to assess the ethnocentricity of displays ethnobiographies of local Indigenous people</td>
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<tr>
<td>The insights and capacities of the Indigenous staff that were employed as co-researchers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formal previous experience as a member of local government community committees</td>
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<tr>
<th>SOCIAL ADMINISTRATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three years previous senior management experience in a government department</td>
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<tr>
<td>Twenty years as a public servant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formal qualifications at the post-graduate level in public management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over twenty years experience as a social worker</td>
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<td>Previous responsibility for 200 volunteers</td>
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</table>
Analytic Tool

Focusing upon the research objectives (Chapter 1), the following analytic tool and framework was developed for reflection and analysis. For each of his practice areas, in accordance with the thinking, doing and being model (see Chapter 3), the researcher formulated four simple reflective questions for analysis. These questions were considered for every element of the practice model (relating to participants, environmental scan, objectives, process and labour and evaluation) and reading the practice experiences in each practice area and is Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 An Analytic Tool and Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE FIVE SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE AREAS</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN</th>
<th>OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>PROCESS/LABOUR</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What was the Thinking?</td>
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<tr>
<td>The considerations here will be the process (critical thinking/critical reflection/systemic/logical thinking and lateral/creative thinking) and the content (existing knowledge, existing theory, existing understandings and frameworks including personal and professional knowledge: contextual issue related to both general matters (paradigms, rules, legislation) and specific matters (this participant, this community, this problem, these strengths).</td>
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<td>What was the Doing?</td>
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<tr>
<td>The considerations here will be the roles of enabling, brokering, advocating, empowering, activism, mediating, negotiating, educating, initiating, co-ordinating, researching, group facilitating and public speaking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>What was the Being?</td>
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<tr>
<td>The considerations here will be the virtues of prudence, temperance, justice, fortitude, charity, hope and faith.</td>
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<td>What were the Dynamics in the Consilience of Thinking and Doing and Being?</td>
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Source: Author
The PEOPLE model and thinking and doing and being together across the five areas of social work may graphically be represented at Figure 4.2:

**Figure 4.2** Graphical Representation of Thinking, Doing and Being across Five Areas of Social Work

[Diagram showing the relationship between thinking, doing, and being across five areas of social work]

**Source:** Author

**Analysis and Results**

The researcher’s reflective and analytic narrative responses to each of the reflective questions for each practice area and sub-aspects of the practice model were systematically noted and have been presented in the thesis. The first reflective questions covered various aspects of dimensions of thinking as presented in Chapter 2. Responses to the second reflective questions covered various roles performed and skills used as a social work practitioner in five practice areas. The third question involved examining the ‘being’ of the participants. Responses to the fourth question included ways of achieving consilience of thinking, doing and being including whether consilience was possible and the difficulties of a consilient approach. Using post facto reflective analysis, how could consilience have improved the practice? These reflective and analytic responses have been presented in subsequent chapters.
It may be noted that some of the practice area chapters such as group work, community development and research, due to the nature of work, included both conventional and alternative research methods such as interviews, secondary sources, key informants, semi-structured interviews, groups, transect walks, timelines, ethnobiographies, well-being rankings, stories, portraits, creative writing, analysis of differences, mapping, participatory diagramming and unobtrusive observation and cost-benefit analysis. Although these are important, they are secondary to the main purpose of the thesis. As noted the main focus is my readings of those experiences and reflections on them as they can be applied to a useful practice model.

**Ethical Issues**

Some research projects and social work practice were undertaken for a purpose and contracted by an outside body. The work required the approval of the Charles Sturt University Ethics Committee and all contractual arrangements were met. On each of the research projects, the author was either the project manager/team leader or co-project manager/team leader. On the other practice areas, the author was the principal practitioner/sole researcher involved.

Where relevant, all participants were requested to sign a disclosure and informed consent pro forma which required that they indicate that they had been informed of and understood the purpose of the research/consultancy. Participants were also requested to identify whether they wished to remain anonymous with respect to their details and comments. Where public officials were contacted as a matter of public record, their occupational title or position, and/or statements were reported in the case study.

**Limitations of the Study**

The limitations of qualitative research can be applied here. The results are time, location and situation specific and may not be reproducible at a different time, with different
participants and in differing circumstances. The acceptance of diversity and the dynamic nature of the participants and the environment mean that each situation is unique. As a consequence, the results will not be transferable although the processes, reflective techniques, the practice model and the consilience of the thinking and doing and being approach can be applied to many diverse and unique situations.

The description of the participant’s ‘being’ will be partial and is based on my understanding, inference and interpretation of available data. Any description and analysis inevitably is selective and limited by time and other resources. The critical reflections are upon my practice experience and to some extent depend upon memory and with data and records located at a specific time.

SUMMARY
This chapter has outlined methodological approaches and a participatory methodology employed for this study. It has developed and employed a reflective research method that essentially involves reading practice experiences, raising purposeful reflective questions and developing reflective and analytical responses to those questions. The final part covers ethical issues and some of the limitations of the study. The next five chapters will apply the practice model proposed in Chapter 3 using the research methodology and methods presented in this chapter.
CHAPTER 5

DIRECT SERVICE PROVIDER

“You cannot hope to build a better world without improving the individuals. To that end each of us must work for his own improvement and at the same time share a general responsibility for all humanity, our particular duty being to aid those to whom we think we can be most useful.”
—Marie Curie

“Among the individuals, as well as among nations, respecting the other people’s rights leads to peace.”
—Benito Juarez Garcia

The main aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the application of the concept of thinking and doing and being in a consilient manner, as developed in Chapter 2, according to the PEOPLE model (developed in Chapter 3) in the direct service provider context (that is working with individuals and families) and to analyse such practice according to the analytic framework developed in Chapter 4. Following this overarching framework, first I introduce myself as a social worker participant along with my direct service provider.
experience in general and a participant case (individual and family). In the subsequent parts, I discuss thinking, doing and being respectively relating to the participants in terms of the remaining aspects of the PEOPLE model (environmental scan, objectives, process and labour and evaluation). Keeping in mind the conciseness and brevity of the narration, I have deliberately not used these headings in the discussion, but addressed all of them. In the final part, I reflect on the dynamics of the consilience of thinking, doing and being.

READING OF MY PRACTICE EXPERIENCE

Description of the Participant Worker:
As a professional social worker, I began working with individuals and families when I was 22 years of age. I had begun working with families, under supervision, as a Department of Corrective Services trainee at the age of 18 years and while undertaking university studies. I worked in the direct service provider context for over twenty years in a range of settings but predominantly in the area of Corrections. The range of experiences included dealing with individuals, families, drug and alcohol issues, mental health issues (psychosis, compulsions, depression and so on), poverty issues, sexual issues, matters of violence, issues of aged care, physical and intellectual disabilities, violence, issues of child protection, Indigenous issues, and others. In the direct service provider capacity I have worked in several locations and communities within NSW in both metropolitan areas (Central Sydney, Bankstown) and rural and regional areas. I have worked within institutions and within the community and have used approaches including crisis intervention, long-term casework, existential approaches, behavioural approaches and psychoanalytic approaches.

   During this period I worked with over 4,000 individual offenders. Of these, I have
purposively chosen a participant and his family with whom I worked between 1985 and 1990. I was the sole Community Corrections practitioner and only qualified social worker in a small rural location with a mixed caseload of between 65–102 offenders and with responsibility for a 40,000 square kilometre region, a district population of about 20,000 people, a significant Indigenous population and an area with few community resources.

The participant was located within a correctional setting and involved both probation and parole and within a complex family environment following a conviction for child sexual assault. I was involved in the preparation of a Pre-Sentence Report and subsequently at the stage of pre-release from custody and in the post-release supervision. The case extended over a five-year period with this post-facto reflective analysis being primarily directed at the post-release supervision period of the contact. It has some features that are typical of offenders and others that are unique to this case.

Even after many years, memories of this and similar participants are vivid and fresh. Over the years, I have further grown/developed as a participant social worker. My thoughts, my professional experiences and my life experiences have reinforced my commitment to consilience from an early point of eclecticism. I have long believed that no single approach can be applied to the very great multiplicity and diversity of humanity which is the daily experience of correctional staff. Knowledge (be it empirical, cultural or practice wisdom) needs to be drawn from many sources and it always seemed to me that a singular social work approach or one dominating theory would be insufficient (or so reductionist as to be meaningless) in dealing with issues such as violence, physical or mental impairment, drugs and alcohol, depression, marital conflict or sexual aberrations. With these influences, for the purpose of this analysis, I have read and re-read the participant’s artefacts (Watson & Wilcox 2000) that included
case notes, case plans, timelines, ecomaps, written reports, evaluations, case conference notes, workers’ conference notes, professional discussions, interviews, court reports, practice memories, critical issues and critical incidents. I prepared a first draft of this case for the Australasian National Conference in 1987 when it was still a ‘work in progress’. During the five-year period I was involved with this case I reflected on the influences, theories and approaches that were being used. In part, because of its profile and risks, this offered some degree of professional protection and defence if the situation deteriorated and the logic and the thinking could be used to justify actions taken. These artefacts and my own reflections on them are the main sources of the following narrative.

Description of the Participant (Individual and Family):

Ixx (all names and specific identifying details have been changed) was convicted on numerous counts of indecently assaulting his partner’s daughters each aged under ten years. He was sentenced to lengthy imprisonment with a custodial period of two years. In addition, he was sentenced to multi-year recognisances with specific conditions relating to supervision by the Probation and Parole Service. He was to undergo psychological or psychiatric counselling as required. He was also prohibited from seeing his stepdaughters or to reside in the family home except with the permission of the probation officer.

At the time of the commission of the offence and subsequent sentencing, Ixx was aged 36 years and since the disclosure of the offences had resided away from the home of his defacto wife. He was unemployed and in receipt of fortnightly benefits. He was the second child in his family. He had one sister aged some many years his junior. He had a good relationship with his sister and indications were that there had been no instances of sexual interference with her. His father had been a heavy drinker and there
were reported instances of domestic violence and anecdotal accounts of violence towards Ixx by his father. Ixx had resided with his family until entering into the relationship with the mother of the victims of the offences, approximately six years prior to disclosure of the offences.

He had undertaken his education at a school for mildly intellectually delayed children. He left when aged 17 years, was illiterate and agreed with the view that he was in the low range of intelligence. He had held approximately ten years of employment. An application to be placed on an invalid pension had been rejected.

He did not frequent hotels and was a light drinker. People with whom he identified as friends had few social skills and could fairly be described as of relatively low intelligence, restricted insight and low verbal ability. Until entering the relationship with his partner, the mother of the victims of these offences, Ixx had indicated that he had no sexual experience. He had no formal sex education, had little or no appreciation of psychosexual or psychosocial development. Some of his statements, even allowing for his poor verbal skills, suggested a view of sexuality based on gratifying his own needs. He indicated that he had frequently viewed ‘filthy videos’.

Although originally charged with some multiple offences extending over a period of two years, the Crown accepted pleas in relation to three lesser offences in full satisfaction of the indictment in order to ensure that the victims did not need to appear as witnesses to offences for which Ixx had pleaded not guilty. He acknowledged his guilt in relation to touching the girls on the outside of their clothes, and in the area of their private parts and displaying his own genitalia. Much more serious offences were dropped rather than proceed to evidence.

Ixx claimed that his behaviour commenced as part of a game, some of which was
initiated by the children. He asserted that ‘in my eyes I wasn’t doing anything wrong’. He had little insight with respect to the possible consequences of sexual interference on the children and he had a tendency to displace responsibility for the assaults onto others including both the victims and his partner.

Physically/organically, Ixx was short, thin and with badly decayed teeth, poor clothing and poor personal hygiene. In the area of mental/emotional, he was a man of low intelligence, with poor scholastic background, a tendency to bad temperedness and a propensity for threatening behaviour. He had little insight. In the area of social-relational, Ixx had had a difficult childhood, suggestions of child abuse in his childhood and adolescence, a reasonable work record, economically poor and in most situations powerless, and with no organised leisure pursuits. He had few parenting skills when he entered the de facto relationship and consequently took significant responsibility for a family for which he seemed ill equipped with few social skills. He did not consider himself spiritual or existential although his time in prison had caused him to think about ‘good and bad’ and ‘right and wrong’. The prognosis for a successful case outcome was dubious.

Vxxx (V):
At age forty, Vxxx was the common law wife of Ixx. She was physically large, with poor hygiene, few communication skills and emotionally dependent upon Ixx. She had reportedly been the victim of child sexual assault, had married her mother’s choice of partner when Vxxx was aged 14 years and had had a series of subsequent relationships. Her childhood and adolescence had been marked by rural poverty, lack of opportunity, poor education and early cessation of schooling, an early event of child bearing, a period of sole-parenting, a marriage which involved a further two children and subsequent desertion and divorce by her second former husband. Her current
relationship offered her the opportunity for mobility, mutual gratification, assistance with her family, an opportunity to express and receive affection and a modicum of financial stability.

The offences had caused an existential crisis for Vxxx. Her initial reaction to the disclosure of the offences was of disbelief, although other evidence suggests that she was aware of the abusive behaviour towards her daughters for a period of at least two years. Vxxx denied any prior knowledge although she did accept that when her daughters had previously told her of the behaviour she dismissed it as not being true. Vxxx maintained that she had suffered no ill-effect of her own sexual assault experience and could see no reason to involve any outside authorities following the disclosure of these offences. After initially requiring her partner to leave the relationship upon disclosure of the offences, whilst Ixx was on bail, the couple reunited and the victims of the offences were placed in care in order to protect them from either physical, sexual or emotional abuse. Vxxx simply wanted Ixx back in her life.

Fxxe (F):
Aged less than ten at the time of the disclosure of the offences, this young girl was known to have been sexually assaulted by at least two other men prior to and during the period in which she was sexually assaulted by Ixx. One previous perpetrator of child sexual assault on this victim has been convicted and sentenced and the other perpetrator (family member) had not been charged. Physically small and immature, Fxxe had a close relationship with her sister, but the mother-daughter relationship was ambivalent. She cared very much for Ixx and considered him to be the only real father figure in her life. She desired that the family live together harmoniously but she did not wish to be assaulted again.

Fxxe had no outside leisure activities, no friends, was performing very poorly at
school and was presenting as a behavioural problem in the school environment. Fxxe had originally disclosed Ixx’s sexual assaults to the male school counsellor.

**Xonx (T):**

Aged under 10 at the time of the offences, small in stature, timid and withdrawn, Xonx had definite tendencies toward self-destruction with attempts at taking her life. Often depressed, Xonx had little regard for Ixx but was in desperate need of the continuing support of her mother. She too was performing poorly at school and had no outside leisure activities. She could not identify a single friend and had few social relationships. She was sad and her drawings illustrated a sense of hopelessness and fear.

**Rxxxxx (R):**

Rxxxxx was the 18-month-old son of Ixx and Vxxx who had not reached the stage of verbalising. He appeared to be developmentally delayed in verbal, motor and social skills. He was much loved by all members of the family.

Ixx was released from the custodial portion of his prison term to reside back with his parents. Within two weeks, in the company of Vxxx (mother of the victims), he approached the probation service about residing back with Vxxx and ‘his family’. Indications from his partner, from Ixx and from the victims of the offences were that all members of the family wished to have the offender reunited in the family environment.

A psychological report was commissioned and the logistics and costs negotiated. The psychological report indicated that continued offending behaviour was likely if the offender was returned to the home as none of the pre-offence conditions had significantly altered. A further report from a family counsellor was required and a family conference was convened. Again the report indicated that continued offending behaviour was likely if the offender was returned to the home as no circumstances had significantly changed. My assessment was in accord with this view and it appeared that
the period of imprisonment had offered little or no opportunity for Ixx to reflect on his assault behaviour and had failed to change Vxxx’s attitude towards Ixx. The deleterious effect of imprisonment was that Ixx had successfully lied his way throughout the prison system, had maintained the secrecy of his offence by inventing a more prison-acceptable offence and had convinced himself that by comparison to others he was not a criminal.

Following the psychologist and family counsellor’s report both of which had resulted in physical threats by Ixx towards counsellors, Ixx and Vxxx returned to the probation office indicating that they were going to live together. They indicated that if the probation officer would not give them permission under the terms of the bond and the parole order to reside together as a family, then Vxxx would surrender the children who were the victims of the offences to the authorities in order to cohabit with Ixx. He would therefore not be in breach of any legal orders.

WHAT WAS THE THINKING AS AN INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY WORKER WITH RESPECT TO ‘PEOPLE’?

The description outlines some of the features of the participants. Thinking involves critical/systemic/reflective thinking. I considered that Ixx and Vxxx had carefully thought through their situation and had decided to present a dilemma/ultimatum to me. Their approach evidenced systemic thinking. However, their understanding of the system was such that it did not necessarily include Vxxx’s daughters.

Thinking is always about content. In thinking about this case, I was informed by the then current state of knowledge and theories for practice. I was informed by attachment theory (Bowlby 1982, Crittenden & Ainsworth 1989) and particularly the classifications of attachment (Crittenden & Ainsworth 1989: 437). The female victims bore many of
the characteristics of neglect attributable to primary aged children (growth retardation, enuresis, lethargy, depression, below average intellectual functioning, less able to seek emotional support, co-operative and compliant). I was consciously informed by developmental theories (Piaget 1983 on developmental stages; Bandura 1977 on social learning theory; Vygotsky 1978 on social and cultural learning; and Kohlberg 1973, 1981 on moral development). I was less consciously influenced by the Freudian psychoanalytic and behavioural training I received at university.

In the area of criminology, corrections had been deeply influenced by the Martinson paper (1974) of ‘nothing works’. This profoundly affected the NSW Department of Corrective Services, although my own thinking and doing and being never accepted that approach. I was too optimistic and saw too much ‘evidence’ of real and sustained change in offenders. Nevertheless, it was the prevailing contextual paradigm and permeated the rules and approaches that were dominant at the time. (For example, the Departmental mission statement changed from ‘changing offending behaviour’ to ‘managing offenders for the duration of their sentence’.)

In the area of sex offenders, the use of lobotomies (psycho-surgical approaches for violent sexual offenders) had been discontinued but active programs of chemical castration and some psychological conditioning programs were being undertaken. The dominant community counselling intervention approach in NSW with regard to sex offenders was based on Jenkins’s Invitation to Responsibility (1990). Specialised services for sex offenders, especially in rural areas, were unknown. The John Howard Society material from Canada (2002) would have been particularly helpful in addressing the needs and approaches that would work with a client who was a sexual offender and of limited intelligence. The recidivism rates, unknown in the late 1980s for incest offenders, are quite low (8.4%) when compared to non-incest child molesters who
recidivate at 19.5%. The literature does not clearly delineate whether step-fathers (as in this case) are consistently classified as incest or non-incest child molesters. Jenkins’s ‘Invitation to Responsibility’ was used as a framework for thinking about Ixx and the situation. Theoretically, the discount hierarchy (Flandreau–West 1984) was also thought through and used.

The state of casework and case planning was also limited in the Probation and Parole Service. Not until the mid-1980s did the service develop a case-planning model. My own thinking meant that I was the first to trial a USA-based risk assessment tool as a critical/systemic thinking tool that I could then compare to my own clinical intuition. The risk assessment tool offered me (in a one person office without any professional support—visited three times in eight years) an independent actuarial ‘second opinion’ and operated as a safeguard against the personal heuristic tendencies. This was especially important in high-risk matters such as with Ixx. I was conscious however, that my modification of the tool had not been evaluated for reliability and validity from a positivist quantitative paradigm.

My thinking also took account of some personal and professional knowledge. I had had some previous success with high-risk sex offenders and had formed the view that very regular contact, reporting regimes and very open communications were required. This was more practice wisdom than research based knowledge. I had formed the view that clear, written, sequenced changes were required with the offender and that these needed to be maintained over a sustained period. While this presented some ethical concerns around confidentiality, I had formed the view that in dealing with sex offenders the notion of confidentiality could quickly be adapted by the offender into the concept of ‘secrecy’ on which much child sexual assault behaviour is prefaced. The process of ‘grooming’ that targets children can also occur with care-givers/parents and
is also able to be used by an offender with respect to the professionals in his life.

While self-delusion is always possible, I brought critical thinking/critical reflection/systemic and lateral/creative thinking skills to the case and useful theory for practice. The critical thinking was about the nature of the problem posed by Ixx and Vxxx. It would have been possible to think in a very limited way and define Ixx as the client (and the corrections mandate certainly would have supported that view) and to have dealt with that issue in isolation to the rest of the family. For example, it would have been possible to enforce the condition of the parole order and the recognisance and kept Ixx and the victims separated—whether that meant that the girls were placed in foster care and an uncertain future. An alternative would have been the return of Ixx to prison if he cohabited with the girls without authority. He was unlikely to return to Vxxx without authorisation and very likely to have her choose him over the girls. Critical/reflective/systemic thinking allowed for an analysis of the wider family and social system and the redefinition of the client as the family rather than the individual. Lateral and creative thinking meant considering other alternatives to the binary ‘either/or’ proposed by Ixx and Vxxx and working through a range of possibilities that might achieve superior outcomes for all concerned.

The theories for practice included understandings of power and control (for example, Hagan 1989), interactional theories (for example, Thornberry 1987), the use of Groth’s et al., (1982) concepts of fixated and regressed child sex offenders and recognition of the developmental needs of the victims (including safety and certainty).

I also brought some contextual knowledge of the community in which this family was located. It was a conservative rural community, with few formal professional helping resources and an abhorrence of childhood sexual assault. It was a community that was highly stratified with clear physical separation based on the lines of social
class. Experientially, I knew that there were certain low-cost housing areas that would have a succession of people on my caseload and certain caravan parks that attracted what some locals referred to as ‘trailer trash’. This is not formal knowledge derived from theory but cultural knowledge derived from living and working in the area and then placed within the sociological constructs of stratification theory (see Saunders 1990; Parsons 1951; Parsons & Shils 1976).

My thinking about the ‘society’ domain included considering the current values and beliefs of Western society which were directed at protection of children from sexual assault. Dominant conventions included pathologising the offender and separating him from the family. Current laws and protocols favoured isolating the victims from the source of harm usually by the removal of the offender to prison or the removal of the children from harm.

In thinking about the ‘practice field’ domain (defined as the specific field or fields of social work practice that may require specific knowledge or skills) the domain in this case study was the field of corrections at both the community and institutional levels of operation. Particular knowledge and thinking skills for this domain involved the trialling of the modified USA Risk/Need/Responsivity assessment tool, knowledge related to parole and probation law and the administrative procedures of the NSW Department of Corrective Services to post-institutional care. I was also using knowledge acquired in relation to deviance (for example, Sutherland & Cressey 1978, Becker 1963, Matza 1960), understanding of the nature and dynamics of desistance (I was interested in the question of why and under what circumstances people ceased offending behaviour although in the 1980s it was only beginning to be written about as desistance theory (see Grove 1985 and Loeber & LeBlanc 1990), relapse prevention theory (particularly Marlatt & Gordon 1985), criminology theory (Gottfredson & Hirschi
other practice field domains were highly significant including the ‘practice’ domain of Child Protection (for much of this case we acted on the 1939 legislation and subsequently on the 1987 legislation), mental health (this was after the Richmond report but without the promised community services), sexual assault (the dominant influence was Finkelhor 1986) and developmental disability. In a multi-dimensional approach with an interdisciplinary team, there will be intersecting domains requiring consilience from and between the domains. Part of the issue in determining the practice field domain is thinking about and identifying ‘who is the client’. In the present case, the client of the Probation and Parole Service was the mandated offender. The primary clients for the Child Protection services (DoCS) were the child victims, and the clients of the sexual assault services were both the mother and the child victims. However, a narrow focus upon the individual social worker’s practice domain would have prevented a more holistic outcome and closed off some outcome possibilities and established an ‘either/or’ agenda rather than a ‘both/and’ or ‘all/and’. The ‘practice field’ domain involves the application of the appropriate social worker’s knowledge and skills through a reflexive process that enables each unique situation to be acted upon in an individualised and appropriate way. In this case there was much ‘practice wisdom’ including that appropriate foster care for the victims would be difficult given their damage, age and circumstances (subsequently established by reports such as Cashmore & Paxman 1996); that outcomes for older aged children placed in foster care are very poor (Cashmore & Paxman 1996); that sex offenders who are step-parents have difficulty changing patterns of behaviours but less difficulty in changing families and developing new victims; that external resources in an isolated community were unlikely; that stigmatisation of the victims had occurred; that double victimisation
(being a victim of an offence and then victimised by being removed from home) was frequent; that developmental disability impacts upon psychiatric diagnosis; and that risk is being borne by those who are already victims.

In thinking about the ‘community’ domain, the case was set in a rural location where there was no resident psychologist or psychiatric service, one mental health nurse, no sexual assault service (bi-monthly visits from 130 kilometres away), no marriage or family counsellor and few positive family supports. The offender was well known within the community and the family concerned was stigmatised. Knowledge and assessment of the community was an important consideration in developing a plan that might give effect to the individual desires of the offender, his partner and the victims while minimising the impact on the victims. It needed to be recognised that the victims were now aged over ten and the opportunity for stable long-term Out-of-Home (foster) Care for intra-familial sexual assault victims was (on all objective measures) unlikely.

Systemic/critical thinking about the stark practice reality involved recognising that there could be multiple objectives and multiple outcomes. The objective of safety for the children could involve a choice to remove the children (at least the victims and possibly Rxxxxx) to a very uncertain future or working within an informed risky set of parameters that were complex and far from ideal. A reductionist approach may have involved determining that the minimum unit was the individual and taking action to protect the girls (victims) from assault while risking long-term damage and continued self-destructive behaviour (by Xonx at least). The rural locality and the low intelligence levels of Ixx and Fxxe made intensive family-based therapies both impractical and unsuitable. The significant interpersonal, intra-personal and resource gaps were noted and strategies devised to minimise, overcome or avoid the gaps. In thinking about
evaluation in the human services (see Jamrozik 1982; Moller & Graycar 1983), it became clear to me that multiple types of evaluation were needed.

I was a Departmental representative in 1987 at the Australasian Evaluation Society Conference and was thinking through formal and observational means of evaluating. Little had been done on singular case evaluation and the emphasis was on program and policy evaluation. I began thinking through and reading material on process evaluation, impact evaluation and unobtrusive observation as a means of evaluating (Owen 1993 clarified many of the issues in evaluation for me). Some of the evaluation methods for this case would be quite formal (for example, testing) while others would include unobtrusive observation (hence the very close monitoring and reporting regime) and others may include self-evaluation by the participants (including myself) with triangulation from other sources. No one tool or method would be relied upon but rather a range of methods and tools was employed.

When confronted with the ultimatum regarding the couple cohabiting (with or without the children), my immediate thinking was to delay a decision while I gave myself time and space to think of creative alternatives. I wanted to assess the attitudes of other professionals in the situation and decided to call a workers gathering to think of the possibilities for the future. I initially thought through my own assessment of the situation. I then involved a range of other agencies to determine their view of the dilemma/ultimatum. There was predictable anger and concern but we worked through the risks and possibilities.

WHAT WAS THE DOING AS AN INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY WORKER WITH RESPECT TO ‘PEOPLE’?

According to Hepworth Rooney & Larsen (1997), the role of the social worker operating as a direct service provider can involve individual problem-solving, marital or
family counselling, group service work and as educator/disseminator of information. Hepworth et al., (1997) have a distinctive category that they call Systems Linkage roles which include Broker, Case Manager/Co-ordinator and Mediator/Arbitrator/Advocate. The following discussion suggests the performance of these roles.

I involved Ixx and Vxxx and we jointly reviewed the environment. They wished to be a ‘family’ and all live together. We explored their meaning of ‘family’ and their desired outcomes. They began to see that their systemic analysis was simplistic and directed at Ixx being able to live in the ‘home’. They had simplistically defined ‘home’ as the physical entity with a street address rather than the more difficult and inclusive concept of home as a set of relationships built upon a series of principles and virtues and with an on-going commitment. Through the process of collaboration, assessment and engagement over three one-hour sessions, they were able to see that the present reality was that they would not be a ‘family’ living together in the near future and that the notions of ‘home’ and ‘family’ were developmental and would require work and change. I involved them in the considerations relevant for the child protection agency and asked them to place themselves in that agency’s position in the light of the evidence of Ixx’s offences against the girls, his continued denial of offending, his lies in prison and his lack of any real change since the disclosure of the offences. If their ultimatum/dilemma occurred, the girls would be removed immediately and the ‘family’—as they conceptualised it—would not all cohabit. If the situation was a contest (as constructed by Ixx) between the professionals and the ‘family’—no one would achieve their goals. Constructing the situation as ‘either/or’ would mean that the family did not cohabit at all, that the girls would be removed and that destructive consequences would occur for all (including the professionals involved). The post-removal family may consist of Ixx and Vxxx and possibly Rxxxx although child welfare authorities would need to assess the safety of Rxxxx. This brought a hostile
reaction and called for considerable fortitude and prudence. After dealing with the anger and hostility, their thinking around the concept of ‘family’ was revisited. Their concept was of a nuclear family cohabiting together immediately, but they gradually came to understand that families had many different structures and many different ways of being ‘family’. Vxxx’s need for ‘family’ was acute and it may have been significant in her overlooking the stories of sexual assault told by her daughters regarding Ixx. We looked at a range of family structures and how families operated (for example, at families that they knew where the man worked away for weeks at a time) and looked at creative ways that we could work out that would enable each person to be both safe and happy in the complex matrix of practice.

Following the third meeting, I drafted and presented a complex case plan and a two-year timeline for change that was carefully sequenced, logically structured, that considered the needs of all the parties and that could be the basis of a long-term cohabiting ‘family’. This was put to the workers from different agencies and the two girls (by the child protection authority). We held a family conference which I chaired. The first family conference was abandoned after thirty minutes when I shut it down. There was no client self-determination in that decision. Ixx was determined to have a guarantee that if he did ‘his bit’ then we (the professionals) had to promise that the family could all live together. Others (including myself) were determined that the program be implemented successfully and that the objective (family living together) be motivating and conditional upon successful implementation not simply going through the program. In this I was guided by some practice wisdom that had seen many prison-based programs where attendance rather than performance and insight was all that was required. The immediate issue in this case conference was that I was concerned for the girls and the intimidating and grooming behaviour of Ixx. He angrily said, for example, to the girls:
Tell Bill you want me to live there (at home)—’cos your mother can’t go out anywhere ’cos she don’t have a car and she wants me to drive her places—if you want her to go out—I need to live with yas.

Their body language (restlessness, withdrawn, picking at fingers, eyes down) indicated fear and re-traumatisation. After a further four weeks of working with Ixx including reviewing his behaviour at the first case conference, a second family conference was successful with agency staff remarking on the change that had occurred in Ixx. The partialised detailed case plan was:
## Overall Case Plan for Ixx and Vxxx

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<tr>
<th>OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>METHODOLOGY</th>
<th>METHOD OF EVALUATION</th>
<th>OUTCOME</th>
<th>IMPACT</th>
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| Family happily reconciled such that the victims are not at risk of sexual assault from their stepfather | As per Case Management Plan | Various:  
- Self reporting  
- Question and answer  
- Unobtrusive observation  
- School performance | Desired:  
1. A well-adjusted Ixx  
2. A well-adjusted Vxxx  
3. A well-adjusted Xonx and Fxxe  
4. Effects of the offending behaviour minimised  
5. Happy agencies | Desired: A happy reconciled family at no risk of further offending  
Actual:  
1. Major changes in Ixx  
2. Vxxx has enhanced her self-esteem but remains damaged/uncooperative  
3. Xonx and Fxxe remain with Vxxx |
### Overall Case Plan:

**Ixx**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>METHODOLOGY</th>
<th>METHOD OF EVALUATION</th>
<th>OUTCOME</th>
<th>IMPACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To have client develop a knowledge of female sexuality</td>
<td>Six weeks with male Health Dept worker with a program of information giving</td>
<td>Promotion &amp; Parole Officer (P &amp; PO) tests knowledge by verbal question and answer quiz</td>
<td>Client has knowledge of terms and functions in female sexuality</td>
<td>Client appreciates the physical and psychological damage he has inflicted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To gain a knowledge of psychosocial development</td>
<td>Six weeks with male Health Worker on information giving</td>
<td>P&amp; PO tests knowledge by verbal questions and answer quiz</td>
<td>Client has knowledge of age appropriate social sexual behaviour</td>
<td>Client appreciates the inappropriateness of his behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have client accept the 'wrongness' of his behaviour</td>
<td>Counselling with P &amp; PO focusing on breach of trust, force and power issues Written article on Incest Victims read to and discussed with Ixx</td>
<td>1. Does client blame victims? 2. Can he focus on his own actions? 3. Can he state why he was wrong? 4. Does his affect demonstrate any change—Observation 5. 4 weeks later—does he still see the 'wrongness'?</td>
<td>Client says he has 'done wrong' Affect supports claim Resolve and Plans support change</td>
<td>Client takes responsibility for behaviour. Acceptance of that responsibility persists Guilt develops Asks for forgiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have client develop strategies of impulse control</td>
<td>Discussions with P &amp; PO suggestions of ways by P &amp; PO brainstorm ideas with client and defacto</td>
<td>1. What strategies can client think of? 2. What does he do about them?</td>
<td>Locks on doors and shower Not alone with girls No discipline of girls Temper control by counting, going for a walk, outside ventilation</td>
<td>Impulse control significantly improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have client use no alcohol</td>
<td>P &amp; PO direction to client</td>
<td>1. Self-reporting 2. V's report 3. H/V's checking re alcohol 4. Visit hotels on pension day by P &amp; PO 5. Financial method</td>
<td>Direction obeyed</td>
<td>No use of alcohol</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Overall Case Plan:

**Vxxx**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>METHOD OF EVALUATION</th>
<th>OUTCOME</th>
<th>IMPACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Have Vxxx see the need of counselling for the girls</strong></td>
<td>Six weekly sessions with DoCS worker (female)</td>
<td>Will she allow the girls to have counselling?</td>
<td>No. Failed to attend more than twice</td>
<td>Vxxx is strongly resistant to counselling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Have Vxxx express her love for the girls</strong></td>
<td>Weekly information sessions with DoCS Worker</td>
<td>1. Observation of relationship 2. Diary of activities done together 3. Feedback from girls</td>
<td>Activities done jointly Diary kept Girls seen</td>
<td>Have expressed love but girls want more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Have Vxxx see the need of CSA counselling for herself</strong></td>
<td>2 sessions with DoCS</td>
<td>1. Did she attend? 2. Will she accept help?</td>
<td>Did not attend</td>
<td>Cannot come to terms with her own CSA. This objective was not achievable (P &amp; PO’s judgement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Build Vxxx’s self esteem</strong></td>
<td>Involve her in pottery classes and social activities</td>
<td>1. Attendance recorded 2. Self-reporting</td>
<td>Nice pottery; new group of friends; first female friend in many years</td>
<td>Vxxx achieved and felt good. Program to continue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Have Vxxx become more assertive</strong></td>
<td>Counselling with P &amp; PO</td>
<td>Will she: 1. Express an opinion? 2. Take control of issues? 3. Recognise her own capabilities?</td>
<td>More outspoken and claimed ‘I’m not stupid’ in a row with P &amp; PO</td>
<td>Vxxx has developed more assertion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall Case Plan:
Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>METHOD OF EVALUATION</th>
<th>OUTCOME</th>
<th>IMPACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To have the family build trust in each other</td>
<td>Family outings—initially supervised—becoming progressively more frequent and less supervised. Must be in a public place with itinerary given to P &amp; PO one week ahead</td>
<td>Self-reporting by family. Supervising families report. Assessment by P &amp; PO</td>
<td>1. More frequent family outings 2. Less supervision going to nil supervision</td>
<td>Family trust is developing. Girls more relaxed with stepfather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have the family adapt 'Family Rules'</td>
<td>Negotiation of rules with the family</td>
<td>Is there a tangible, achievable set of rules with enforceable consequences for all parties?</td>
<td>Tangible achievable set of rules</td>
<td>Privacy of girls guaranteed. Discipline code that doesn’t include corporal punishment is in effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop a safety net—that is, action to be taken if offending behaviour commences</td>
<td>1. Discussion 2. Locks that ensure privacy 3. Significant other list</td>
<td>Does the safety net exist? Judgement as to whether it would be used</td>
<td>Significant others list exists. Locks in place</td>
<td>Some confidence that authorities would be notified by Xonx and Ffxe. No confidence that Vxxx would notify offending behaviour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Overall Case Plan:

**Xonx and Fxxe (T & F)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBJECTIVE</th>
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<th>METHOD OF EVALUATION</th>
<th>OUTCOME</th>
<th>IMPACT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have T &amp; F improve their self-esteem</td>
<td>Involve in sewing, dancing, basketball and children/youth group; Counselling sessions</td>
<td>Do they go? Diary</td>
<td>Regular at activities</td>
<td>Feel good they can achieve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Diary of feelings/success kept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have T &amp; F improved scholastically</td>
<td>Regular study time More structured maternal involvement</td>
<td>Have school counsellor report to P &amp; PO re T &amp; F’s progress</td>
<td>Vast improvement in grades; Circle of friends developed; Book of school achievements developed</td>
<td>Girls feel positive about school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have T &amp; F learn protective behaviour</td>
<td>Use a Protective Behaviour Training Program</td>
<td>Do they understanding their needs</td>
<td>Program completed</td>
<td>Feel they could say ‘no’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have T &amp; F experience a more complete family life</td>
<td>Fortnightly w/end foster care placements in a home with a disabled child</td>
<td>Experimental</td>
<td>Fortnightly w/end foster care</td>
<td>Positive experience; like the family;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My ‘doing’ in this case also involved negotiations, undertaking advocacy, brokering services, mediating, speaking in public (the case conferences) educating (on the nature of families, impact of offending and so on), initiating (future possibilities) and group facilitating (the case conferences were a very complex group with a wide spread of ages, interests, agendas, a decision-making processes, communication styles, educational backgrounds and agency requirements).

I constructed an ecomap of the family following input from the other professionals involved in the situation. It showed differential associations (as would be expected in most families) but showed very close attachment of the youngest daughter to the mother. The strength of association is at Figure 5.1.
The closest attachment of the mother was to the perpetrator (her partner). All members of the family wished to reside together but the victims (and others) recognised that continuing offending was quite likely. Neither the stepfather nor the mother considered further offending would occur. The ecomap was a practical way to visually describe the relationships and also to show the very restricted relationships and interests that existed outside of the immediate family. The very nature of these relationships and the social situation (poverty, housing location and social skill set) reinforced the social isolation and created the conditions that allowed Ixx to construct the family as ‘different’ and ‘against’ the rest of society (‘different’ and ‘against’ were his terms).

The doing of the case initially involved ‘shuttle negotiations’ where I acted as a
liaison between the parties presenting proposals and counter-proposals between the offender, the mother, the two children and the various agencies. This seemed appropriate in circumstances where there had been sexual violence and where there was still a significant power differential. I was aware that there are some theoretical positions in relation to negotiating that recommend that negotiation and mediation are not appropriate in situations of violence and where the power imbalance is pronounced. It was inappropriate to bring all parties together (especially the girls) on some issues where hostility and anger may have had a debilitating effect. The children participated in their own forum (away from Ixx’s early intimidation) and then their views were represented by others or myself in the role of advocate. While not in a legal sense—the concept was that of guardian ad litem. The overall objective of attempting to change the family dynamics so that the whole family could reside together at a specified time in the future and subject to specified changes within individuals and within the family was reached following ‘shuttle negotiations’ in the sessions between the first and second case conferences. The plan was over a two-year period and Ixx would continue to reside outside the home while progressive positive changes were developed. Rather than rely upon one approach (casework for example), multiple approaches were used (casework, family group conferences, activity-based approaches, advocacy, educational approaches, partner counselling developing social and relational contacts external to the family) and a variety of theories were used as indicated above. Each approach and theory had something to contribute to both the understanding of the problems and issues and to their solutions. Consilience was practised in order to understand and change the situation.

My doing included considerations of other strategic options. I involved Ixx and Vxxx in systemically and critically thinking about other possible approaches and outcomes including brainstorming alternatives. These included the consideration of
removal of the children with the consequence that Ixx and Vxxx would live together; consideration of finding a pretext to return Ixx to prison; agreeing to the demand on the basis that the girls may be sexually assaulted again—but that may be preferable to suicide; and considering removing Fxxe but not Xonx with the possible outcome of Fxxe being safe and Xonx being at high risk but without being separated from her mother. These logical options were carefully considered. The possible and probable outcomes of each alternative were considered in an exercise that was clearly thought through. Some represented immediate safety but long-term risk and I made the point that these would have fitted more easily within the conventions of the societal and agency domains.

A critical feature of the practice model is establishing a working relationship between the participants and the social worker participants. Initially, all the professionals (Probation and Parole, at that time Family and Community Services—FACS—now known as DoCS, Sexual Assault, Community Health, School Education) were mindful of the difficulties and risks involved in working with this family and this offender. The family wanted to cohabit and the professionals did not see that as realistic (at least at that time). Working intensively with Ixx and Vxxx, I explored whether there were any other options. The environmental scan led to working with them to explain and explore the situation. An ecomap was a visual help. Highlighting the impact of sexual assault on girls (from a written source that I read to Ixx and Vxxx) had an impact on Ixx but not on Vxxx. Together we devised the elements of a two-year plan that would allow the girls to remain at home in a safe environment while each of the members of the family worked on specific objectives. Ixx agreed to remain away from the home except for every second weekend when the girls would go into temporary respite and Ixx would move ‘home’. This allowed Ixx and Vxxx to enjoy a sexual relationship (important to them both) and for them to see themselves as a couple. The
planned approach was worked out using methods such as mapping and time-lining. The proposal was discussed by Vxxx and the girls (Ixx was absent) in the presence of the Probation Officer and DoCS (then FACS) officer who were participants in the discussion and monitoring the discussion for any threats from Vxxx that did not mean the children were participating freely. The extensive proposal was later put to all the parties including the professionals involved and responsibility for assigning the work was allocated between the professionals and the family members. It was highly structured. The objective was whole family reunion on a changed basis. The objectives were specific, motivating, clearly actionable, relevant and had time parameters.

Progression was (in most cases) dependent upon completion of previous objectives. Project management techniques (including Performance Evaluation Review Techniques) were used and multiple tasks between the parties were undertaken simultaneously. In this regard, the concepts and approaches derived from mapping were particularly useful. Mapping in this case study served the purpose of narrative text, had a therapeutic value, a personal story and was undertaken with each of the parties concerned (except Rxxxxx who was pre-verbal). Mapping was visual rather than verbal. At a personal level, the mapping identified the causes of the offending behaviour and poverty and social distress, highlighted the value of education (especially with Xonx and Fxex) and made sense of economic dislocation and family breakdown. At the community level, mapping was able to reframe deficit stories and enlist support from community members for the family.

My ‘doing’ involved evaluation and was critical to the need to protect the victims and to protect the agencies who were taking significant risks. Evaluation occurred at all parts of the process including an evaluation of the objectives, the inputs (that is the resources available), the processes adopted, the actual outcomes and the impact (if any)
upon the family and community. The means of evaluation varied as illustrated in the case plan.

The education of Ixx was very instructive. He developed a knowledge and awareness of his assault behaviour that he had not previously had and there seemed to be very genuine remorse for the behaviour. He needed to ask for and accept forgiveness and to re-evaluate himself in the light of his hurtful and abusive behaviour. It was important that this ‘forgiveness’ for wronging the girls did not become part of the pattern of discounting the offences. The danger was in ‘cheap’ forgiveness, and here it was important to read the body language, the tears, the resolve and the insights he developed in order to ‘be’ different.

The progress of Fxxe and Xonx was monitored, in part, through their school performance. While Ixx had been in prison the school performance of the girls had improved substantially. Upon his release, the school performance of the two victims plummeted to the pre-imprisonment level as measured by school testing and Xonx re-developed an enuresis problem at school. Once the intervention plan was approved and agreed to by all parties, the school performance returned to the pre-release of Ixx level and the enuresis problem did not occur again. This was taken as evidence from the physical/organic and mental/emotional areas as a good indicator of abuse and/or stress. Both girls co-operated to develop a safety plan, did a ‘Right to Say No’ and ‘Your Body is Your Own’ program and importantly developed a much wider circle of interests and associates. The social isolation that had left them vulnerable was ameliorated to a large degree. Their social/relational and emotional/mental capacities were substantially built and the stores of networks and trust relationships (in part through the Out-of-Home Care family to whom they went each second weekend to enable Ixx and Vxxx to have time in her home together) were developed.
Vxxx remained resistant to dealing with her own issues of Childhood Sexual Assault (CSA). While she made substantial changes in her social life, appearance, parenting skills and general ability to care for the girls, her ability to protect them from further harm was always questionable and hence the emphasis on building the girls own capacity.

The inability of Vxxx to achieve the objective (regarding her own CSA) that had been mutually set and agreed was a serious concern. The issue became whether the inability to achieve this objective rendered the whole family objective and the whole direction of the case as being unachievable. Thinking was around whether she was deliberately sabotaging the family goal (including consideration as to whether she really did not want to be a reconciled and safe family; or whether it was simply too painful to consider her own CSA experience; or whether she wanted to remain personally powerful by negating the efforts of those around her; or whether her own sense of ‘being’ genuinely found no difficulty with her childhood experiences of CSA and those of her children). A further environmental scan and some enhanced safety modifications that were agreed to by all, enabled the case to continue despite this particular element of it not being achieved.

WHAT WAS THE BEING AS AN INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY WORKER WITH RESPECT TO ‘PEOPLE’?

As discussed earlier in Chapter 2, the concept of ‘being’ is developed around cardinal and theological virtues. The application of such a concept to my thinking and doing relating to the participant family raises several questions. Did I use common sense to act with due consideration of consequences (prudence)? Did I go at a right length with the participant family (temperance)? Did I maintain fairness, honesty and truthfulness, and keep promises (justice)? Did I work with the case with courage and confidence
(fortitude)? Did I love and forgive the participant and his family (charity)? Did I give direction and purpose (hope)? Did I hold to reasoned fundamentals irrespective of changing emotions and feelings (faith)?

On reflection, I think I brought a measure of the cardinal and theological virtues. These are most important in areas of child sexual abuse where it is easy to see the offenders as the ‘label’ (that is, see the offender as a child molester rather than within the context of his whole life) and to consider the children under the label of ‘victim’ (rather than the context of his/her whole life). Equally it is important not to depreciate or discount the impact of either the offending behaviour or its consequences. CSA is also an issue that evokes strong personal reactions and requires fortitude and temperance. The inter-relationship of the virtues (particularly of charity, hope, and faith) needs to be carefully balanced with temperance and fortitude. At a personal level, the nature of CSA offenders promotes emotional reactions that are negative. In Ixx’s situation, this was compounded by his failure to be truthful and by his avoidance of responsibility for his crimes. It was also compounded by the Crown in accepting pleas to lesser charges that enabled Ixx to avoid a longer sentence and avoid confronting the severity of the crimes. My way of dealing with this need for balance was twofold. First, I recognised that the balance was not like a set of scales where one weighs the various virtues to reach an equilibrium (or balance). Rather the virtues are required simultaneously. They reinforce each other in order to contribute to a positive and whole outcome. I re-examined the notion of charity (love) and reminded myself that charity (love) is not a weak or inconsequential notion but one of strength that requires fortitude to continue in difficult times and through very difficult circumstances over a long period. I had to hold charity and fortitude, hope and temperance, faith and prudence as well as justice consiliently. In theological terms, I went back to my theological studies and recognised that the Christian Gospel (at least in the Protestant tradition) does not have a hierarchy of evil
but acknowledges that all people stand in need of grace and charity. I needed to
recognise that, here there was a measure of hopelessness that had also been appropriated
by some of the agencies involved. Equally, the participants had a measure of
hopelessness (particularly the younger victim as expressed in the suicide attempts and
suicidal ideation). In Frierian terms, the ‘oppressed’ had accepted the domination over
them and saw little possibility of it being different. Engendering hope also requires the
virtues of faith and justice. ‘Being’ cannot be compartmentalised into the constituent
elements of the seven virtues but in fact must be consilient.

A particular challenge to my being was that I had a three- to eight-year-old
daughter at the time of dealing with this situation. While well aware of the issues of
transference and counter-transference, in practice it was difficult to exercise charity (in
the CS Lewis sense) towards Ixx and it involved a consilience of faith (holding on to
reason despite emotions and feelings) with charity. This was sorely tested when Ixx
made his comments about offending against the girls not being important because they
had been sexually assaulted before. I struggled with his lack of compassion, lack of
insight, lack of understanding, apparent callous disregard for other human beings and
the complete self-centredness. In this, I had to go back to my own sense of being and
within my own Christian tradition and understanding recognise that ‘all people have
fallen short of the glory of God’ and that ‘we are all beggars—some may know where to
find bread’. This reflection and reframing was helpful to me in dealing with the
situation and was related to the virtues.

It was also difficult to exercise justice towards Vxxx who wanted others to maintain
their commitments but was unable (or unwilling) to keep some of the commitments that
she made. I recognised that my approach to justice was a ‘reciprocal justice’— where
you treated someone justly if they treated you justly. I firstly needed to recognise that
this expectation was based on the perversion of the so-called ‘golden rule’ (‘do unto others as you would have them do unto you’) and had easily become ‘do unto others as they do unto you’. Faith involves recognising the things that your reason has accepted in spite of changing emotions and feelings and I had long recognised the need to practice in a way that promotes pro-social change. In practice, it was important to be temperate and make commitments only to the level that they could be kept and monitored. It was important that Ixx and Vxxx (in different ways) did not extract concessions or directions that they would want kept but which could prove injurious to or have counter-productive outcomes especially for those who were most vulnerable (Xonx and Fxxx). I developed a technique of saying that I would like a couple of days to consider any request that was made and that I would not be responding to the immediate demands. This pattern was set at the earliest meeting and gave the impression that I had a long-term (hopeful) rather than short-term perspective.

Fortitude was critical. Ixx was tall and physically imposing and at times aggressive to professionals and others. He had constructed a world of ‘them and us’ (‘us’ being the family) and had constructed himself as the guardian of ‘us’. He was powerless in many areas of his life (work, education, friendships) but was dominating within ‘his family’. Fortitude was required in challenging his dominion but in a way that allowed for positive change rather than resulted in adversarial and oppositional outcomes (reinforcing ‘them and us’) or complete withdrawal from the situation (‘see what they have done to us’).

As indicated in Chapter 2, the ‘being’ must include an understanding of the personal domain of the participants (in line with the concept of the participant[s]-in-the environment) and the social worker participant. Here, the individual client (Ixx) had very particular views that had implications for other family members. ‘Being’ is
therefore also about the participant(s) being. In this case, all members of the family wished to reside together and to be a family. There was little real understanding of what ‘family’ was and how ‘family’ may apply. Initially, ‘family’ was an ideal which all participants wanted—but there had been no reflection on the meaning of family, no shared understanding of ‘family’ and (at least) both adult members had very poor experiences of family-of-origin. One of the matters, jointly decided upon by all, was what the characteristics of a ‘family’ were, what functions members of a ‘family’ had and what rights and responsibilities members of a ‘family’ had both individually and collectively. That became the client-worker relationship-driven objective to which all parties (social worker, perpetrator, mother, children and other agencies) were committed. There were questions over the victims’ capacity to make a decision other than to be with the family given their sense of ‘who they were’. Some agencies (for example, DoCS then FACS) found themselves in an uncomfortable position that rendered them open to public criticism from the ‘society’ and ‘agency’ domains if the plan failed and re-offending occurred. This required fortitude. There were very substantial risks to the victims no matter which decisions were being made. This required prudence and temperance. Were the victims to be removed and made immediately safe, the long-term risk was to their security and identity and the short-term risk of that intervention (at least for the younger victim) was self-harm or suicide at being separated from her mother. Courage, temperance, justice, prudence, faith, hope and charity were required by agency personnel as well as family members.

Part of the case plan was to assist Ixx to ‘be’ someone different. This was to be achieved by removing the excuses that had been allowed to develop and had been maintained throughout the period of imprisonment. This involved confrontation and the removal of excuses. Using the discount hierarchy as a guide, Ixx progressed. Ixx’s statements were examined in a hermeneutic way. At the level of existence, he initially
and throughout his imprisonment maintained that there was no problem by denying his involvement (‘I did not do anything at all—it’s lies’). He moved to a stage of significance by admitting offending, but by denying the severity of the offending (‘I only touched them through their clothes’) and by discounting the significance (Ixx stated that the girls had been assaulted before and that his offences were ‘like a slice off a cut loaf’). At the level of solvability, Ixx admitted the impact of his behaviour but asserted ‘it has happened and I can’t do anything about it now’. While the classic discount hierarchy involves the level of self—I prefer the term ‘level of responsibility’ (using the concept from Jenkins 1990). Here, Ixx acknowledges that his behaviour was wrong, hurtful and criminal and that there was a range of actions, behaviours and attitudes that he could personally change that could ameliorate or remediate some of the impacts of the behaviour. It was also acknowledged that some of the impacts were irreparable. To achieve these changes involved education on psycho-social and psycho-sexual issues and on the nature of families, ‘home’ and being a ‘man’. It involved reconsidering his capacities and abilities. It involved developing real empathy for the victims and understanding the nature of his offending actions. It then involved re-developing an alternative story with an understanding of responsibility and sensible step-parenting practices.

A most important part of the case plan was to assist the girls to ‘be’ different and to reframe the deficit stories and hopelessness with positive experiences and a sense of value and personal worth. The case plan, for example, involved the girls in positive experiences of their choice—including sport, ballet and music. The fortnightly respite care for the girls (that allowed Ixx and Vxxx to have time together in her home) had the effect of providing an alternative family for the girls, an alternate role model of family, stability and access to other avenues of help in their future teenage years and provided one plank in the safety plan that was developed. The case plan also meant that the girls
had a guaranteed two years of remaining with their mother and the opportunity to
develop other skills and attributes as well as two years of developmental maturation.

Programs such as the ‘Right to Say No’ program enabled the girls to reflect upon their
worth and their self-esteem and to develop self-protection strategies that are based in the
person that each wished to be.

Vxxx was also offered the opportunity to ‘be’. This was offered through activities
and programs of her choice. She laboured fully in the activities and developed a range
of additional skills (including pottery, parenting skills and learning to drive a car).
However, the changes to her sense of ‘being’ were of a marginal nature.

After two years, the family started to cohabit as a family. A further year of
monitoring indicated that the school performance of the girls remained high. No further
tries at self-harm occurred; there was no re-occurrence of the enuresis problem; the
outside social activities (now for the girls including accessing a town youth group and
singing in a local choir) occurred; the young women’s level of assertion and confidence
continued to develop and grow in age appropriate ways; the respite care foster family
continued to be a source of advice and inspiration for the young women; the safety
plans and ‘family rules’ remained in place; the nomenclature deliberately changed from
‘girls’ to ‘young women’ as a way of differentiating the past from the present; Ixx
 gained employment for the first time in the period that he was in this family; and there
was no indication of any offending behaviour. Whether the cycle of intergenerational
abuse (that had occurred with Vxxx and then her children) will have been interrupted in
Vxxx’s grandchildren is a matter some years into the future. In any evaluation, the time
horizon is important—but the legitimate time horizon here was determined by the bond
 and the post-release period of imprisonment with any working mandate (as far as
probation and parole is concerned) being limited by those legislative parameters. This is
a challenge to the ‘being’ of workers. Here, the individual/family work is compressed and constrained by the realities of legislation and not by the best interests as determined by those involved. While I could plan for the time when no services would be formally involved in the life of this family—in terms of prudence and temperance—the parameters are set. The limits of involvement are not dictated by the needs and circumstances of those involved.

**WHAT WERE THE REFLECTIONS ON AND DYNAMICS OF CONSiLIENCE OF THINKING AND DOING AND BEING?**

The inter-relationship of thinking and doing and being is consilient and one where the elements of thinking and doing and being are complementary and holistic rather than oppositional and divisive. In the previous sections of this chapter, thinking and doing and being were separated into their three elements in order to consider the individual elements. But they are held consiliently in the reality of practice. In order to reflect upon consilience and the dynamics of it, I have asked myself a series of reflective questions designed to promote reflection in a similar way to the questions required in a guided autobiography (Seaton 2004, Brown 1992b; Goldstein 1973; Hancock 1997; Northen 1995):

- Was thinking dominant, absent and implicit?
- Was doing dominant, absent or implicit at any point of the model?
- Did I jump into action without any explicit theory?
- When was the doing guided by being?
- In what context/circumstances was consilience of thinking, doing and being achieved?
- In what context/circumstances was consilience of thinking, doing and being not achieved?
What were the difficulties of achieving consilience of thinking, doing and being?

With hindsight, by reflecting how could difficulties be overcome to achieve consilience of thinking and doing and being?

I acknowledge that there are other questions that could be asked that may promote reflection on thinking and doing and being.

‘Thinking’ is an integral part of being (some would argue that you are what you think) and ought to guide actions (see Chapter 2). I am conscious that this is a Western tradition in which thinking leads to doing. There are other traditions (for example, South American) where ‘doing’ (or praxis) comes first and reflective thinking occurs later as part of the cycle of thinking about the action. The Western enlightenment tradition is thinking leading to action while an alternative tradition is action leading to thinking. I am part of the Western tradition and in this situation thinking dominated the PEOPLE model in the participant and environmental scan elements—although even here it is not possible to say that I was not ‘doing’. There was much activity (for example, shuttle negotiations, case conferences, engagement, assessment and seeking collaboration).

Initially, thinking of the systemic/critical/reflective type was used. Having collected a range of information and assessed the possible uses of the information, I spent time thinking laterally about the possibilities (whole family, divided family, family in progress, no family) and used de Bono’s six hat thinking as a way of bringing both order/structure and creativity to the situation. Thinking also dominated in accessing theories for practice that could be used in the situation. Among the plethora of theories for practice, some seemed appropriate to the environmental and participant context and others that required intensive or specialist resources or high intellect and high capacity for insight or high levels of literacy on the part of the participants were either dismissed or discounted. Thinking meant that the known contextual features of this particular case
were considered against the requirements of particular theories.

Thinking dominated the initial stages of the evaluation element of the PEOPLE model by considering what and how information was to be collected. The collection of information (doing) on which judgements (especially as to the safety of the girls) were to be made needed to be accessible, observable, frequent and from multiple sources.

On reflection, thinking was not absent at any time. However, more thinking and assessment may have prevented the first whole-of-family case conference from being abandoned. On reflection, at the time and now, I think that I simply assessed the situation wrongly and in that regard I behaved intemperately (I went too far too quickly). I thought that the shuttle negotiations and individual work with Ixx had led to a point where the whole family could discuss their future in a rational and sensible way. However, Ixx’s ‘being’ had not changed to the extent that I had thought and the case conference was abandoned. The process had been carefully thought through, but I think that I underestimated the strength of his past learned behaviour and understandings as ‘head’ of the family (Ixx’s phrase). His perception of ‘headship’ needed to be thought through and then work done on the nature of ‘headship’ in families. This had particular gender implications in that a female worker may have more quickly and accurately assessed the situation. My own maleness and understanding of the concept of ‘headship’ in the Christian tradition (the concept of relational mutuality as based around Ephesians 5:21) may have been blinding me to Ixx’s different understanding for which he used the same terminology. As we explored his and my understandings of ‘headship’ it became clear that there were significant differences and that these needed to be resolved prior to any further case conference. One of the difficulties here was that Vxxx had appropriated a passive female role and reinforced Ixx’s perception that the man was the head of the house and defender of the family. Thinking through the issues and applying the thinking
and doing and being model following the failure of the first case conference, led to an understanding of the very different beings Ixx and I had, and an examination of the underlying reasons for beliefs about headship. Ixx had appropriated a conservative male approach that fitted well within the rural community but had the corollary of being in part responsible for his offending and his considering ‘the family’ as his personal fiefdom. This was supported by the comments and views of Vxxx. Over time, Ixx came to see that headship meant responsibility rather than power. Despite the rise of feminist ideologies and practices, at that time Ixx’s view (and that of Vxxx) was not particularly atypical of rural conservative, single-income families that I encountered in the 1980s.

My own being as a Christian person was sometimes helpful in challenging this prevailing ideology as many, including Ixx, considered that male headship was somehow ‘the right way’ even if they could not articulate the premises upon which they based the behaviour and their being. Their concept of ‘headship’ was poorly considered and was more a reflection of Victorian values than theological or well thought out considerations.

While ‘doing’ was occurring at every point of the PEOPLE model (I would argue that assessing is a form of ‘doing’), which is consistent with the notion of consilience, the process/labour elements of the model saw the predominance of ‘doing’. Having established collaborative relationships (after some considerable difficulties), undertaken participant and environmental assessments and having thought through the objectives (all of which also involve ‘doing’ skills), the actual work of the case proceeded according to the case plan. But here the consilience of thinking and doing was also evident as every action had to be thought about and be consistent with an understanding of ‘being’. For example the development of a wider social network for the girls (music, dance, youth groups) had to be acted upon in the knowledge that victims of sexual assault are far more likely to be victims again than non-victims through the concept
known as ‘victim precipitation’ (see Wolfgang 1972). Increasing the social network was
designed to change the girls ‘being’. It was designed to increase their social contacts,
broaden their understanding of families and society and allow them opportunity to find
new interests in which they could participate and which they may enjoy. It was designed
to give them hope for the future and increase their capacity for prudence, temperance
and justice (in the virtue senses). While ‘doing’ may dominate in certain areas—it ought
to be linked to thinking and ‘being’ in a consilient way.

While I prefer to speak of explicit and implicit theory, Payne (2005: 6) following
Sibeon (1990) uses the terms ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ theory. Payne identifies ‘formal
theory’ as that which is written down and debated within the profession and academia
while ‘informal theory’ consists of the moral, political and cultural values that exist in
society and constructions from practical experiences. In reflecting on this case (and
many others), there were many times that I was involved in ‘doing’ (action) without that
‘doing’ being tied to a formal or explicit theory. But guiding any action ought to be the
implicit or informal theory derived from moral, political, cultural and social (and I
would argue spiritual/existential) values and/or from practical experience. Informal or
implicit theory becomes part of the way the social worker practices and in that regard
becomes part of his/her being. Consilience allows for formal and informal (explicit and
implicit) theory to be valued and used. The real question to be reflected upon involves
the relationship between the formal and informal (explicit and implicit) theory and when
the formal and informal theory needs to be challenged and changed so that it is not
merely an agent of oppression or incorrectly based on bias and/or prejudice. In this
regard, in this case client confidentiality will serve as a good example.

Formally, a client has a right to confidentiality in most circumstances (for example,
the Corrective Services expectations and the AASW’s Code of Ethics). But, as
illustrated, formal and informal theory notes that confidentiality in sexual assault matters can become part of the culture of secrecy, which is a feature of the grooming process and the offending behaviour. I have never accepted that confidentiality is an absolute or that it is between the participant and the participant’s worker but rather have accepted that confidentiality is between the participant and the agency (in this case, Corrective Services). The challenge in working in a family environment with multiple agencies is determining who is entitled to know certain information and at what point (if at all) is confidentiality over-ridden. This is a real issue in multi-agency case conferences, and I had to challenge my acceptance that confidentiality was between the individual and the mandated agency. I read extensively on privacy and confidentiality but found that it was highly principled and philosophical but not very useful in everyday practice (with echoes to Schön’s swamp 1983). Confidentiality became an issue, for example, when the school counsellor and principal were at the case conference and the discussion moved to the family-of-origin background, the intimate past and the current relationships of Ixx and Vxxx. As chair of the case conference, I was immediately forced to consider to what extent the individual privacy of the perpetrator-participant could be infringed in the interest of the family and, more especially, the limits of the exposure of Vxxx’s unfortunate childhood to a case conference where some agencies did not have her as part of their mandate for action. Perhaps simplistically, I jumped into action by suggesting that the discussion we were about to have was not really relevant to the school and that it may be an opportune time for the school representatives to have a coffee/tea in the tea room. I acted. I could not have explicitly aligned the action to a formal theory of privacy and confidentiality and it may have been infringing good case conferencing protocol and certainly endangered agency relationships. It was a function of my ‘being’ that it was not prudent, and perhaps unjust, to allow the case conference to discuss these issues with a membership that included some people that did not need to know this information.
Experienced practitioners may act habitually or heuristically. Clinical practice can be dominated by particular theoretical positions, the influence of past cases and the dominance of one approach. Reflecting on this case in the light of other current cases, I do not consider that experience or habitual or heuristic responses dominated the thinking and doing and being. In fact, one of the strengths of the consilience approach is that it requires the worker to reflect upon the three elements of thinking and doing and being in a way that means each of the elements is considered and reflective questions asked.

I was working on three other sexual assault cases of a longitudinal nature at that time. One case involved a long-term, single, aging predatory paedophile with a history of sexual assault on pre-pubescent boys. He fitted more accurately the description of a fixated sex offender (see Groth et al., 1982) and was being treated with regular injections for limiting sexual predatory behaviour (not a treatment of my choosing). My chief concern was to limit his access to pre-pubescent boys and monitor his social relationships. Another case involved intra-familial sexual assault of daughters over a sustained period of time in a situation of acute social isolation. While the offender was in prison, the family had moved into a large town, made excellent progress and had decided not to resume any relationship with him upon his return from prison. My chief concerns were in protecting the family members from threatening and/or ingratiating behaviour by the offender and ensuring that he did not form other relationships with other women with young daughters. The third case involved the once-off traumatic rape of the offender’s adolescent daughter. No contact by the offender or with the other family members was desired and the offender continued to maintain his innocence despite overwhelming physical and forensic evidence. Psychiatric indications were that he had suffered an acute psychotic episode of which he had no recollection and that responded well to medical treatment.
These cases require different thinking and doing and had different participant being. They called for different approaches. In the third case, for example, it would have been useless and ineffective to have used the discount hierarchy as the offender had no recollections of the event at all. In the first case, the offender was prepared to acknowledge his disposition (nature) towards pre-pubescent boys and had rationalised his behaviour as ‘teaching them how to love’ and called upon the examples of history (Roman and Greek) as indicating that ‘man-boy love’ had been socially acceptable in the past and that it was only quite recently constructed as a crime. In the second example, there were features similar to those of Ixx (similar views of family relationships, headship, a view of the proprietor rights of a man with respect to his family) and some similar family features (social isolation of the family, restricted intellect and insight). The essential difference was that the period in which the offender was in prison allowed the female family members to develop ‘new’ and different lives (in my terms to be different and liberated from oppression).

As an experienced practitioner, in dealing with Ixx and Vxxx and their situation, I was acting on their individual and particular circumstances. I was seeking to bring my practice experience to their unique situation but apply a consilient approach that allowed me to think and do and be in a way that acknowledged diversity and uniqueness. Past and current experience is part of a social worker’s ‘being’ and can be a frame for action and a lens for viewing a situation—but it is only one of the elements that are applied consiliently.

Sexual assault matters (and many others in the experience of correctional staff and of course other social workers) raise issues about the nature of evil, the capacity of offenders to change and about remediation of the effects of evil. Views on the nature of evil come from many sources (for example, Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, Peck
1883) and personal experience. For example, a magistrate with whom I had many dealings unashamedly referred to himself as a social determinist who accepted that people were either good or evil by nature and who believed that people could not change that nature and that the impacts of their offending were un-remediable. I have generally considered the nature of evil in classical, philosophical terms with evil being either natural (earthquakes, famine and so on) or moral (wilful human acts) with each being able to be sub-divided into physical (pain in the body or mind) and metaphysical (injustices, random chance and pain of the soul) evil. I have had to reflect on these issues in relation to Lxx and Vxxx (and others). Initially, in my own thinking and being, I considered that evil was the antithesis of good. It was any easy, simple classification to allocate people to an either/or category similar to my magistrate colleague. With many case experiences, advancing age and more profound consideration of Christian theology and Western philosophical reading, I consider that evil is not a natural or necessary element of human existence nor simply the negation of good, but rather a parasite state that perpetuates itself by misusing God’s good resources and by following wrong directions. It is the consequence of human beings that are self-centred and self-absorbed. Human evil has a moral dimension that occurs when individuals fail to develop and live by appropriate virtues (temperance, prudence, justice, fortitude, charity, hope and faith) that manifest themselves in many ways including excessive drinking, excessive speeding, drug use and the failure to consider the rights of others. Consilience for me allows a framework for considering gross acts of evil while maintaining hope for the future.

This was sorely tested in the mid-1970s when I was required to attend as the Departmental representative at the court hearings for two murderers (they both still remain in prison). I heard how they had abducted, raped, tortured and murdered an innocent woman over a period of time. I was also privy to the case history of one of the
perpetrators who had a record of one prior car theft. I met with his family and observed how they were shunned from the small community because of his actions. I noted that the family had to leave the community, change jobs and schools and start again. I noted their struggle to reconcile the photographs of their son in the local under-12s cricket team, at pony camp and at Christmas caravanning holidays with the ‘monster’ of the offence. Consilience, for them and for me, allowed these very different manifestations of the person/offender to be ‘jumped’ together and the understanding of evil (fuelled here by drug usage) was helpful in that they could see that evil could apply to acts that were a departure from virtue but that the hope of developing virtue into the future remained.

Consilience allows for the influence of personal experience as it affects one’s professional being. This is a profound factor that is frequently overlooked. ‘Being’ involves the personal and the professional, although some helping professions in the positivist tradition attempt to draw a sharp distinction between the personal and the professional. Similar to the issue of Ixx and Vxxx having daughters not dissimilar in age to my own daughter, in 1984, 18-year-old Jane (name changed) was placed on a one-year recognisance under probation supervision for a minor stealing offence. She had been the victim of sexual assaults by her brothers and father since early childhood. She had a long involvement with child welfare authorities, multiple foster care placements, disrupted education, no family support, no work record, a series of broken partnerships/relationships, transient housing and was five months pregnant at the time of her court appearance. My son was born two weeks after her son. As I reflected on and constructed a case plan for and with Jane, I was profoundly challenged at the different starts in life that these two boys had in terms of family, income and stability. Despite enormous support, within four months, the welfare authorities removed her son as Jane was using alcohol excessively and leaving the child unattended, hungry and neglected.
(for example, severe nappy rash from sleeping in faeces). The child welfare authorities and I determined that Jane loved her son but that it was unlikely in the near future that she would be able to care for the child effectively. Together with Jane, we determined to place the child and Jane in foster care with a large family who would have the legal responsibility for Jane’s son and with Jane being able to live with the family and/or have as much access as she desired. She had a room in their home with her child. Over the next eighteen years, Jane came and went to that home as she developed and then lost various partnering relationships. The son remained in a secure home environment, always knowing that his mother loved him, but recognising with his increasing development that his birth mother was not able to provide consistent care for him because of her own issues and background.

Over twenty years later, her son has experienced stability and love from both the foster family and his mother. Consilience allowed the needs of the child and the needs of Jane to be considered—not as ‘either/or’ but rather as ‘both/and’. Jane’s sense of being was profoundly affected by her own experience of sexual assault. Her son’s sense of ‘being’ would develop over many years. One context for that development may have been instability and neglect and poor parenting (I believe only because Jane was still struggling with her own issues) while a different context involved stability and consistent care. A consilient approach allowed for the many different needs and perspectives to be considered and acted upon. Defining issues as ‘either/or’ can lead to the closing off of real possibilities. Reflectively, my own personal experience of parenting and my own appreciation of the needs of small children profoundly affected my professional sense of ‘being’ and pushed me to think of the physical/organic, mental/emotional, social/relational and spiritual/existential needs of these boys (Jane’s son and my own son). Whether it is a failure on my part to be able to separate the personal and professional is a matter for others to judge. The reality is, however, that the
nature of being human requires jumping together disparate knowledge from many sources—some of which may lay outside of professional or academic training.

I have used the Ixx and Vxxx case over six years (1998–2004) as a social work training exercise for third-year social work students—many of whom are mature-aged and some of whom were current employees of the NSW Department of Community Services and other child protection authorities. The case frequently receives a hostile reaction from students as they struggle with the nature of the offences and the attitude of Ixx and their perceived dislike of Vxxx for her preparedness to surrender the children to care in order to be with Ixx. I consider that these reactions are largely because the case challenges their own sense of ‘being’. The reaction of departmental staff/students is really interesting and has a further dimension. Some have applied the current actuarial risk management models (KiDS) and have determined that the children would be removed immediately and placed in care. Others have indicated that the type of individual and family work done here would not be possible as the casework manager (the caseworker’s supervisor) would not be prepared to take the risk involved in this kind of casework. They consider that the time involved and the longitudinal nature of individual and family work of this type could not occur in the resource-deprived current environment. They also cite the public scrutiny, the climate of complaints (including to the Ombudsman) and the media as combining to ensure that any practice is conservative, evidenced-based (evidence being primarily empirical evidence), defensible and with a focus on physical safety. I accept that a 2008 environmental scan would need to take account of a range of social factors, agency factors and theoretical insights either not relevant or not available in the 1980s. However, consilience is now perhaps more important in 2008 than in the 1980s. If the criticisms made by departmental staff are accurate, then consilience offers the opportunity for individual and family work to return the focus to thinking and being and the centrality of humanity.
rather than a mechanical application (doing) of a risk assessment tool. Consilience of thinking, doing and being offers the opportunity for participants to be heard and valued; for interventions to be appropriate and longitudinal; and for individual and family work to place Ixx and Vxxx and the children (and Jane and many others) as the co-participants in an emancipatory and empowering approach rather than a defensive and regulatory approach.

Consilience and the model (PEOPLE) also takes account of resource implications (in the environmental scan) and brings into stark relief the competing demands for resources in individual and family work. It allows for the consideration of the holistic needs of the individual and family (physical/organic, mental/emotional, social/relational and spiritual/existential) rather than simply those needs that are within the resource base or the agency mandate.

CONCLUSION
With respect to the model of PEOPLE, thinking and doing and being occurs within each element of the model. It does not occur sequentially and individually but rather holistically and establishes a hermeneutic circle where the understanding of the text/family as a whole is established by reference to the individual parts and the understanding of the individual parts by reference to the whole. The model’s chief utility here, and in my years of casework experience, lies in providing a framework that directs the consideration and activities and attempts to ensure that critical matters are not overlooked. Using the understanding of human beings, and informed by the considerations of the environment (for example, law, politics, professional duties, agency requirements, the particular practice field), it provided a matrix of factors for analysis, assessment, judgement and action.
In Horton and Freirian terms, a destination on the horizon had been set—a safe, happy and reconciled family. The road was made by bringing together thinking, doing and being and the unique circumstances of this family. It was a road with detours and bumps (for example the abandoned case conference) and some dead-ends (the inability of Vxxx to be able to change her understanding of CSA). Through the process of consilience of thinking and doing and being using the framework of the PEOPLE model, a practical outcome was developed with the family (and individual members of the family) to which they were motivated and laboured to achieve outcomes.

Consilience, as a process, allows for knowledge derived from many sources to be ‘jumped together’ towards an overall objective within a PEOPLE framework that recognises risks and the opportunities presented by the environment and the participants.
The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate consilience of thinking and doing and being as a group worker. The PEOPLE model is applied to group work in a correctional centre for prospective parolees. This group was chosen especially for its difficulties and because it was initiated without participant consent and involvement. Thinking and doing and being are considered separately and then the dynamics of their consilience is reflected upon.

READING OF MY PRACTICE EXPERIENCE

I was trained as a group worker in the 1970s. I have been involved in groups of a very wide variety including youth groups, education groups, therapeutic groups and project/task groups. Some groups have been voluntary and others have been as part of my employment. I have used Payne’s table (2005: 47) as a summary of theoretical
approaches to group work and in my teaching of group work at both an undergraduate and postgraduate level.

In corrections, I have facilitated methadone maintenance/withdrawal groups, violent offenders groups, domestic violence perpetrator groups and drink/ driver groups. I have led groups for professional counselling staff, prison officers involved in a sex offender group program and provided consultation to the group leaders (staff) in a Sex Offender Redirection Training program (SORT).

The groups considered here ran in the years 2002–2003. The researcher’s artefacts (Watson & Wilcox 2000) included twenty years of practice experience in corrections, formal study in corrections, notes, group plans, timelines, written reports, participant evaluations, session notes and outlines, workers’ notes, professional discussions, interviews, reports, theoretical understandings gained from secondary sources, practice memories and reflections on critical issues and critical incidents.

**DESCRIPTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS AND THE ‘SUCCESSFUL PAROLE PROGRAM’**

The contractual obligation upon me was to design and deliver ten two-hour educational/experiential group sessions for up to ten inmates who had the possibility of release to parole supervision within one year. This was the ‘top-down’ objective that was set by the outside contracting authority (the NSW Department of Corrective Services). I responded with a program design, and insisted upon the opportunity to modify it in the light of interviews with the actual participants (prisoners). Excluding prisoner participation in the setting of objectives is a poor process and antithetical to the PEOPLE model and to my own sense of being. The Department accepted the program and acceded to my insistence on being able to modify it in the light of prisoner input.
The program was run on three occasions over a two-year period. In all, thirty (ten in each of three groups) inmates commenced the program and twenty-nine completed it. The purpose of the program was to equip participants for successful community living upon their release. The program was seen as a pilot.

The criteria for group membership was that participants had to be long-term prisoners or with a record of failure on parole. They had to be within one year of their expected earliest date of release. Initially, the Department wanted to ‘require people to attend’. I resisted that, and insisted that people ‘self-nominate’ although I recognise that there was pressure on prisoners from staff to ‘avail themselves of this opportunity’. All participants who ‘self-nominated’ were accepted. This first group consisted of ten long-term prisoners. The average age was 32 years (with a range of 23 years to 54 years) and the average time in prison on the current sentence was over ten years with the longest serving participant having been continuously in prison for twenty-two years. All participants in the group were at medium (B) classification. I refused to have any reporting obligation to the Department. I was subject to the legal and procedural restraints of a prison but I insisted that the group not be under video surveillance. I was guided by a report from Kendall (1993) for the Correctional Services of Canada. Among the key considerations identified by pioneers as being therapeutic were:

1. A space to be themselves;
2. A respite from the sense of constant surveillance;
3. To be in control of their own lives; and
4. An opportunity to value and be valued by others.

At the first session, I stressed the independence of the program from the prison, the interdependence of group members and actively discouraged attendance as a means of impressing for parole purposes. I asked participants to commit to new ways of thinking and doing and being. I committed to particular matters of personal change. This was
done to pro-socially model change and growth as being normal for all people and to limit the power differential between the participants and myself. I outlined some of the expectations of group membership.

WHAT WAS THE THINKING AS A GROUP WORKER WITH RESPECT TO ‘PEOPLE’?

On Criminals, Crime and Criminal Behaviours:

Criminological theories are extensive and variously classified (see Schmalleger 2008). Schmalleger (2008: 21) suggests that the core of thinking about crime and criminals is the crucial distinction between those that think crime is a matter of individual responsibility and those that emphasise that crime is a manifestation of underlying social problems. This is an ‘either/or’ approach rather than a ‘both/and’ (or consilient) approach. My thinking about crime and criminals is that criminals, like all human beings, are physical/organic, mental/emotional, social/relational and spiritual/existential beings that live within an environment and that the failure to employ a consilient approach with diverse perspectives and accept knowledge from a range of sources leads to dangerous practice. For example, ‘scientific’ or biological criminologists who emphasise only the physical/organic aspect of humanity have an unfortunate and dangerous history. Aristotle was condemned to death partly on the evidence of a physiognomist. Medieval imperfections (such as warts, moles or a third nipple) were used as physical ‘evidence’ of demonic possession. Della Porte (1535–1615), Beccaria (1764) and Lavater (1775) attributed characteristics such as ‘shifty eyes’ or ‘weak chins’ to criminals whilst phrenologist Gall (1758–1828) related criminal behaviour to bumps on the skull. Lombroso (1876) used the Darwinian theory of evolution to classify criminals as biological throwbacks. The Eugenics movement of the early 20th Century and the later work of Jacobs (1965 on XYY Supermale), Wilson (1975 on the survival
of the gene pool) and Thornhill & Palmer on rape (2000) appeal to biology and science. While some criminological biophysical theories are reductionist, materialist and determinist there is evidence that appearance and attractiveness do result in differential social acceptance (Cavior & Howard 1973; Kurtzberg et al., 1978; Saladin, Saper & Breen 1988) with those judged as less attractive being labelled as more likely to commit crime.

I have been influenced by ‘labelling theory’, the work of Becker (1963) and Goffman (1968) and the later developments of other symbolic interactionists who see crime and criminality as people acting, choosing and making sense of the world as best they can rather than crime and criminality being objective facts with an innate causality.

I recognise the shifting paradigms in criminology (see Fattah: 1997) and that there are dominant approaches that gain favour at particular times. The paradigm shifts included an interest in scientific criminology (see Burt 1925 and 1965: 600) through the ecological explanations of the Chicago School (see Shaw & McKay 1942), Sutherland’s sceptical criminology (see Sutherland 1947) as well as the synthesising of criminology and sociology by Merton (1969) and others—the so-called ‘new criminologists’ or ‘radical criminologists’ (see Young 1971, Cohen 1973). Martinson’s (1974) ‘nothing works’ was followed by a period of the ‘post-social criminologists’ (see O’Malley 1996) and symbolic interactionalist, postmodernist theories (see Harvey 1990; Bauman 1991) have given way to a more modern concentration on reconciliation, victimology and re-integrative shaming (see Braithwaite 1989). Each has value and brings a way of looking at the world of crime and criminality.

For example, of significance to the social/relational, Wetherburn & Lynd (1997) record that poverty, unemployment, single parent families, lack of residential stability and crowded living conditions were all related to measures of abuse and neglect on the
one hand and to juvenile crime on the other (see Sherman 1997b: 1).

**On Prisons and Prison (Re)habilitation Logic:**

My systemic/critical/reflective thinking on prison rehabilitation or habilitation (there is debate in the literature as to whether many of those in prisons have ever been habilitated and as to whether rehabilitation is really putting prisoners back into the same situations of disadvantage) programs are that they operate on spurious program logic. In practice, the (re)habilitation program logic of prisons operates in the following manner:

Prisoner A—the mythologically normative prisoner will be (statistically) male, young, under-educated (the majority have not completed high school) and be unemployed at the time of the offence. In addition, about 74–82% of prisoners self-report a drug and alcohol problem; up to 30% will have psychiatric disabilities and/or developmental delay; and there will be a disproportionately large Indigenous group (27% of Australian prisoners). Overwhelmingly, parental and family ties will have been either disrupted or destructive.

The Courts will have held Prisoner A responsible personally and individually for his offending behaviour. Prisoner A is then added to 749 others (in the case of Junee Correctional Centre) who exhibit Prisoner A’s statistical characteristics to a greater or lesser degree.

This group of A and 749A’s is placed in an environment that is controlling, oppressive, operates on bizarre norms, has a culture of fear and intimidation and creates dependency. The structure is such that it removes the vast majority of decision-making, including all money, the opportunity to meet people unlike oneself, almost any legitimate expression of sexuality, some civil rights, and practical life skills (for example, when to get up, when and what to eat, with whom you will co-habit) and a
myriad of seemingly small and insignificant decisions.

These factors are then multiplied by a factor of time (three years, five years and so on) which has nothing to do with individual needs or a carefully planned program of re-integration—but has to do with the politics of legislators (and possibly the media) and the nature and expediency of judicial discretion operating at the persuasion of State or privately financed advocates.

The outcome at the expiry of the appropriate time is a (hopefully) well adjusted habilitated or rehabilitated A (or at least an A no more damaged than when he went to prison) who is ready to again resume his place in the community and begin to fulfil his part in the social contract between the State and its citizens.

Prisons may serve a multiplicity of functions including as places of punishment, as a means of specific deterrence, a focus for general deterrence and a place of incapacitation (that is, they incapacitate the prisoner by restraining freedom and access to others in the ‘normal’ community). It is acknowledged that there is a separate logic for incapacitation, punishment and deterrence. The Prison (Re)habilitation Program logic is not well reasoned to promote positive change. The evidence of recidivism rates is 64% within two years (Wedderburn 2004). The analytic evidence supports a conclusion of inefficient, ineffective and inappropriate outcomes.

On Prisons as Communities:

Acknowledging that ‘community’ is a concept that can be constructed in different ways, prisons are an interesting form of community. They meet Ife’s (1997) definition of ‘a form of social organisation’ and his criteria of having human scale; identity and belonging (whether that is a voluntary identification or a forced identification). There is interaction through a variety of roles; and there is a local unique culture. Prisons are
places of oppression where control dominates. Prisons, as communities, are places that have only a tangential likeness to normal communities in which ex-prisoners will live.

On Group Work Within Prisons:

There is surprisingly little written on the operation of groups specifically within prisons. Two searches of the database EBSCOhost (using the search criteria ‘group work’ and ‘prisons’ and then ‘group work’ and ‘corrections’) produced five and nine results respectively with all but three being irrelevant. A search of the leading Australian text and five leading international textbooks on Corrections revealed that group work and/or the practice of group work was not mentioned in any of the publications.

As a knowledge base for group work, I use a number of features from different models. This may be described as eclectic—but I consider that it is consilient and that it is thoughtful and analytic. These features from different models create a ‘mental map’. I can compare what is actually occurring in the group to the ‘mental map’ (that is, the theoretical understanding of what generally should be occurring). I use Tuckman’s (1965) model for describing stages of group work (forming storming, norming, performing and adjourning) and I draw from Garland, Jones & Kolodny’s (1965) model with its emphasis on closeness, power and control, intimacy, differentiation and separation. These are sequential stage models, and Bales’s (1965) model of recurring phases that seeks equilibrium between task-centred work and emotional relationships between members is sometimes more accurate of the practice reality.

In relation to leadership, I use a number of approaches. The behaviour-oriented criteria of Kretch, Crutchfield & Ballachey (1962) recognises that a leader is a member of the group that s/he is leading; embodies the norms and values that are central to the group; and fits the expectations of the members about how a leader for this particular group should behave. Other leadership criteria are ‘trait-based’ (see Hare 1962 and
Johnson & Johnson 2000: 189) and functional or performance based (see Johnson & Johnson 1975) with leadership tasks being distributed among group members. Having undertaken the Belbin (1981) Group Questionnaire on a number of occasions, I operate most effectively in the role of ‘shaper’ and ‘co-ordinator’ with the least adequate rating/performance on the scale of ‘completer/finisher’. This is valuable knowledge in leading this prison group, as I anticipated that I would need to provide behaviour and trait-based leadership and progressively lessen the reliance of the members on my leadership and develop in the members ‘functional and distributional’ leadership.

The issue of power and control in the group was central. French & Raven (1968) recognised the five types of power. It was my intention not to use coercive power at all and to progressively pass expert, referent and legitimate power to group members. Reward power was to a limited extent available to group members—but the rewards would be intrinsic to their being rather than external with the exception being the final week’s celebration lunch. In Brown’s (1992) classification, this group was to be time-limited, person-centred, mildly psychotherapeutic, guided, problem-solving and social skills oriented. I consistently referred to Zastrow’s Social Work with Groups (2001) but had to continually reflect upon it and modify it as this was a prison group and not a class.

I was informed by the work of Howells & Day (1999) that indicated that prison groups needed to unpack the cognitive processes (see Agnew 1995: 390) that allow offenders to justify their offending. Pa’s research (1996: 256) indicated that the most successful approaches were behavioural, cognitive-behavioural and social-cognitive. McGuire (1996: 84), in referring to approaches in corrections, state that social, cognitive-behavioural and cognitive self-instruction appeared to have efficacy. To these, I wanted to add the dimension of existential/spiritual.
I was concerned that most group programs that I have seen operating in prisons are instructional rather than therapeutic. I was conscious that Howells & Day (1999: 4) recommended that programs in correctional settings should run for at least 100 hours and take place over 3–4 months as a minimum in order to establish new behaviours and ensure that they are embedded and practiced. This was one reason for giving participants of this group exercises to be done between group sessions and also for changing the focus to include the existential/spiritual. The imposed parameter of ten weeks (twenty hours in all per group) was directly contrary to the research findings.

There are unique features of prisons that may not be conducive to group work theory applied from other settings. Groups that operates within a prison setting have particular environmental features. These include:

- power vested in the prison authorities;
- institutional norms that may be destructive;
- rules of the institution are restrictive;
- a formal and informal hierarchy;
- goals/objectives set by the institution;
- limited capacity and willingness of an institution to accommodate individual differences;
- clear standards of unacceptable behaviour within the institution;
- strong formal and informal institutional sanctions;
- competing sub-groups within an institution;
- varying degrees of commitment of individuals to the institutional goals;
- limited or non-existent participant involvement in the decision-making of the institution;
- funding/budgetary priorities; and
- an oppressive institutional ethos.

As a consequence of these structural factors and in the light of research (Howells & Day 1999), I had modest expectations of the group. It was set against significant social
exclusion, in an environment not generally conducive to developing positive pro-social attitudes and behaviour change. It offered the opportunity for participants to be involved with a mildly therapeutic program that acknowledged the static re-offending risk factors but aimed at the dynamic risk factors which have been continuously identified as the high-risk factors for parole failure (see Genreau & Coggin 1997, Hansen 2000). The static risk factors may be summarised as: socio-economic deprivation; poor parenting; family deviance; school problems; hyperactivity-impulsivity-attention deficit; early anti-social behaviour; the age of first conviction; and the number of previous convictions. The dynamic risk factors relevant to this group were:

- accommodation (number of changes of address)
- employment
- alcohol and drug use
- relationships
- relapse prevention
- leisure
- attitude/motivation and
- thinking/beliefs

WHAT WAS THE DOING AS A GROUP WORKER WITH RESPECT TO ‘PEOPLE’?

This program offered experiential and didactic approaches with the focus on awareness; the acquisition of knowledge; the transfer of learning to risk situations via games and role plays; the development of skills with an emphasis on practice; and the challenging and changing of attitudes via group processes and individual reflections. Adult learning principles were employed and the program was designed to be flexible enough to meet the unique interests and needs of the participants. The aim was to create the space for ‘aha’ experiences and to encourage inductive reasoning as well as deductive reasoning. The consilience (the term was not used in the presence of participants— I used the
phrases ‘holding in tension’ or ‘separate ways of seeing things that together give you a fuller picture and more opportunities’) of these two approaches was designed to assist participants to explore new and different ways of thinking, doing and being. The program was structured around three skills (see Figure 6.1). These skills were considered as core living skills that would be needed for successful integration into the community. These core skills were applied to the dynamic risk factors.

**Figure 6.1 Successful Parole Program**

The skills were targeted by their application to the factors that are known to be dynamic risk factors for success or failure on parole and the participant developing the ability to adjust to ‘normal community living’. The anticipated outcomes included:

- enhanced knowledge of key risk factors;
- enhanced skills in creative thinking;
- problem reframing with a focus on strengths;
- enhanced understanding and skills in communicating;
- a range of strategies to address expected problem situations;
- realistic expectations of accommodation options;
realistic expectations of relationships;
strategies to use in relation to drugs and alcohol avoidance or control;
first day and first week planning release;
exploration of the relationship with previous parole experiences; and
a range of skills in negotiating and conflict resolution.

Process evaluations were encouraged but were not compulsory. The sessions were evaluated on a scale of 1 to 10 in terms of meeting session objectives and in terms of participant satisfaction with the session and are detailed at Table 6.1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SESSION AND TOPIC</th>
<th>OBJECTIVE(S)</th>
<th>CONTENT</th>
<th>MY DOING AS A GROUPWORKER (ROLES AS PER ZASTROW)</th>
<th>PARTICIPANT'S DOING</th>
<th>SESSION EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. INTRODUCTION AND NEW WAYS OF THINKING</strong></td>
<td>To introduce the facilitator and participants; outline the rationale and sessions for the program; discuss the nature of dynamic and static risk factors; review the program logic of imprisonment.</td>
<td>Discussion; getting to know you exercises; a range of systemic and creative thinking exercises; a team-building exercise; de Bono’s 6 hat thinking exercises; discuss the ethical and practical limitations of groups in prison.</td>
<td>Consider ‘forming’ stages of a group; <strong>Role:</strong> Initiator/public speaker/educator/co-ordinator</td>
<td>Determine post-release goals; self-identify current patterns of thinking; covenant with the group.</td>
<td>Returned: 10/10 Satisfaction Rating (SR): 7.8/10 Meeting objectives (MO): 7.3/10 My evaluation (ME): Fun, safe and participatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. COMMUNICATION</strong></td>
<td>To give a theoretical overview of communicating and develop new skills.</td>
<td>Communication skills (eg. non-verbal, paralinguistic and meta-communication; ‘I’ statements’, active listening—using games; reflecting skills; role plays</td>
<td>Teach/instruct; elicit contextual examples extended to community settings; explain role plays as rehearsals with flexibility; Consider conflict; ensure differentiation. <strong>Role:</strong> educator/enabler/empowerer</td>
<td>Discussion; role plays; analyse pieces of communication; develop skills.</td>
<td>Returned: 10/10 SR: 7.5/10 MO: 8/10 ME: Participatory, well received.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. NEGOTIATING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION</strong></td>
<td>To consider ways to negotiate and resolve conflict and develop personal strategies for conflict resolution.</td>
<td>Conflict resolution network material; creating win-win situations; Kennedy’s model of negotiating; the ‘new truck problem’.</td>
<td>Normalise conflict; develop conflict resolution means; direct the role plays; reinforce the ‘I messages’ from the previous week. <strong>Role:</strong> mediator/activist/co-ordinator/educator</td>
<td>Analyse previous means of resolving conflict; identify conflict personal ‘triggers’; role play ‘at risk’ situations; do the ‘new truck problem’.</td>
<td>Returned: 10/10 SR: 9.5/10 MO: 8.5/10 ME: Outstanding; excellent participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. ACCOMMODATION</strong></td>
<td>To apply new ways of thinking, communication and negotiating and conflict</td>
<td>Values clarification exercise based around accommodation; identified affordable accommodation possibilities.</td>
<td>Develop the clarification exercise; challenged irrational or shallow thinking; consider group</td>
<td>Proposed post-release accommodation plans; do the values clarification; identify</td>
<td>Returned: 10/10 SR: 7/10 MO: 8/10 ME: Excellent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.1 Program Evaluation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS</th>
<th>To consider the skills and the personal impact of alcohol and other drugs on new ways of thinking, communication and conflict resolution.</th>
<th>Brief purpose-designed questionnaire about knowledge and attitudes to drugs and alcohol; purpose designed AOD personal inventory.</th>
<th>Designed AOD questionnaire; suggest ways to manage AOD issues; manage conflict; self-check on my use of power—sought participant feedback.</th>
<th>Undertake a personal drinking/drug history; engaged in a brief alcohol education package based on cartoons; develop a drink/drug covenant; role play difficult scenarios in sobriety.</th>
<th>Returned: 9/9 SR: 7/10 MO: 8/10 ME: Excellent participation; new learning; ability to apply core concepts to an application.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. STRESS MANAGEMENT AND ANGER MANAGEMENT</td>
<td>To identify stressors for each participant and develop an effective range of stress management strategies.</td>
<td>Used a purpose-designed stress inventory; identified physiological, psychological and behavioural responses to stress; identified methods of stress release; identified precipitators of anger; identified anger management techniques; taught relaxation and anger management techniques; a video on anger in relationships.</td>
<td>Develop the stress inventory; lead the relaxation exercises; self-disclose personal stressors; suggest a range of management of stress plans that deal with the bio/psych/ socio/existential elements.</td>
<td>Identify personal stressors, risk factors/ situations in relapse; do stress management exercises; rehearse relaxation techniques; identified personal stress management plan; identified ‘nice’ things will manage stress in the first day and first week of release.</td>
<td>Returned: 9/9 SR: 7.5/10 MO: 6.5/10 ME: Too much content so teaching relaxation and identifying relapse prevention strategies was rushed. There was a need for the reinforcement of concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. PAROLE AND PAROLE OFFICERS</td>
<td>To outline the expectations of Parole and the development of a relationship with Parole Officers.</td>
<td>Outlined the expectations of parole; discussed the prior experiences of parole; discussed the expectations that parole officers can have of participants; clarified roles and role differentiation; and used role plays of differing</td>
<td>The session was conducted by a Parole Officer. I attempted to change the instructional (telling) approach but with limited success. I developed a picture version of gambits (games) used to obtain parole.</td>
<td>Listeners and limited interaction. Specific questions—but little engagement.</td>
<td>Returned: 4/9 SR: 5/10 MO: 8/10 ME: Low response rate; low participation of members.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 8. RELATIONSHIPS

**To focus on the essential features of positive relationships.**

Identified roles and responsibilities in relationships; used a value clarification game; developed skills in forming and maintaining positive relationships.

**Role:** co-ordinator

Develop a values clarification game regarding relationships; challenged notions and conceptions of ‘love’ (using the four loves identified as sexual love, friendship, affection, and unconditional love).

**Role:** enabler/educator/activist

Discuss resolving difficulties in relating; identify the contextual features of relating; learn skills in ‘letting go’ of relationships; focus on being the right person rather than finding the right person.

Returned: 9/9  
SR: 8/10  
MO: 8/10  
ME: Positive session; too much content/too little time; processing material needed to be done outside group.

### 9. FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

**To consider family relationships and the potential to help or hinder normal community living.**

Develop and use a questionnaire; identify key issues expected regarding partners, siblings, other family members; identify and develop skills in concern to participants in the post-release plans; use family therapy concepts focusing on strengths, miracle questioning, exceptionality to enhance coping and life skills; identify relapse triggers and plan appropriate responses.

Develop questionnaire; use Love/Hate video; reconsider issues of closeness; power and control, intimacy, differentiation and separation; Re-apply the Belbin Teamrole assessment; assess leadership on autonomous/allonomous scale.

**Role:** researcher/advocate/enabler/empowerer

Discuss individual circumstances of family; consider concepts of manhood; consider the person that each would like to be; identifying issues of concern into the future; group critique of each individual’s plan.

Returned: 9/9  
SR: 9/10  
MO: 8.5/10  
ME: Excellent, supportive group with a number of members changing plans for release. Leadership was autonomous rather than allonomous.
| 10. CREATIVELY LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY | To identify practical barriers to successful community living; identify resources that are available upon release; identify strategies for negotiating the first day and the first week of release; identify time management strategies to ensure full occupation of time; identify ‘nice things’ to do immediately and in the medium-term upon release. | Create and use cue cards to brainstorm barriers; handout of community resources; develop day planner; bring food etc. into the prison for the celebration lunch. | Create and use cue cards; develop handout, first day & first week planner; review dynamic risk factors; plan for termination of group through group lunch; develop post group commitments and establish a weekly time for personal revision and reflection; review; attend to issues of ‘adjourning’ rather than termination. | Rehearsed a range of topics on which participants can talk; review issues that have changed since being in prison (eg. music, cars); reviewed review skills and applications; receive graduation certificates and commit to lifelong learning. | Returned: 9/9 SR: 10/10 MO: 10/10 ME: Excellent finish to the group but may have been influenced by food. |
Qualitative anonymous comments were also sought in writing. These were based on the ‘Harvard One-Minute Evaluation’ approach and modified for this group. Comments were sought on content and feeling/commitments. A sampling of the qualitative comments grouped under ‘content’ and ‘feelings/commitments’ and recorded as written included:

**Content:**

- How to look with a new perspective;
- A creative outlook on life;
- You need more time for discussion (that is, to take the session in);
- Other ways to get around things;
- This session has given me food for thought;
- I learned a different way to negotiate; how to budget money;
- This probably needed two sessions (AOD);
- How to apply for housing;
- Another good class;
- More time needed on certain subjects;
- More time is required for each subject.

**Feelings/Commitments:**

- It’s not too late to follow dreams;
- I truly feel positive after leaving this group;
- It was fun;
- I start to motivate myself more;
- I learned what’s going on outside so you can interact and not feel left out;
- Excellent communication...friendly and relaxed...no-one is treated any differently to another;
• I do not feel pressured in any way;
• Changing my personal irritating behaviour and I will shower more;
• I will drink less coffee and more water;
• Good group;
• (I will) give up smoking;
• Abstinence when released;
• Adopting abstinence is the only way for me;
• Techniques for stress release—they work;
• Not to believe manipulators;
• Truth is best;
• Other ways to release anger—I’m going to try it;
• How to control my feelings when people annoy me;
• Very well presented;
• Very easy to understand where (name) is coming from.

The group began as an allonomous group (a group work term meaning that it required much external leadership independent of the group members) with high anxiety levels and few common features. While it developed into a more autonomous group, there was the need for leadership in order that the content of the sessions were covered. Group role differentiation occurred and communication patterns were enhanced. One feature of the program was that participants were to prepare a topic of interest to them in order to start a conversation. The topic was not to be prison related in any way and could be from a paper, book, television or from their own thinking about an issue. On two occasions, I set the topic (fashion, race relations) in order that participants had to think and research the topic and then report to the group on a conversation that they had held
on the topic with a non-group member.

Group dynamics were generally positive and evidenced by some of the evaluations and my own perceptions. Participants maintained a focus upon tasks but also considered maintenance roles (Pfeiffer & Jones 1976); personal goals and group goals were highlighted in week two with the modified game ‘Hidden Agenda’. Members began to see themselves in different roles within the group (I had exposed them to Belbin’s team roles) and they began to appreciate the diversity and inter-connectedness of members. There were appropriate challenges to both other group members and the content of the sessions that ensured that the group did not have destructive or negative norms that simply demanded conformity and compliance. For example, on one occasion, I used an overhead from the Conflict Resolution Network that stated that every mistake was simply a step to the next success. Led by a participant who was in his fifteenth year of a sentence for a double murder—he responded with:

*Bull…t—I made one mistake and it doesn’t feel like a step to success.*

He received wide support. The overhead was inappropriate to the setting and I apologised for the trite sentiment it contained. One participant retorted:

*That’s OK, Bill—don’t beat yourself up over that crap—I guess there are some people that think like that—but they’ve never been to prison.*

The communication within the group was initially problematic in that much communication initially passed through me as the group leader. Setting up the room in a way that was not a classroom with all the focus upon the front and the ‘teacher’ was
challenging. Participants were comfortable with a classroom format and a table
separating them from the teacher and with little eye contact with any other members.

Setting the room up in a U-shape enabled the barrier of the desk to remain, but allowed
eye contact between members. By week four, the seating structure involved the removal
of the desks and the development of a circle in which I was one member. This was
related historically to ‘King Arthur and the round table’ as a reflection of the way the
physical/organic can determine social/relational aspects of living. It was an excellent
exercise in reflection. The change in the communication patterns and seating
relationships reflected the therapeutic nature of the group which had initially replicated
the prison communication which passes through perceived authorities with a great
degree of deference to power and status. Gratifyingly, this changed over the course of
the group as it moved from allonomous leadership to autonomous leadership and as the
deerence moved from myself to the expertise of the whole group.

The dyads and triads and scenarios developed for role plays enabled different
participants to work together and encouraged reflection upon actions and creative
approaches. The triads in particular meant that some participants were placed in the role
of observers who had to be able to assist in developing creative and helpful approaches
when others were ‘stuck’. This developed a group climate of ‘helpfulness and support’.
There was initial high anxiety about the role-plays as it was thought that there was a
‘right’ way to do role-plays.

**Quantitative Outcomes**

The immediate measure for this first group was that there were 94 of 100 possible
attendances. One group member was sent to a different prison at the end of week four
by a judicial decision. That resulted in six failures to attend but was the only loss to the
program.
Follow up in the community was voluntary. Each member of the group was given a survey, to be sent to me in self-addressed envelopes at three months post-release and twelve months post-release. To my knowledge, as at the final follow-up through the Corrective Services system, no participant had been returned to the prison. However, the limits of confidentiality and the inability to personally search the database means that ‘hard’ quantitative data is unavailable.

This program cost the Department of Corrective Services a total of $3,600. It is possible to calculate the cost-benefit on a variety of assumptions. For example, the program represents an outlay of $400 per participant that completed the program (nine people at a total cost of $3,600). Given the current cost of imprisonment (say, very conservatively $70,000/year/medium-security prisoner) programs that contribute to successful reintegration into the community may reasonably be argued are cost effective if measured against current and future imprisonment costs. While the costs are easily quantified, the real benefits (if any) are only known upon release and successful completion of parole. Of course, intangibles may not be known but include lower crime incidences, reduced victimisation, taxation paid and enhanced social functioning. There may also be second and third generation effects that are not quantifiable.

WHAT WAS THE BEING AS A GROUP WORKER WITH RESPECT TO ‘PEOPLE’?

Prisons and prison groups posed a challenge to my own sense of being, with an environment focussed upon control and oppression that is not generally conducive to change. The prevailing current convention within the NSW prison system is towards using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy approaches (CBT which focuses on the mental/emotional) rather than holistic or social/relational or spiritual/existential
approaches. This continues the pattern of conservative ideologies that pathologises prisoners and seeks individual change. Care needs to be taken not to unreflectively appropriate the prevailing conventions and norms of the prison and exclude consideration of the whole human being. I am not immune from the oppressive and controlling influences and I was concerned to avoid promulgating oppressive and controlling approaches. This is especially the case where the objectives are unilaterally set by the controlling organisation.

It was a real challenge for all participants to break away from the prison norms. It was a continual struggle to be known as ‘Bill’ rather than ‘sir’—and to avoid the implied power relationship.

Being a private prison, the educational programs are sub-contracted to an external educational provider that is responsible for delivering a contracted number of face-to-face hours to prisoners. Their expertise is in education and not therapeutic groups. The contractual measure is the number of prisoner hours and represents an output rather than an impact. It is cheaper to deliver a one-hour program to thirty prisoners in a group (thirty prisoner hours for one hour of teaching cost) than to deliver five targeted programs to six inmates each (that is five hours of teaching time for thirty prisoner hours). It is easier (and cheaper) to adopt a lecturing/teaching one-way instructional approach to a larger number than a small group or experiential approach. It is easy to be ‘captured’ by the institutional norm and to teach rather than be involved in life-changing group experiences. The pressure for outputs can interfere with gaining impact in people’s lives.

However, emancipatory practices and approaches within a prison context also pose problems for the being of prisoners as they conflict with the control ideology of the institution. Prisoners build up means of defending themselves in a hostile and abnormal
environment. In this group, members took time to build up trust as the environmental features of a prison were not conducive to trust. Others adopted approaches that were designed to be exclusionary from the group by emphasising negativity and hopelessness (Zastrow’s ‘catastrophier’ and ‘paranoiac’ 2006: 104). For others, the notion of being able to change behavioural and attitudinal approaches was initially quite alien to their own self-perceptions. For some, their whole being was defined by their offence or prison classification or the label (for example, ‘I am 843675’, ‘I am a murderer’; ‘I am a junkie’; ‘I am a B’; ‘I am a C2’, ‘dog’, ‘rockie’, ‘sweeper’). The overall tendency was to define oneself in relation to the operation of the prison. Creating a sense of being that was different to the prison was a challenge especially when the environmental factors of the prison are focussed upon control and oppressive structures and practices.

Apart from self-perception and self-definition (being), other psychological barriers to community social inclusiveness included the lack of experience in managing ‘normal’ social behaviours. Often conditioned to certain narrow responses to antagonistic or unusual situations, participants found that enlarging their range of responses was not difficult but challenged their previously learned habitual behaviour and sense of themselves. A brainstorming, creative thinking exercise served as a good example of expanding approaches and consilience. Participants were posed the following problem: ‘It is Wednesday and your $200 rent is due on Friday—what will you do?’ They were being asked to think both laterally and systemically. Initially, participants responded with anticipated responses including ‘pull a job’, ‘snatch a bag’, ‘do over a house’ and ‘put my good looking sister on the street’. After exposure to different techniques of brainstorming, this group developed forty-three legal approaches to resolving the problem that had a high likelihood of success. They (and I) were amazed at the solutions; the way that they had partialised the $200 into smaller monetary units and the way they co-operated to develop ideas and refine possibilities.
The participants saw that they were creative, capable of thinking expansively and the value of working together. It profoundly challenged their concept of whom they were (being) and the level of capacity that they perceived that they had.

Feeling excluded was identified by some participants as being common. It was felt that everyone would know that you had been in prison and that everyone would be watching you and expecting you to fail. One participant clearly identified that his return to prison on the last occasion was as a result of being treated suspiciously by everyone else. He perceived that:

*If you were being wrongly accused you might as well do the thing that you are being accused of.*

Other barriers to social inclusion were the expectations that participants had of society and the sense of being ill-equipped for meeting those expectations. For some, there was an idealised view of their return to the community and high expectations of the level of support and assistance available to them. For some their thinking had elements of fear, catastrophising and irrationality. These matters were often addressed by other group participants rather than by myself and there was a (for me) surprising level of genuine support for each other.

This program created serious challenges to my sense of being particularly to the sense of hope. For example, I had embraced privatisation of the Junee prison as offering the opportunity for a new approach. Rather than control-based regimes, privatisation offered the opportunity for new players using different paradigms to develop approaches that were prisoner-centric or prisoner-officer relationship-centred, flexible and solution-focused rather than being prison-centric, problem-saturated and control dominated. However, the hope that I had for private prisons has been diminished as I
consider that they have become merely sub-contractors of people in a system which offers only marginal differences to other parts of the State system. The privatisation of prisons offered the opportunity to introduce prisoner choice (for example the choice of control regimes from the State or the choice of personal growth and development in a private system)—but privatisation has been used as a threat to the public system to contain wages and costs (see Harding 1997: 17–21; Freely 1991; Moyle 1993) rather than provide something essentially different to the participants. From a basis of human rights and social justice and with a framework that involved a focus upon the whole individual, I could conceive of a private prison in the following way: As a small (say 10-bed), dual sex hostel operating as a therapeutic group/community with different clothing, different social and authority relationships and that is surrounded by music, literature, art and opportunity, with a focus upon the individual, staffed by social workers, educators and health professionals who consilience ‘facts’ from a variety of approaches so that detained ‘participants’ had positive ‘aha’ experiences and learned new ways of ‘being’.

Sexuality and love are part of being. Using CS Lewis’s *The Four Loves* (1960) was useful as framework. The composition of the group included participants whose life situations were a litany of broken trust, broken relationships and questions about why they were ‘unloved’ and ‘unwanted’ and questions such as ‘what is wrong with me?’ Preparing for a two-gendered world was a significant issue. For one participant (assented to by at least three others) there was a sharp dichotomy relating to his perception of women who were either like his mother (warm and affectionate and protective) or ‘sluts’. Given the very limited recent exposure of a number of the participants to other female role models (other than some prison officers), it was a dichotomy that was difficult to change.
For at least three participants, their only experiences of love (in the storge or philos sense used by Lewis) were from prison where they could identify shared interests and a sense of brotherhood that was not replicated in their experience in the community. Discussions in relation to the family of origin revealed that step-parenting and/or adoption were significant issues with five of the nine who had not had an upbringing in their birth family of origin (that is, they were fostered or adopted).

My being was challenged around questions including to what extent I should co-operate with the dominant oppressive paradigm that can be considered as the antithesis of emancipatory social work and which continues to fail prisoners? To what extent could I subvert the current prison logic or seek to mobilise collective responses within the prisoner population against the oppression? How do I maintain hope and optimism in the face of daily situations of injustice and violence? How do I balance the virtues including the need for fortitude (courage) and the exercise of appropriate prudence?

These required temperance and justice. There were some issues that were simply too entrenched in the environment to be amenable to change in the short term and would require a systemic commitment to change. There were some issues that were amenable to change (either the individual or the system). There were some approaches (for example, mass mobilisation of prisoners against oppression) that would be illegal and the consequences are likely to be ‘borne by those least able to pay the costs’.

There were challenges to my own being. I have suffered claustrophobic reactions and panic attacks in confined environments for many years. Each time I was locked into the confined and unmonitored education room with neither fresh air nor means of access/escape, I could feel the anxiety and panic attacks developing. This required physical/organic, mental/emotional, social/relational and a spiritual/existential responses to meet the challenges posed. It was useful for the other participants in the group—for
whom being confined was no challenge at all (and for some represented a sense of security and their chief fear was in release) to see that my own experience raised insecurity and a physical/organic response. This use of being was a positive for others and I used it as an example of stress management in the group. The other participants appreciated the diversity of stressors and it assisted them in disclosing their own stressors and in developing their own coping strategies.

These are also wider considerations of being including the relationship of the human being (prisoner) to the State and society. Prisons are a unique community of interest formed and controlled by forces beyond the prison. The modelling received by prisoners is modelling provided by the institution and the State. Myths are deposited and reinforced.

WHAT WERE THE REFLECTIONS ON AND DYNAMICS OF CONSILIENCE OF THINKING AND DOING AND BEING?

The PEOPLE (participants, environment, objectives, process/labour, evaluation) model was used in a very difficult setting where the objective was developed by a contracting body that did not include the participants of the group. My dominant role here was as a group worker but included being an enabler, teacher, empowerer, researcher, broker, advocate, activist, public speaker, negotiator and mediator.

Thinking dominated the design of the group work sessions. My thinking was that there appeared to be truth in many of the correctional paradigms that have been developed over the last century and consilience allowed me to draw from scientific criminology, symbolic interactionism, labelling theory, structural criminology and those advocating reconciliation as well as others that had a significant insight to offer (for example, CS Lewis and The Four Loves). Consilience allows for the thoughtful use of
information, models and theories that may assist the participants. It is not a matter or ‘either/or’ but ‘both/and’ (or ‘all/and’ or ‘most/and’).

Consilience applies to group work models and theories as well. The group worker must take account of the environment and the socio-political and structural issues. I had insisted that the group be in one of three areas of the prison that was not under constant video surveillance and monitoring. One session had to be moved to an area (which is under video surveillance and monitoring) drawing comments such as:

- *Can’t we go somewhere else?*
- *I hate that thing* (pointing to the surveillance equipment)
- *This is going to change things*
- *I’ll wave to the screws*
- *Can they hear what we talk about?*

The incident caused me to reflect with the group upon Kendall’s observation about the importance of personal space and used that as an incentive for successful parole.

Another session started late as authorities had locked down the prison for a cell search. I was able to politely demand that the members of the group be released from the lock-down in order to participate in the group. This was done. Wanting to know how this was achieved, surprised group members reflected upon how resolving conflict is both an attitude and a behaviour that would help them to adapt to ‘normal’ community living.

Consilience may involve ‘jumping together’ many different pieces of knowledge and information. A difficulty I had not anticipated was the wide variety of post-release plans and the lack of shared group goals in post-release accommodation. I was
personally dissatisfied with my ability to assist participants some of whom were returning to family, while others were likely to be released to hostel accommodation, others were to be released to bed-sitter arrangements and yet others were returning to their matrimonial home. The issues for each were different and individual members did not have sufficient time to respond to their unique needs. I wished for the 100 hours and three to four months identified by Howells & Day (1999: 4).

Consilience allowed me to undertake social work roles other than those used by a group worker. Significantly, when a discussion occurred in relation to Medicare, at least one inmate had never seen a Medicare card and had no knowledge of how to go about acquiring a card having been imprisoned prior to the advent of Medicare. This drew attention to the need for a checklist of commonly needed items for normal community living in a civil society (for example, identification, Medicare card, tax file numbers, birth certificate, entitlements to gate money, information on obtaining a driver’s licence and so on) to be drawn up and applied to every prisoner nearing release—especially for very long-term prisoners.

Consilience does not avoid making choices as to what information to seek and between different objectives and different pieces of information. While there is much to be gained by a thorough understanding of the physical/organic, mental/emotional, social/relational and spiritual/existential nature and history of group members, given the environment with its inability to guarantee confidentiality and the structural factors mitigating against it, I chose not to seek any details of offences, prison history and so on of the group members. I decided to take a here-and-now approach and consider the past only as it was revealed by participants and was relevant to creating a new ‘story’ for the future. Some of the physical characteristics of the group members were instantly identifiable (physique, tattoos, haircuts, prison green dress and so on) and some of the
social/relational matters became quickly evident (from the seating arrangements, the prison nicknames, general affect, wariness in early contributions). Some of the mental/emotional was evident (capacity to assimilate material; capacity to think in different ways; the timing of the group relevant to the dosage and availability of methadone; inability to read; limited experience in reflecting and assimilating emotions and so on). The spiritual/existential was acknowledged at various times in relation to belonging and identity, self-esteem, purpose of life, guilt and restitution, the role (or lack thereof) of fathers as models, nightmares and sweats as an indicator of anxiety and the capacity for realistic hope for a different life.

At the final session, the overall evaluation results were extremely positive but they were tainted as the session involved a celebration of completion. I provided a Chinese meal (ordered by the participants from a menu) from the 'outside' (I kept reframing this language as 'community') and ordinarily unavailable in prisons. There was a 'jumping together' of learning objectives, reward power and enjoyment in this exercise. The participants had a notional budget which made participants appreciate the costs and variety of choices available. They had to make the decision as a group within the budget which practiced their negotiating skills. For a number of participants, there was a range of vegetables and other items on the menu that were not known to them when they were imprisoned. We used this new and unknown situation to practice the strategies that they could use in a social setting when confronted by information that they did not understand. We rehearsed the kind of 'self-talk' that they could use to counter the immediate feelings of inadequacy and 'different-ness' that situations like this created for their sense of being and worth. Achieving the objective of getting non-prison prepared food into the prison involved considerable negotiations with prison authorities but also served to model the way negotiation skills can be used and have beneficial outcomes. It involved pro-social modelling negotiation for the other participants. For a
short period, some prison authorities joined the celebration and it was noticeable that participants spoke with the authorities on a range of issues not associated with the prison or prison life. My unobtrusive observations were that participants were speaking with prison authorities on prepared topics (usually starting with comments about the excellent food) that were not prison related and were using the recently acquired communication skills by asking open questions that encouraged dialogue. Following the lunch, the participants reflected on the way food was a natural ‘leveller of people’ and that they could meet with prison authorities as ‘men’. It was also noted that while there was respect for the authorities, there had been a change in that the deference towards authorities was more realistic and more equitable. One commented: ‘they’re not that bad really—when you know them—they are just like us’. Another commented ‘Mr…I almost felt sorry of the bloke…he is really sick, poor b—’

This celebration was decided by the group at the eighth week. It was a group activity (to design its own celebration) and involved using the three skills in a different application. I was interested in whether participants could transfer their new ways of thinking, communication and negotiation skills to a social setting with a particular time-limited goal. It was partly a test of their capacity to transfer learning to new and unfamiliar circumstances. The participants were asked to consider what ‘normal community things’ they would like as part of the celebration of the group. They were asked to decide upon the type of food, design the menu and the activities and the attendance list (if others were to come). There were a number of predictable requests that all participants knew could not be complied with (one participant asked for a woman; one asked for a bath as he had not had a bath for twenty-two years; one asked for a view of the world that was not framed by bars or mesh). At the start of the program I had undertaken a personal challenge (related to the use of self and the notion of being) to learn to cook as a way of pro-socially modelling change. The celebration lunch
included a request from the other participants for cakes (with the usual, predictable comments from staff and participants about files in the cakes). Unavailable fruits (for example, kiwi fruit, pineapple, peaches, cherries and so on) were also brought in but they had to be consumed at the celebration dinner (as any fruit substance is a potential brew in prisons). The impact on the final evaluation of the celebration lunch however was that it may have served as an inducement or created a ‘halo effect’ as participants had access to a range of foods not normally available in their environment but available in ‘normal community living’. The dilemma of the social worker acting consiliently is initiating pro-social change while simultaneously meeting the demands of rigorous methodology for accountability purposes and re-funding purposes. I could not find a way for the two to be done simultaneously. I decided that people have primacy over research methods—but from a research point of view the final program evaluation has been omitted because of the likely contamination. Consilience may mean that you cannot ‘jump together’ all knowledge or objectives. Unlike eclecticism which is (I think unfairly) accused of being unthinking, consilience does mean that you will make informed, thoughtful and prioritised decisions about the knowledge and information and processes available.

The consistent focus in the group was upon the future and the successful re-integration into the community through thinking ahead, visualising the participant's response and with an emphasis on rehearsing and practising responses to community situations. Participants recognised a number of barriers to reintegration and social inclusion and this illustrates the consilience of thinking and doing and being. As participants thought and acted reflectively—they began to change. Whilst all underwent a transformation, some recognised the need to change dominant thinking patterns, others the need to change their actions and behaviours (doing) and some recognised that they needed to change how they thought of themselves and how they identified
themselves (being).

Over half of this first group did not have sufficient identification to meet a 100 points check required for opening a bank account. Five of the ten members of the group did not have a birth certificate. This is a basic issue of identity (being) and can be read as establishing the participant as a ‘non-person’ when released. The cost of procuring a birth certificate was $24 at a local courthouse but for those who were adopted (two in the first group) the birth certificate is only available through the Sydney Registrar of Births Deaths and Marriages and at a cost of $76 and a (then) turn-around time in excess of four weeks. This is a very significant amount of money when each person in this first group would be released with Centrelink payments of $804 for the first five weeks of freedom. My advocacy resulted in a system being set up such that all people released from this program would have a birth certificate that was paid for by the Department of Corrective Services.

Being encompasses the physical/organic. One member of the group was paroled (three weeks after the completion of the program) after fourteen years in prison. He had no family or other support. His only non-prison clothes were those that he wore to prison some fourteen years previously and when he was thirty kilograms less in weight (and when fashion was quite different). The folk saying or cultural wisdom ‘that clothes maketh a man’ was certainly true when this participant was taken (on special release) to shop for comfortable fitting modern clothes. At a very practical level, it made a significant difference to his sense of being and his capacity ‘to fit in’ to his new community.

In this first group, nine of the ten original participants had very poor experiences of being fathered (five indicated lengthy foster care experiences or orphanages and four described their father as ‘drunk and violent’). Six of the ten men were fathers
themselves although four had no contact at all with their children. As the group progressed, a number of the participants wanted to explore the impact of their childhood on their own sense of being and how it had determined their present situations. The group explored the concept of ‘fatherhood’, ‘manhood’ and ‘being a man’. We looked at male role models that were available to them as children, the characteristics of a man and the men that they now most admired. For all but two, Nelson Mandela was the most inspirational as, for these participants, he reflected strength in adversity, courage (in my terms fortitude), an ability to love (the participants’ word) without bitterness and always remain positive (in my terms of virtues—hope). This led to a discussion on the man that each participant would like to be. We reflected on the classic virtues and the theological virtues. Each reflected upon the areas that they needed to continue to develop. For each of us (participants and myself) it is a ‘work in progress’. For each participant there was a commitment (I do not know if it was carried through post-release) to think, act and be in a different way. For one participant, it was to ‘forgive his father’, for another it was to write to his former wife regarding contacting his daughter and for another (who was adopted) it was to reframe his adoption as an act of love rather than an act of surrender and betrayal. I was uneasy. My dis-ease was around managing the after-group emotions and the reactions of the participants when they returned to the prison wings. I would not be there and could not report the highly emotionally charged content of the session to the prison authorities as this would have broken trust and confidentiality in the group. I was not confident in the ability of the prison regime to respond empathically and appropriately. I spoke to the members of the group about the dangers of being different. I asked them to care for each other—as some were quite vulnerable. Considering existential issues in this environment was a matter of concern for me and I worried about raising these matters in the environment of a medium security prison. It reinforced why most prison groups are educational rather than therapeutic.
In the environmental scan that was conducted with participants, systemic changes in the operation of the employment network, housing and other systems were not well understood. Simple procedures such as obtaining a tax file number or a Medicare card were either not understood or presented significant difficulties for the participant. This reinforced my views of oppression, where those who have been subject to social exclusion generally emerge from their prison experience with the same or similar predisposing factors that have led them to imprisonment. Some have deteriorated in their experience and understanding of the post-institutional world that they will re-enter as a result of their time in prison. In addition there are other factors occasioned by their institutional experience that promote social exclusion. For those in this group, a number recognised that they had been ‘cut-off from the world’ and that money (no $50 or $100 notes), traffic lights (that make a noise), social customs (how to ask someone out) and so much more had changed during their imprisonment. Some recognised that a return to ‘old’ environments with ‘old’ expectations and an ‘old’ sense of ‘who I am’ that would continue their social exclusion.

The social/relational barriers to inclusion also rested upon the lack of social and occupational skills necessary to be part of the society that they were re-entering. For many, the attainment of vocational skills which enhanced their sense of worth and their hope for the future was tempered by the fact that the skills were obtained (and publicly named as having occurred) while in prison. The participants perceived there was a social stigma in having obtained qualifications (for example, a forklift licence) while serving a lengthy prison sentence and they believed this created a social barrier to inclusion in the non-prison world.

A further barrier that reinforced exclusion is that long serving prisoners have little recent and relevant experience of community life. The conversations and interests are
often limited and restricted. Participants, as a form of self-protection while in prison, expressed that they do not think about the ‘outside world’ when they are doing a long sentence. The view was that ‘to think about outside things makes jail time harder’. The impression was conveyed that you think and do only those things appropriate to the situation of being a prisoner. While there is a certain fatalism (or lack of the virtue of hope) in this view, it may also be seen as prudent and courageous and a sensible reaction to a difficult environment.

A practical feature of this program was a requirement for participants to read articles/books and newspapers and listen to radio and watch television with a view to rehearsing conversations about issues completely alien to prison. Participants recognised that to be ill-equipped for ‘normal community living’ enhanced their social/relational exclusion and maximised the opportunity for continuing in behaviours, approaches and attitudes that continued the likelihood of exclusion.

Visualising and developing a future that was other-than-a-prisoner required participants to develop a range of experiences and interests that would enable them to re-integrate within the community. Being involves how one sees oneself, how one projects oneself and how one is seen by others (and I would argue, how one is seen by God) and to consider the self-perception and the projection of self and to consider the way certain attitudes and behaviours will be generally interpreted by those who do not have or share a prison background. Participants were asked to think, act and be different. For example, one participant believed that everyone in the community would be looking at him and could tell that he had been in prison. I reframed this by asserting that the majority of people were interested in themselves and he was probably not that important to most other people. Other group members humorously agreed and kindly asserted that the only thing people in the community were likely to see ‘was his big
head’. An identifying tattoo that he perceived attracted attention was easily covered. His sense of being changed with the understanding and acceptance of this reframing and practical solution to the point where he considered that he would ‘melt in’ with the crowd rather than ‘stick out as a crim’.

It was of concern to me, however, at the preparation stage and at certain points in the group, that as participants began to appropriate new ways of thinking, new actions and began to be different, that they would be demonstrating these changes in an environment of control and violence (often verbal more than physical) where difference and diversity was not readily accommodated, where thinking for oneself was not a high priority and where particularly the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity were not easily assimilated and demonstrated or were misunderstood. Consilience involved bringing together thinking and doing and being but it was not without its risks for the participants. As a practical example, the Chinese meal that was brought in had the potential to alienate group participants from the general prison population and thereby create difficulties for the group members. The participants of this group were seen by staff and other inmates as being treated ‘specially’. Reflecting on this, I changed the entry criteria for the following two groups and did not accept anyone into the group who had more than six months of expected imprisonment remaining. This was in part to limit the time exposure so that any changes that participants made in their thinking or doing or being would not be dissipated in the time that they still had to serve in prison and more particularly that the participant was not exposed to risk from other inmates for thinking, doing or being ‘other’ than a prisoner.

The group offered the opportunity to think, act and be a social worker within a correctional environment. There is little theoretical guidance on the operation of social work groups contextualised specifically for correctional settings. There is little written
in Australia on the specific social work contribution to corrections. There is little social
work guidance with respect to enacting social justice and human rights within a setting
of oppression and control. The insights of prisoners and their knowledge are rarely
sought. Prisoners are largely shunned, and frequently voiceless. These are serious issues
for me as a social worker and group worker and they are serious issues for Australian
social work generally. Will social work listen to and engage with prisoners and be an
advocate for human rights and social justice by promoting inclusion and by redressing
exclusion? Or will Australian social workers continue to be voiceless with respect to
making real and sustained changes in prisons?

CONCLUSION

The theoretical knowledge base on crime and corrections continues to change and
develop. Prison populations continue to rise and ‘new’ approaches to corrections—
including privatisation—are developed. Well known and researched factors that create
social exclusion continue. Contextual knowledge and practice wisdom are to be valued.
Consilience as a process and operating through the framework of the PEOPLE model
was useful in the group work context and re-emphasises the importance of considering
the whole person (being) in an environment not immediately conducive to, or
reinforcing of that consideration.
This chapter aims to apply the PEOPLE model and the consilience of thinking and doing and being as a community worker on an important community issue. The community organisation work presented in this chapter relates to awareness-raising and capacity building of communities to support families affected by drug and alcohol usage at Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett (small rural towns in Western NSW). Among a number of possible community work projects that could be reflected upon, the longitudinal nature of the project, its operation over three communities, its high Indigenous population and the need to find innovative and creative approaches to a community issue illustrated the consilience of thinking and doing and being required.

READING OF MY RESEARCH PRACTICE EXPERIENCE

My artefacts and readings include twenty-five years of vocational experience of rural communities and forty years of living in rural communities. I have been involved in community organising through churches (for example, ‘the Community Optimist Program’ for a church in an area of poverty, refugee resettlement programs including development of a Dinka Sudanese congregation), para-church movements (for example,
Scripture Union with camps for disadvantaged children, family camping, programs and services to community events, community film nights and so on), sporting clubs (for example, forming a cricket and football team from juvenile justice and correctional clients) and community organisations (for example, school programs of integration for children with disabilities). I had specific knowledge/work experience of these three communities, formal community development studies, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data, police and hospital data, previous community mappings of these and other communities, interviews, focus groups, reading of data collected from school groups, meetings with key stakeholders, in-depth discussions with the community worker and her agency, analysis of financial data, unobtrusive observations (undertaken in the key community gathering places—schools, hotels, churches, clubs and so on), transect walks, review of a photo competition, review of a young peoples’ video, community participatory diagramming, review of a recording produced by young people, four ethnobiographies of local former ‘drinkers’, Family First projects on ‘Paint ‘n’ Play’ and ‘sustainable books’ and a review of the three community service booklets and the training program for the community.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TASK

At 11.00am one day in April 2002, having returned to my position in the joint appointment between the University and the Department of Community Services (from the Director of Child and Family Services Western which included these three communities), the Regional Director for the Department of Community Services (Western) approached me with an urgent request. The Commonwealth had provided funding through the State for community capacity building projects. A proposal—developed, with a clear budget, auspiced to a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) and with a clear methodology—had to be provided by 5.00pm that day or the funding would be lost. The Western Region of DoCS had a clear strategy to develop the
community capabilities of its Western communities. The development and implementation of the project called for the rapid application of the thinking, doing and being framework. Was the practice model applicable in such circumstances to a social worker acting in the capacity as a community organiser? The following section describes and analyses some features of a fixed-term project where funding was provided by the National Illicit Drug Strategy (NIDS) through the NSW Department of Community Service (DoCS)—in order to develop the community capacities of Walgett, Brewarrina and Bourke families in coping with illicit drug use and licit drug misuse.

The project had a maximum fixed term of twenty-four months with expiry on or by the 30th June 2004 and a funding base of (maximum) $92,000/year. The project funding was not recurrent and it could not develop services that required funding beyond June 2004.

The Commonwealth Government project guidelines were aimed at illicit drug use. The priority and the major drug issues in the identified communities are alcohol and marijuana and (unrecognised) tobacco. I was the initiator of the project, provided the intellectual and some physical resources, provided some oversight of the work, designed the methodology of the project and was the evaluator of the project. The funded project was handed to an NGO who implemented the project and undertook the actual fieldwork. The genesis of the program indicated a ‘top-down’ approach to communities.

The project outcomes were defined within parameters set by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and the National Illicit Drug Strategy and were overseen at a local level by a project reference group.

The top-down objectives were modified to include ‘licit drug misuse’ as my previous statistical mapping of the Western region (using freely available public data drawn from health status reports and court figures) had indicated that alcohol, tobacco and marijuana were the most serious contributors to poor health outcomes, child
protection reports and a host of other health and welfare outcomes. However, my approach did not involve actually meeting with the communities at the development stage. While I had quite good knowledge of the communities, this was not a substitute for living in the communities.

The specific objectives for the Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett project had to be consistent with national objectives. Locally the community organising the objectives were to map existing services available to families whose members were misusing licit drugs or using illicit drugs; identify the options available to support families in the community; assess the appropriateness and availability of existing community resources; where possible, deliver current programs of education and intervention in response to identified needs; provide information to services in order to link and coordinate pathways to health-related counselling, community and preventative services; and to develop programs at primary, secondary and tertiary intervention levels that used creative mediums and innovative approaches to address the issues of licit drug misuse and illicit drug use. These mediums were to include (possibly) music, art, dance and narrative approaches.

There were three groups of participants: the whole community (primary intervention); at risk groups (secondary intervention); and confirmed drug misusers and abusers and their families (tertiary intervention). The programs were to focus upon engagement with the community and creating pathways to services (where those services existed). In analysing the objectives, there seemed to be a progression of program logic from the knowable, empirical and scientific (the mapping stages) to the creative and innovative. I was unconcerned about the mapping stages but was concerned about the short time frame for developing innovative and creative approaches in building community capacity.
WHAT WAS THE THINKING AS A COMMUNITY ORGANISER WITH RESPECT TO ‘PEOPLE’?

My critical/systemic/reflective and logical thinking was around the existing knowledge, existing theory, existing understandings and frameworks and general and specific contextual issues. Lateral/creative thinking was used to imagine new ways of engaging and changing the communities.

On Community and Community Organising:

‘Community’, as a term, is used in different ways. Some use the term to mean a geographic entity defined by physical boundaries such as a neighbourhood or locality (for example, Walgett). Others use the term to refer to common attributes, which are used to identify membership (for example, Christian community, gay and lesbian community, Aboriginal community). The term is sometimes used to describe both attributes and locality (for example, Brewarrina Aboriginal community).

Plant (1974), in his book Community and Ideology, offers a systemic examination of the problems of the usage of the term, emphasising the distinction between ‘descriptive’ and ‘evaluative’ elements in the use of the term ‘community’. Warren (1963) writes of communities, as historically having five functions—production, socialisation, social control, social participation and mutual support. Kenny (1995) makes the point that community is essentially a subjective notion, and defines community as what we experience as community. This can be considered as a concept of ‘a psychological sense of community; a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group and a shared faith that member’s needs will be met through their commitment to be together’ (McMillan & Chavis in Brodsky, O’Campo & Aronson 1999: 661). Ife (1995: 90–91) writes of community as ‘a form of social organisation’ with: human scale where interactions are readily accessible to all; identity
and belonging—a sense of identity from belonging to a community; obligation—a sense of rights and responsibilities; ‘gemeinschaft’—people can interact with each other in a variety of roles and as whole people; and culture—local culture expressing the unique characteristics of that community.

Writers of community work are also explicit about the range of frameworks and tools used. Rothman & Tropman’s three models of community work (1987: 5–6) suggest that community work can be considered in terms of locality development, social action or social planning. Payne (2005: 49) summarises models of community and macro work (Popple 1995, Taylor and Roberts 1985 and Brueggemann 2002) and subsequently Payne (2005: 223) considers Henderson & Thomas’s (2002) concepts of social capital, civil society, capacity building and social inclusion as key contemporary concepts in community work. My thinking about community organising and social development has been consilient and influenced by a recognition of the interaction between social, economic, political, ideological, local and individual factors (see Midgley 1995 on distorted development and Wallerstein 1974 on world systems and the relationship of core, semi-periphery and periphery).

Definitions of community work make assumptions about the capacities and interests of community members and the value and necessity of including community members in decision making about community issues. McArdle (1993: 20), for example, sees community development as ‘the development and utilisation of a set of ongoing structures which allow the community to meet its own needs’. Community development is therefore concerned with bringing about change through the community. Kenny (1994) sees that notions of transformation are implicit in the term ‘development’.

My thinking was that, in practice, communities can be understood as organic rather than mechanistic; dynamic and interrelated with the environment, rather than constant in
structure and form. Each community has its own being, depending on the local, physical, social, economic, political, cultural, environmental and existential/spiritual characteristics. Community organisation refers to strengthening social interactions within a community by bringing people together and helping them to communicate in ways that build genuine dialogue, understanding and potential for social change.

**On Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett:**

Communities have a sense of being that includes physical/organic, social/relational, mental/emotional, spiritual/existential and virtue features. Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett are (I contend) rural and/or remote communities in North-Western NSW. The definition of ‘rural’ has had little consensus. Useful contributions have been made (Martinez-Brawley 1984; Ginstaug 1977; Cheers 1987) to the definitional issue but the ABS defines a rural area as any area with a population under 1,000 people. This definition is, in my thinking, inadequate as it defines places such as Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett as urban areas. The definition used by the Productivity Commission makes use of terms such as urban, major rural, minor rural and remote. Notwithstanding technical definitions, in practice, these communities have features including isolation (the communities are separated by about 250 kilometres with no regular public bus or train service), high Aboriginal populations (see Census data ABS 2001), high youth populations (ABS 2001), educational disadvantage (see MacDonald 2000:3; HREOC, 1999:12), employment issues (Chapman & Greenville 2002) and from local and anecdotal sources high adolescent pregnancy rates, issues of petrol sniffing, illicit marijuana and other drug use and excessive alcohol use. The communities have high levels of violence and long court lists. Each rates highly in the ‘State Table of Disadvantage’ (Vincent 2004). Average family income is low. Table 7.1 compares income levels for regions of NSW and Table 7.2 illustrates the income disadvantage.
Table 7.1 State Table of Disadvantage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Median Weekly Individual Income</th>
<th>Median Weekly Family Income</th>
<th>Median Weekly Household Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>$400–$499</td>
<td>$1,000–$1,199</td>
<td>$800–$999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far West</td>
<td>$200–$299</td>
<td>$600–$699</td>
<td>$400–$499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>$300–$399</td>
<td>$800–$999</td>
<td>$800–$999</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS 2001 Census (The communities of Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett are in the Far West score).

Some salient features of the communities are to be noted. In Bourke, for example, the shire is eight times more likely than the State average to have teenage mothers while they are sixteen times more likely to have Aboriginal teenage mothers. In both Bourke and the Far West the percentage of Aboriginal babies born with a low birth weight is twice that of the percentage of non-Aboriginal babies and significantly more babies born prematurely to Bourke Shire women, compared to NSW.

These are disadvantaged communities. Disadvantage in New South Wales is well established and visually mapped (see Vinson 1999, Vinson 2004). Additionally, the SEIFA (Socio-Economic Index for Advantage) index of the ABS uses four indexes (Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage/Disadvantage; Index of Economic Resources; and Index of Education and Occupation) as a summary obtained from using the technique of principal component analysis. High scores on the SEIFA scale indicate relative advantage and low scores indicate relative disadvantage. This is shown in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage/Disadvantage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>1051.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Far West (includes Bourke, Walgett, Brewarrina)</td>
<td>908.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>1015.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS 2001

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While these are three difficult communities (as physically evidenced by the shops and stores being encased in wire mesh or having roller shutter doors that are pulled shut at 5.30pm and the presence of closed circuit television in the main streets), they are not without strengths. There is a long Indigenous history, culture and association with the land with the Brewarrina fish traps being the oldest man-made structure in the world.

These are rich and vibrant agricultural communities with a sound economic base. There is community infrastructure including many services, education through schools and TAFE, police, churches, local government, a strong commitment to Indigenous Community Working Parties and a strong alliance between local government and Indigenous groups. There are future economic opportunities related to natural and cultural assets. There is an awareness of the issues of ecological sustainability. Many of the people are resilient and the communities have continued despite racial riots (see Cowlishaw 2004), droughts and other natural events and economic restructuring.

In thinking about Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett as diverse rural communities, I applied a classification of regional and rural communities developed by a team (of which I was part) in the Western region of DoCS. This was built from the collective lived experience rather than statistical or theoretical approaches. The four-stage classification was not to be seen as prescriptive and immutable but rather as diagnostic and a benchmark against which action could be taken. The system was a basis for analysing the community and take account of the physical/organic, mental/emotional, social/relational and spiritual/existential. It sought to consilience information and assessments from a variety of sources. This fits also with the social work emphasis on thinking, doing and being. As a useful ‘first-cut’ tool, communities can be located upon a continuum from impoverished through to mature. It is possible for communities to develop towards maturity as well as move towards impoverishment. Decisions taken outside the community have the potential to move communities in either direction.
Taking this approach means that there is recognition of the dynamic interplay between community- and outside-of-community forces.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impoverished</th>
<th>Emerging</th>
<th>Maturing</th>
<th>Mature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having few opinion makers; power vested in few people; few services and/or fragmented services; little information, or the information is held by the few; a lack of social cohesion; a lack of acknowledgment or respect for diversity; vandalism/violence/lawlessness; visible drug and alcohol issues; social isolation/disempowerment, low employment/high unemployment; cultural and spiritual quality of life experienced as lack of connectedness; inertia and expectation of external solutions; a lack of mechanisms for ‘belonging’; a lack of shared community visioning; and dependency.</td>
<td>Mechanisms to stimulate leaders/catalysts and opinion makers; small scale/practice; few services—emerging coordination—gap identification; information access points clearly identified and information broadly available; responsive to community; increased tension; developing mechanisms for and exercising of community voice; groups and communities of shared values, beliefs and expectations that are articulated in behaviours; a focus on shared community responsibility and recognition of community members contribution to wellbeing and health of the community; community action strategies; alternate employment/training; community participation with diversification of opportunities emerging; community identification/belonging with confidence and pride; and emerging cultural and spiritual connectedness.</td>
<td>Dynamic and diverse range of catalysts, champions, opinion makers and ambassadors; advocates; mixed service systems; coordinated collaborative reinvigorating, regenerative responses to need; creative and challenging outcomes focused on clients and the community; information readily accessible in multiple formats; community profile to which the community is responding; community participation mechanisms and community visioning processes which are integrated into general community life; organisational and social constructs that support effective use of community resources, harnesses energy, builds diversity and solution building that is based on inclusion; formal and informal community organisation for wellbeing and health of all members; organised and spontaneous community solution building; and relationships and interrelationships emerge that are celebrated/strengthened; a dynamic economic/social interface; preventative and diversionary processes prominent in the law and order and tertiary systems; and independence moving to interdependence.</td>
<td>Formal processes for community representation; participation from all sectors of the community; service systems that are operative including funding and service provision; a healthy market economy free of monopolies and oligopolies; charity models formalised into fundraising; sophisticated community and social constructs; tolerance of diversity; inclusion of difference; information available that is current, targeted or responsive; accessibility of information to all; community expectation for increased government visibility and action in a partnership with the community responsibility and care; enhanced informal care systems; community Reconciliation approaches and Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms; interdependence and cooperation; and community confidence and shared vision of the future.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
WHAT WAS THE DOING AS A COMMUNITY WORKER WITH RESPECT TO ‘PEOPLE’?

My doing included being an initiator, enabler, broker, advocate, negotiator, educator, co-ordinator, researcher and group facilitator with public speaking duties. The originally planned project had four phases—orientation and mapping; development; implementation; and reporting.

The ‘orientation and mapping’ phase developed familiarity with the community using the physical/organic, mental/emotional, social/relational and existential/spiritual schemata. This involved mapping the physical conditions and the ‘mental and emotional health’ of the community by transect walks, interviews and participatory diagramming and required engagement skills and collaboration skills to gain access to the communities. It involved the doings described by Henderson & Thomas (2002) including entering the neighbourhood, knowing the neighbourhood, identifying needs, goals and roles, making contacts and bringing people together. It required mapping the existing relationships and organisations, their ethos/being, an environmental scan, and identifying the problem situations and potential solutions.

The ‘development’ phase was designed to enlist community and agency support by conducting community development and education training session with community residents and with partner agencies. Critical to this phase was the development of trusting relationships that would enable access to the more marginalised secondary and tertiary groups.

‘Doings’ in the implementation phase included obtaining and reviewing resources related to supporting families and individuals with drug and alcohol issues that had been helpful in other communities and then modifying them or developing local and
appropriate resources using music, art, dance and culture and narrative approaches. Some resources could be utilised/modified for primary prevention (community education). Other resources and approaches were selected for secondary intervention groups (for example, young people at risk of alcohol or marijuana use) and tertiary intervention groups (for example, young people actively using illicit drugs or misusing legal drugs—amphetamines users, petrol sniffing groups, riverbank alcoholics, smokers, alcohol binge drinkers).

The ‘evaluation and reporting’ phase used techniques including participatory research approaches, stakeholder analysis and beneficiary assessment (see Narayan et al 1998).

**Services Mapping**

While it could be argued that the primary doing skills used here were research skills, it also required negotiating skills (to gain access to schools and communities), coordinating and mediating skills, group facilitation and public speaking skills. I had considered that the major issues in the community were licit drug misuse and probably marijuana use. The services mapping was undertaken as an early part of this project to ensure that my perception was the community perception. Service mapping included meeting with all service providers (drug and alcohol workers, doctors, hospitals, police and so on) to seek their input on the issues. Community members were also contacted. A directory of services available both locally and within the region that would assist families who were dealing with members who have a drug or alcohol problem was developed at this time. Service mapping, in these communities, needs to be undertaken at least annually—given the instability and unavailability of some services through their inability to attract appropriate employees. Current directories, a tangible outcome of this project, were freely available, appropriately simple in format, were short and colourful,
widely distributed and available to service providers and service users in places where
the community gathered (hotels, schools, churches, the police station, Council,
Indigenous housing corporations and so on).

While service providers and community members provided insight into problems
related to alcohol and other drugs (AOD), it was important to seek the ‘voice’ of young
people and triangulate information. Accordingly, a number of pair wise rankings (at all
three centres) were undertaken with high school aged young. The results at Table 7.4
showed differences and similarities across communities.

Table 7.4 Most Serious AOD Ratings Between Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue/School</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Alcohol</th>
<th>Marijuana</th>
<th>Cigs</th>
<th>Speed</th>
<th>Heroin</th>
<th>Petrol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bourke</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Yrs 7–12)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brewarrina</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Yrs 7–10)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walgett</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Yrs 7–12)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

At Walgett High School a preference rating among services available for drug and
alcohol issues was undertaken. Participants could use multiple ratings as to his/her
perception of the services from what they knew either personally or by reputation and
are detailed at Figure 7.1.
Neither of these sets of results can be taken beyond confirming some adolescents who were at school for this task rated alcohol, marijuana and cigarettes as the major drug issues. Methodologically and statistically, it ought not to be taken beyond being one piece of evidence in support of the presumption made as to the community issues.

The mapping of the services and drug issues was also supplemented by focus groups and conversation with young people who were not represented in the schools. The mapping of the existing services had also identified options available for families in the community to support members who were having a drug or alcohol problem.

**Participatory Diagramming as Awareness-Raising**

The project envisaged mapping the physical location of places within Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett which were the sources of, or had the highest likelihood of, alcohol or other drug addicted persons being present. Very large physical maps of the towns were made and laminated and taken to different groups of people within each of the three communities. This process was undertaken in Walgett and Bourke but met...
significant community resistance at Brewarrina. This highlighted the diversity of communities that, on socio-economic factors, had many similarities. It may also highlight the possible flaws in engagement of the workers with the community. The original intention was to map the users and their patterns, associations and involvement. However, some community members at Brewarrina refused to identify locations and this indicated a basic level of mistrust between community members and the ‘professionals’. Where the community mapping was undertaken, the outcomes from Walgett included identification of the sources of problems which were predominantly around a particular hotel and a local public reserve. This locality-specific result came as a surprise to the participants and was an example of the ‘conscientisation’. It also led to the community considering possible solutions. The outcome included making changes to the lighting in the reserve. This social mapping or participatory diagramming was intended primarily to identify locations at which services could be delivered in the community. Discussion with services in Walgett, Brewarrina and Bourke indicated that services needed to go out into the public places rather than wait for clients to access services at the service provider’s address. Services that waited for the community to access them were frequently under-utilised. Taking the services out to the places where the community naturally congregated (such as parks, the homes of informal community leaders, to the local schools and at the Indigenous community organisations) proved to be far more effective. This same approach was envisaged for the mapping of users by taking education and innovative approaches to the localities that were the most significant in terms of reaching current drug users or illicit drug misusers.

**Doing as an Educator in Response to Identify Needs**

One social work activity is as an educator. The outstanding needs of these three communities on all the available evidence was a reduction of alcohol use, the substantial reduction in use of marijuana and the significant reduction of cigarette smoking within
the community. I was guided by Bradshaw’s (1972) taxonomy of need, where need can be felt, comparative, normative or expressed. In community organising in these communities, the need was certainly comparative, expressed by some, normative and felt by some members of the communities. Alcohol, marijuana and cigarettes were the three most prevalent drugs used in these communities (as assessed on a range of figures and supported by the school analysis). Each is known to have significant health impacts and significant impacts on the community as a whole. Indications from a variety of sources were that petrol sniffing can be problematic but was episodic in nature. While extreme indications were given (for example a three-year-old who was petrol sniffing) this was not generally seen to be the most significant issue. The work done in the schools confirmed the three major significant drug usages. It needs to be noted that one particular group (Family First’s mother’s group at Bourke) maintained that heroin was a very significant problem and it was identified as being more significant than any other. This may be a reflection of reality, or may be an acceptance of the widespread use of alcohol and nicotine and marijuana within the communities or it may be wrong.

Triangulation involves seeking evidence from a variety of sources to support a comment or view, and in this instance the official reports (police and court records), others with a possible avenue to knowledge (for example, inquiries made of garbage collectors/street sweepers who may have been seeing needles) and statements from others did not support that view. It is also to be noted that for a number of service providers, they did not see nicotine as a drug until it was specifically raised. One service provider in the health sector commented: ‘You know, it’s so widespread that I don’t even think about that now—but I should’.

One of the impacts of this project was to bring information and knowledge in an accessible form to service providers. The Commonwealth had produced an excellent ‘glossy’ document on illicit drug use. However, by showing it to focus groups, it was
clear that its language and close print meant that it was unusable with a poorly educated and oral-based community. The document was re-written and shortened with culturally appropriate pictures and local illustrations. Family First workers were trained in its use. They could then deposit appropriate knowledge in the three communities. The community worker undertook the training and performed the role of educator.

**Initiating and Brokering Creative/Innovative Approaches for Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Interventions**

The heart of this project was to think laterally and creatively and find ways of reaching people with creative and innovative approaches that may have a significant impact on their drug and alcohol usage. As indicated, the intention of the project was not to create dependencies on a service that would not exist beyond the 30th June 2004 but rather to deposit capacity within the community for addressing some of the drug and alcohol issues of the community. A number of innovative approaches had been undertaken within the three communities.

Within Walgett, young people took part in a mural and photographic approach, which created links to the learning program for ten young people (particularly young women) through the Department of Education. This was precisely in line with the project outcomes which attempted to link current drug and alcohol users to other services and in this particular instance to educational services. The situation in Walgett was made more difficult with regards to continuity by the loss of the Youth Development Officer and plans needed to be revised to link young people with a newly appointed Sports and Recreation Officer.

At Bourke, there developed a number of significant and innovative programs. Most outstanding was a video produced with and through the auspices of Big Art, which relates to the drinking behaviour of young men and young women in the Bourke area.
The video depicts a well-known young Aboriginal man (in the video called ‘Paulie’) from the Bourke area being a responsible driver while his four friends are well intoxicated. The driver is stopped by police and breath tested by local police (the police officers were part of the Indigenous youth mentoring program), passing the breath test and subsequently going on to a party where he is consuming water. At the party, Paulie is surrounded by young Aboriginal women who value that he does not drink, while his intoxicated mates fail to make any impression with the girls. The video concludes with Paulie chatting to two girls and with the phrase and caption ‘Paulie’s the Man’—a clear reference to the influence of Anthony Mundine (Aboriginal boxer and footballer who has links to this community). The messages of the video are clear and highly applicable to this group. Of particular significance is the fact that the persons in the video are members of a group known as the BLB (Back Lane Brothers).

The community organiser worked with this group of about fifty young men who were often reputed to be excessive consumers of alcohol and were significant troublemakers within the community. The organiser brokered other services and expertise and the involvement of police. The five young men in the group on the video are reputed to be among the informal leaders of that group. Comments indicated that their participation in the video caused at least some of the young people to reconsider their consumption, had changed some attitudes towards the police and law enforcement and has given encouragement towards developing new video programs. Two members of another group known as the SWAs (Sisters With Attitude—which numbers about fifteen) were also in this video and were also looking at becoming involved in other creative approaches. The video was originally done for the ‘Getting Smashed’ program and there was keen interest by both groups in a new program—‘Your Shout: Young People and Alcohol’. These groups of young people are early school leavers and do not appropriate formal drug and alcohol education as part of their normal educational
development. The community organiser had roles including initiator (of the program, involved in obtaining the funding, making contact with the BLBs and SWAs), broker (for example, obtaining police involvement, obtaining the skills required for the technical editing of the project), educator (on the role of alcohol and cannabis in health) and co-ordinator (entering into the State competition, organising travel and transport for participants and so on).

The video was selected as one of six finalists in a state wide competition and young people were able to travel to Sydney for the judging. A consequence of that project has been that the Imparja Television (an Indigenous television station) has taken two advertisements from the video, which were shown across the Imparja viewing area of Western New South Wales, southern and Western Queensland, the Northern Territory and eastern West Australia.

At Bourke, a group of young men who would generally fit the categorisation of ‘social exclusion’ developed and produced a rap CD. This group developed out of the video project (as above) and developed independently of the organiser to a large extent. Of particular interest was that the dress, accent, gestures and even words conveyed an Afro-American inner-city rap culture. In my critical reflection on this, I struggled with the ‘aha’ moment of realising that the local Indigenous culture and approaches were being overlaid by a globalised culture. I wondered whether local and poorly resourced communities would be able to resist and/or appropriate globalising influences in a way that contributes to understanding of being or whether these influences would undermine them. Indigenous self-determination has often been held up as a choice. That is, you can choose to be Indigenous or to assimilate into the dominant culture. These young men were accepting and developing an alternative culture that was neither assimilative to the dominant Australian white culture nor specifically Indigenous.
A creative project initiated through the Family Support Service at Brewarrina included young mothers (Brewarrina has among the highest teenage pregnancy rate in NSW) making picture books and encouraging mothers to tell the stories. These books had no words and comprised pictures cut out from the newspapers or magazines. They had themes that included non-alcohol use during pregnancy, toilet training, nutrition and the impact of smoking during pregnancy and on newborn babies. The nursing mothers ‘read’ the books to the child(ren). This stimulated auditory and tactile sensations and experiences for the child while allowing the mother to appropriate knowledge that she needed and had been taught—but within an oral tradition. The pages of the books were in plastic ‘glad bags’ and tied together with wool, which ensured a measure of sustainability and longevity that would not be available in the community if they were paper-based. The organiser was the initiator of this activity, provided the resources (magazines, papers bags and so on), suggested themes, contacted the prospective participants and developed a small community group. The books were made in a public park which enabled others to readily join. Storytelling, narrative and oral traditions were consilenced with health and education messages that were acceptable and accepted, whereas literacy-based approaches have not found a ready reception in these communities. The books that were made needed to be simple and culturally appropriate. They were ‘owned’ by the women who made them ensuring greater usage and longevity.

Four ethnobiographies were undertaken of four former alcoholics who lived in and were well-known within the communities. The community organiser obtained appropriate permissions and considered the legal and ethical matters before taking oral histories (subsequently transcribed) that narrated the way each person overcame their addiction. These were photocopied and widely circulated (among high school students). Audio-copies were produced for those not able to read. They charted individual
narratives in the individual’s voice but with the purpose of being instructive to others battling with addiction. They were far more powerful than stories emanating from outside the community and with whom the community had no relationship. The organiser’s role here included initiating, brokering, educating and empowering.

The project was time limited and sought to deposit and embed information, knowledge and skills within members of the community. Drug and alcohol training was provided to family support workers in each of the three communities. Two hundred copies of the training resource relating to drugs and alcohol were produced and made available across the three communities in accessible public places. Designed primarily for family support workers, some of whom have limited literacy and education and no qualifications, the resource was designed to be photocopied and used as and when the need arose. The training program gave the information necessary for family support workers working with families affected by drug and alcohol use and in a culturally appropriate format. The community organiser embedded information both through the training resource but also through her being with the community remembering both the resource document but equally importantly the person who delivered the resource.

**WHAT WAS THE BEING AS A COMMUNITY WORKER WITH RESPECT TO ‘PEOPLE’?**

My being and the PEOPLE model were challenged by the externally imposed objectives, the limited time frame and the external restraints. ‘Top-down’ and centralised programs presumed that they knew what was best for communities. I was also recruited into that ‘mindset’ by being asked to develop a program with a very short time frame and without significant community consultation. I think that the best community development arises from within the community and has local community champions. This was not the situation here. I approached a NGO that I knew was
working within the community and had the capacity to operationalise this program. But, it was not an open or transparent process. It may not have been the best organisation and an Indigenous organisation may have been more appropriate. Again, as with the group program, the challenge was whether to be involved at all in a less than perfect set of conditions or to let the opportunity for the communities simply disappear. I had to compromise some of the virtue of justice (fairness) in the interests of prudence. It is interesting to reflect on the consilience of the virtues and to speculate as to the point at which no consilience is possible or desirable.

My being was challenged around the issue of changing the objectives. This was an urban-centric program aimed at illicit drug use. The evidence from many sources, both empirical and anecdotal, was that the needs of these communities were predominantly around legal drug misuse. Consilience allowed me to ‘jump together’ both illicit drug use and licit drug misuse—but I was aware that I had to exercise prudence in making this change. Consilience, in this instance, may look like duplicity or even corruption of purpose. Upon reflection I considered that it was worthwhile, empowering and had the potential to be liberating for these communities. However, I was uncomfortable with making this subtle but substantial change in the program focus (see Maynard–Moody et al 1990).

As a way of undertaking an environmental scan and assessing the being of communities, I developed a semi-structured approach to determining the characteristics of any particular community that seeks information from many sources. These are used to assist in rapidly understanding the physical/organic, mental/emotional, social/relational and spiritual/existential nature of a community—in short—its being. They call for judgements that are not readily and easily defensible. They are often my judgements. They are disputable. They are made by someone that does not live in the
community. Communities are complex and multi-dimensional. They contain within them a range of physical, social and spiritual/existential understandings that my semi-structured approach attempts to uncover. Communities have a sense of being and, more or less, exhibit the cardinal and theological virtues. Some have great fortitude, others lack hope, and still others are beset by racial or social divisions with no acceptance of diversity and are lacking charity and justice. These matters are often reflected in the town planning and in the local press (see Chapter 1: 12; see also Cowlishaw 2004 on Bourke).

A challenge to my being was to find an appropriate community worker whose own being was complementary to those of the communities. There were times that the project worker needed to engender hope and other times when community enthusiasm was heightened that prudence and temperance were needed. For example, there were distinct youth sub-groups with the communities that needed to be carefully and thoughtfully managed and with a degree of balance and fairness. These sub-groups can be divided on race, or interest or identity (which hotel or school is frequented).

The project worker lived in one of the three communities. They are difficult communities in which to live and there are significant pressures and stresses. To ensure the continuing competence of the project worker, I chose an organisation that had good support and supervision structures. I also needed the auspicing agency to support and develop staff members and understand the individual communities. There needed to be an apportioning of the worker’s time that was prudent and just.

My being impacted upon the evaluation which was undertaken. An evaluation of the communities was required by the Commonwealth funding body. It involved criteria that were positivist (for example, the number of people contacted through the project, size of the problem, links made to existing services and on). These measures alone would not
reflect either the intent or the outcomes of the project. In line with consilience and the practice model, it was important to give an alternative reading of the innovative changes that had been left in the community. The evaluation included comment from participants, ethnobiographies, a copy of the video, newspaper reports and a range of materials that had been developed within these communities. These were supplementary to the requirements—but were designed to humanise the project outcomes. From my sense of being, they also had the purpose of educating those in decision-making roles and attempting to ensure that rural communities were appreciated for their individual diversity.

I was struck by the profound poverty of some parts of these communities and the lack of opportunity for many young people. For Indigenous young people, many were committed to the area (by reason of kinship and association with the land) while others were motivated to leave the area but lacked the financial, social or educational means. Their sense of being was confused and there seemed to be a lack of direction and hope. One young person expressed it as: ‘there is nothing to do here—until you die’. As a non-drinker and non-smoker who holds a physical/organic, mental/emotional, social/relational and spiritual/existential view of people, the damage being done via foetal alcohol spectrum, through smoking and excessive alcohol use, reckless and dangerous behaviours (eighteen deaths of 12–25 year olds in twelve months) was disturbing and was interpreted by me as evidence of alienation and hopelessness.

I struggled with the approach of some service organisations that, in the face of easily identified needs, waited to be approached. I likened this to the difference between ‘outreach’ and ‘in-drag’ that was as applicable to community organising as to the church context from which I had drawn it. Both in myself and in the project worker, the qualities of prudence, temperance, justice, fortitude, faith, charity and hope (all
necessary characteristics of ‘being’) were significant in engaging and working with the communities.

**WHAT WERE THE REFLECTIONS ON AND DYNAMICS OF CONSILENCE OF THINKING AND DOING AND BEING?**

Thinking dominated the initial development of the project. Consilence involved ‘jumping together’ different forms of knowledge (ABS statistics, local profiles, Indigenous knowledge, personal knowledge and experience, theories of communities, contextual matters including NIDS objectives and so on). It involved using critical/reflective/systemic/logical thinking and creative/lateral thinking. In the initial phase, the local input was entirely absent and I constructed the community project from a distance of 700km away. This was not consistent with good community organising practice.

One of the significant problems in rural and remote Australia is attracting and retaining qualified, skilled, creative workers with appropriate virtues. This project’s commencement was delayed for eight months primarily through the inability to attract an employee to the communities with the right being, thinking ability and doing skills. The person required engagement, assessment and collaboration skills and the capacity to think both critical/systemically/reflectively and laterally/creatively. Additionally, a wide range of doing skills were required that involved very practical matters (skills in driving long distances) through the spectrum from interpersonal skills and group skills to highly developed organisation, advocacy and public speaking skills. The person required the cardinal and theological virtues and to be able to apply those in communities beset by physical/organic, social/relational, mental/emotional and spiritual/existential problems. Both the project officer and I required skills in relating to the Indigenous community and an understanding of national and local Indigenous history and oppression, poverty
and the importance of country. Bringing a sense of being that respects and appreciates these matters can be developed from a range of sources and in a range of ways including, but not limited to, formal education. The capacity to admit error and to laugh at oneself and seek to correct wrongs are important elements in communicating in Indigenous communities. Each of the communities had specific and individual features which required flexible and creative approaches. Communities are diverse and dynamic and a change in one area of a community (for example, job losses or the attraction of a natural leader, transience of participants and service workers, service closures and, in this case, the project funding) may markedly affect the whole community. Communities are flexible and in some instances unstable. The capacity to deal with serious illicit drug use or licit drug misuse can vary depending on the skills and quality of being of the worker and the availability of social and community support.

In these communities there was an intergenerational and interrelational element that was profoundly disturbing to me. I reflected upon the concepts of social capital and social inclusion/exclusion (see Henderson & Thomas 2002) and the practical implications for these communities. For example, there is no alcohol and other drug worker at Brewarrina and consequently, there were no alcohol and drug education or prevention programs. Life Education Vans (an education program for the prevention of drug and alcohol misuse beginning in primary schools) do not visit any of the three communities, as they require a financial co-contribution from the communities who, on every economic measure, are economically poor. Children are being born to very young mothers (as young as thirteen years) whose alcohol consumption may be resulting in foetal alcohol spectrum with its associated physical/organic, social/relational, spiritual/existential and mental/emotional consequences. Social exclusion in practice means that low incomes can directly translate into not having money for the co-contribution. As a result, services such as the Life Education Vans and drug and alcohol
prevention programs do not exist in the communities with arguably the greatest (comparative and normative) need. This serious and significant issue (the development of accurate drug and alcohol knowledge from an early age) is not rectified in children of high school level as many young people of Aboriginal background are not proceeding to high school on a regular basis, beyond the ages of twelve or thirteen years.

The dynamics of consilience of thinking, doing and being as a community organiser may mean considering local service development (or locality development). This was done with the ethnobiographies and other activities. But other locality development opportunities arise serendipitously. Education and school truancy were clearly identified in a number of interviews. This truancy, in the opinion of key informants, was a result of drug and alcohol use by parents and their inability or unwillingness to prepare their children for the next day at school. However, community-owned innovative responses have developed. One community on an Aboriginal reserve had no school truancy. That particular community placed a high value on education and modified its alcohol intake in such a way as to ensure that its children were going to school. On the regular monthly drinking days which were related to income support, the women appoint one of their members on a ‘rotational’ basis as the ‘designated mother’ who was ‘mother’ to all the children, remained alcohol-free and was responsible for caring, feeding, housing and getting them all to school. The community being here was positive towards education, child protection and welfare and instilled hope in their children.

Consilience resulted in approaches that used television/video and oral methods as they are more likely to be effective, given the literacy levels and the reading capacity of some in the communities. There was sound thinking behind free community family film nights with short but visual messages targeted appropriately to the Aboriginal communities in relation to alcohol and nicotine. This provided the opportunity for
educational and preventative information in the context of a community social activity. Other approaches may be ‘jumped together’ but are likely to be less effective.

Consilience of thinking about underpinning theory, current activity and the sense of being may result in discarding possible alternatives. One key informant suggested that, given the occurrence of teenage pregnancies, there may be opportunity to utilise an urban program (seen on television) that required teenage girls to care for anatomical dolls in order to teach the responsibility of care that parents have for children. The program was reputed to have had success in city schools in lowering teenage pregnancy rates. But on reflection and in the light of community discussion, this approach may not be as successful in these communities as in other areas, for the reality is that many teenage young women are already exercising significant responsibility for their younger brothers or sisters. Information from a funded youth group for 12–25 year olds was that half of their attendees were under ten years old (the youngest being eight months) as the teenage girls had to bring all their brothers and sisters to the youth group. While this made discussion of teenage issues very difficult (for example contraception, cigarettes, dating and so on), it negated the likely impact of the program using anatomical dolls as the suggested experience with the dolls was the already lived experience of most of the teenagers in this community. Consilience accepts information from all sources but carefully evaluates all information in the light of the PEOPLE model.

While I had thought that dance/drama would be significant mediums in which to convey alcohol and drug messages, they were not evident. This may reflect poor thinking on my part in designing the project, or the skills and capacities of the project officer or it may indicate that dance/drama is not a medium that would be suitable in this community.

Consilience as a community organiser involved thinking, doing and being related to
the whole community. In general, the three communities were serviced by organisations primarily providing a conservative, eurocentric (see Payne 2005: 210) casework model of intervention. There were no group programs and few self-help programs. Approaches to illicit drug misuse included mezzo-level policy issues such as the licensing of premises for the sale and distribution of alcohol. There have been community compacts formed between the police, communities and licensed premises which have prescribed the times at which alcohol can be purchased. As yet, there has been no desire or demand from whole communities to restrict alcohol to certain days (such as has occurred in other Indigenous communities). While such restrictions have statistically lowered public order offences, there is an argument that the restriction of alcohol in public places simply drives the consumption of alcohol to private homes and thereby increases both the risk and severity of assaultive behaviour towards women and children. Consilience requires that these two pieces of information be jumped together—not to create a unity of knowledge or policy but to lead to new and creative approaches that might both lessen the public disorder and result in safety for the women and children.

Communities can be formed around locality, social activity, social structure and/or a community of sentiment (for example, shared beliefs). The two fundamental communal elements of any social system (Dempsey 1990) are a sense of solidarity and a sense of significance. These two elements of community are closely linked and rarely can a person feel a sense of belonging without also gaining a sense of significance. These communities had a sense of being (shared sentiment) and a sense of the individual’s place in that community. In the Indigenous community that sense of being was (for some) identified by skin names or clan association. There were sub-communities of social activity within the geographic locality. These social activity and social structural elements were based around race (Indigenous/non-Indigenous), gender (male/female) and primary allegiances (churches, schools, hotels and so on). The sense of significance
and solidarity was evident in the Back Lane Brothers (BLB) and the Sisters with Attitude (SWA). Both groups had their primary solidarity to their colleagues rather than to the geographical community of Bourke. While knowledge of communities were helpful, the practice situation with these groups drew as heavily from knowledge gained from gang studies including Cohen, Thrasher, Cloward and Ohlin. Some members felt alienated from the wider community (having left school early, perceiving that they would never have a job) and were critical of the community of locality. There was an acceptance of hopelessness and a belief that things could never change. The video project gave the opportunity for new skills, rethinking values and a degree of notoriety in a positive way. Studies of gangs (see the National Youth Gang Centre Survey 2004) indicate that members are often looking for ways out of their current identification and affiliation. Consilience involves ‘jumping together’ knowledge and approaches and skills from many sources that create a diverse opportunity for action.

The CD project illustrated the complexity of being. When I had conceived this project, I had assumed that many Indigenous young people would be attracted to the Indigenous culture and that identity would be developed through Indigenous music, storytelling and dance and would be centred upon Indigenous culture and history. The CD rap project could have been taken directly from the Afro-American inner-city music scene as conveyed through television programs. Some Indigenous youth of Bourke were not dissimilar in dress, language, dance, music, attitudes and physical expression to their television rap idols. There was no evidence of any Indigenous cultural influence in this project. That forced me to reflect on the nature of being—and that being in this instance was adopted from a globalised electronic source which none of the young people had seen in person but had appropriated through an electronic medium. As I thought about the comments from the Indigenous elders that their young people did not respect the elders and the traditions, it became clear that the voices that were heavily influencing
the sense of being of these young people were voices external to the community of Bourke and that had no intimate connection with Bourke. I was intrigued by the question of why young people were appropriating this new sense of being. Among many possible answers, I considered that they were reacting to the oppressive conditions in the community; that they were simply differentiating themselves as the normal part of the adolescent development process; that they had identified with ‘blackness’ as a reaction and rebellion to the dominance of ‘whiteness’; and that the music and lyrics met an emotional/mental need that no other medium or voice was currently reaching. Consilience allowed for these possible considerations to be jumped together and the recognition that each individual may have held these and other explanations in diverse proportions to others of the group.

This project, in sixteen months, delivered outcomes in terms of building the capacities of communities and in mapping existing service providers and pathways for users of services. Innovative, culturally-appropriate, accessible and creative approaches were developed and embedded within the three communities. Significant problems were encountered including the skill and capacity of the workforce, the transience of skilled workers, suspicion of ‘outsiders’, entrenched multi-dimensional and widespread licit drug misuse and illicit drug use. The web of disadvantage was extensive and most services were provided on an individual casework model rather than on a whole-of-community model. The many positive developments in these three communities were often small scale and dwarfed by the totality of need.

CONCLUSION
Community organisers using consilience will involve valuing both local and ‘outside’ knowledge; recognising current realities; promoting positive change (hope); using positivist and interpretivist approaches that are community-building rather than
community-diminishing; and empowering members of communities to understand their situation and then take control of it. In the fluidity of practice, consilience allowed the ‘jumping together’ of facts and approaches from many sources.

The capacity of communities is built through thinking, doing and being. The social worker operating as a community worker brings being, thoughts and skills to a community even if it is only for a specified period of time. Those capacities are important assets for the community. Thinking without action is sterile and contrary to social work. Doing without thought is likely to be misguided. Neither thought nor action will be effective without prudence, temperance, justice, fortitude, charity, hope and faith. This community project illustrated that there was no single ‘answer’ to the support for families managing drug and alcohol issues—but rather multiple approaches that recognised diversity and creatively reflected opportunities for change. The practice model provided a useful framework for considering the many participants involved and the environment, within a set of objectives that had been developed nationally and were modified to fit the local requirements.
Every man gets a narrower and narrower field of knowledge in which he must be an expert... The specialist knows more and more about less and less and finally knows everything about nothing.
— Konrad Lorenz

If all people are unique, and if they are constantly changing each and every day, then all one can say about any social research finding is that it applied to that group of people on that given day, and given the propensity of humans to be different and to change, then it is unlikely that one would get the same results if one were to repeat the study.
— Wayne Dyer

This chapter explicates the thinking, doing and being of the PEOPLE (people, environment, objectives, process/labour and evaluation) model as applied to a social work researcher. It applies the reflective analytic framework to a pilot project that focussed on rates, services and relationships between local governments and Aboriginal communities.

READING OF MY RESEARCH PRACTICE EXPERIENCE

The researcher’s artefacts and readings include formal training in research
methodologies (both from a positivist and interpretivist approach), research projects related to chaplaincies, student units, whole of community evaluations, quantitative research into student populations, cost-benefit analysis of juvenile justice programs and correctional programs, and qualitative research into ethnic communities and Indigenous communities with either a single focus or a broad multi-dimensional focus.

For the purpose of illustrating the model as a social worker researcher I have chosen a research project that illustrates the need for consilience of thinking, doing and being and that utilised different methods (literatures and legal searches, transect walks, participatory diagramming, ethnobiographies, ABS statistics, local media content analysis, key informant interviews, community meetings—with the number of participants ranging from 6–73 people). The research spanned across ten communities, involved Indigenous people and had multiple foci. The readings and artefacts were drawn from many different sources—some were qualitative, others quantitative and some were the lived anecdotal experiences of participants.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

In May 1996, the Binaal Billa Regional Council of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) called for tenders to undertake pilot research related to regional agreements. The objective of the research was:

To examine and develop strategies, processes and models for developing protocol regional agreements between the Binaal Billa ATSIC Regional Council, Local Government Regional Groups and other agencies. These agreements should facilitate effective service delivery and coordination in a context of support for self-determination of local Aboriginal communities and reconciliation in local communities. (Tender document)

In announcing the project, the Binaal Billa Regional Chairperson said:
Aboriginal people have the potential to play a more significant role at the local level to the benefit of all local government’s constituents through the development of a range of agreements relating to local government issues. Local and regional agreements offer a positive and constructive approach at the local level for the development of economic, social and community goals to the benefit of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents. (Press Release 6/5/96)

I decided to make a tender application on the basis of a longstanding interest in Indigenous communities and because I wanted to undertake research that had practical and tangible outcomes and that could pro-socially model a research approach that was not inherently ‘colonising’. I also wanted to undertake research that was ‘driven’ by Indigenous priorities. The innovative twelve-week full-time project was initiated and controlled by the Binaal Billa Regional Council with a primary focus on ten Aboriginal communities, ten local governments and the relationship between those Aboriginal communities and their local government.

In developing the tender brief, the ATSIC Regional Council Steering Committee required the successful tenderer to employ sessional Indigenous staff with local knowledge and access to the community and they hoped that the project would also develop some research potential in the Indigenous sessional staff employed. The Steering Committee recognised that the project required skills in working with Indigenous (communities) and non-Indigenous people (local government) and that a partnership of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers was most appropriate. The Steering Committee, in their assessment interviews, recognised that they would like to have Indigenous researchers undertaking the project but that the skills and abilities did not (yet) exist within the Indigenous communities to undertake the research. The co-participants in this research included the ten Indigenous communities, the ten local governments, the Binaal Billa ATSIC Council Steering Committee, Indigenous sessional staff and potentially the non-Indigenous community. The research team
consisted of myself as a social work researcher and co-team leader, another senior social work academic as co-team leader, a lawyer and three Indigenous research assistants.

The Steering Committee considered that Indigenous Australians were the most researched people of the world and that they wanted to ensure that this research made a difference and had practical outcomes that could be implemented at the local level. While they wanted research, they wanted the research to involve community development and deliver directions that could be followed and applied to the benefit of ‘their people’. This thinking fitted with my own thinking about social work and the role of the social work researcher and praxis. It also fitted my thinking concerning the development of an Indigenous research methodology (see Chapter 4) and research as a tool of emancipation rather than a tool of oppression. The thinking of the Steering Committee promoted participatory research methods and progressive learning, empowering people rather than extracting data, a visual rather than verbal approach, and the use of multiple methods rather than a rigorous adherence to one method for research.

WHAT WAS THE THINKING AS A SOCIAL WORK RESEARCHER WITH RESPECT TO ‘PEOPLE’?

The selection of the ten Aboriginal communities was undertaken by the Binaal Billa Regional Council Steering Committee on local government issues. The selection of the Local Government Areas was a consequence of the location of the Aboriginal communities nominated. The communities nominated were:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indigenous Community</th>
<th>Local Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balranald</td>
<td>(Balranald Shire Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condobolin/Willow Bend</td>
<td>(Lachlan Shire Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coonabarabran</td>
<td>(Coonabarabran Shire Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cummeragunja</td>
<td>(Murray Shire Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darlington Point</td>
<td>(Murrumbidgee Shire Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubbo</td>
<td>(Dubbo City Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffith/Three Ways</td>
<td>(Griffith City Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murrin Bridge</td>
<td>(Cobar Shire Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nanima/Wellington</td>
<td>(Wellington Shire Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagga Wagga</td>
<td>(Wagga Wagga City Council)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were in excess of 50 possible Indigenous communities in the Binaal Billa ATSIC Region. The thinking of the Steering Committee was to select Indigenous communities that they considered represented a cross-section of relationships between local government and Indigenous people. They predicted that some of the areas selected had close and beneficial relationships between local government and the Indigenous community (Balranald, Wagga Wagga) while others had adversarial relationships (Murrin Bridge and Cobar Shire, Condobolin-Willow Bend and Lachlan Shire). The Indigenous communities were urbo-rural (Wagga Wagga, Dubbo), small rural (Coonabarabran, Darlington Point) and former Aboriginal reserves (Cummeragunja, Murrin Bridge). Some were resettlement communities (Wagga Wagga, Dubbo) while others were former missions on traditional land areas controlled by a particular clan group (Cummeragunja by the Yorta Yorta,) and others were areas of mixed background (Coonabarabran was Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi).
The thinking of the Steering Committee was to obtain a diverse sample and manage some particular ‘local issues’. In research terms, the sample selection was somewhat random, somewhat stratified and somewhat purposive. The selection of the sample was based on their own lived knowledge of the communities, their understanding of local government, personal anecdotes, stories and narratives. A complex process of negotiating with their constituency (Indigenous people) including a reading of the ‘climate’ of the particular Indigenous communities and their receptiveness to a project planned by the ATSIC Regional Council and then undertaken by a non-Indigenous researcher.

**On the Political Environment:**

The project was undertaken at a time of considerable political uncertainty in relation to Aboriginal Australians at the national level. Some of the events relating to Aboriginal issues included: a greater focus on accountability in ATSIC; a Commission of Audit appeared to be signalling a shift of many responsibilities to the States; a review of ATSIC itself; questions as to the commitment of the Coalition Government to Native Title legislation; criticisms of the Minister (Senator John Herron) by the Social Justice Commissioner (Mick Dodson); legislative changes to ATSIC which were initially blocked by the Senate; pejorative comments (‘Aboriginal industry’) by the Minister; a reserved decision by the High Court in relation to the Wik peoples’ Native Title claim; the resignation of some members of the Aboriginal Reconciliation Council; $414 million cut in the ATSIC budget; the 30th anniversary of the Wave Hill walk-off; an impassioned speech by the Governor General calling for reconciliation; the first Aboriginal Olympic gold medallist; a speech by the Independent Member for Oxley calling for the abolition of ATSIC; the report of the ‘Stolen Generations’ Inquiry; a call by the Minister for Education (Western Australia) for ‘forced hostel’ education of Aboriginal children; and uncertainty over continuation of funding of Community
Development Employment Programs.

Indigenous people had limited political voice. Aboriginal inequality and lack of access and equity was also noted in the political systems. At the Federal Government level, for example, there has never been an Aboriginal in the House of Representatives. At the local government level in NSW, there were 177 councils (and the Lord Howe Island Board) with 1808 local government councillors. Of these councillors, eleven were Aboriginal persons who identify with the Aboriginal community. Aboriginal people therefore comprised approximately 0.6% of the elected representatives throughout NSW even although they represented 1.24% of the NSW population. Aboriginal people were significantly under-represented in home ownership, in political structures and in a range of other areas.

On Race and Ethnicity:

Much is written and theorised around the concepts of race and ethnicity (see, for example, Halstead 1988; Hollinsworth 1998; Miles1989). Castles writes (1996):

There is a confusing plethora of literature on race and racism. For instance the useful collection of Rex and Mason (1986) of theories of race and ethnic relations includes Weberian, Marxist, anthropological, pluralist, rational choice, sociobiological, symbolic interactionist and identity theory approaches. These are mainly sociological theories but one can find the works of philosophers, historians, economists, jurists, psychologists, discourse analysts and cultural theorists. Any study of racism is necessarily inter-disciplinary for a full understanding can be achieved only through examination of all factors—historical, economic, political, social and cultural—which make up any given situation of racism. (19–20)

My thinking was that race was predominantly a social construct rather than a biological construct but draws helpful perspectives from a wide range of disciplines including psychological, sociological, economic and political perspectives. Race and
ethnicity involves physical/organic, social/relational, mental/emotional and spiritual/existential components that are used in a way that creates a ‘racial’ identity. I have been influenced by Halstead’s (1988) six-type classification of racism, McConnochie et al’s (1988) approach to institutional racism, Kovel’s (1970) concept of aversive racism, reading about the eugenics movement and my experience with Indigenous communities.

On Local/Regional Agreements:

In the literature, the term ‘regional agreement’ (sometimes called Municipal Type Agreements—MTAs) was used. In Canada, it was used for large area agreements between Canadian Provincial Government or large municipal providers and First Nation peoples. Throughout this research, the term ‘regional agreement’ was used to denote broad land-based agreements between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and others and the term ‘local agreement’ was considered as a smaller unit than regional agreements and encompassed non land-based aspects of relationships. The concept of a local agreement was that it was narrower in its geographic span, but broader in the issues encompassed. Local agreements were contracts, covenants or arrangements that gave Indigenous interests greater recognition and/or control over services and development. Given that the focus was upon local government and local Indigenous communities, its use was confined to local government boundaries, and local issues such as consultation, rates, local development, local housing, recognition of Indigenous people, access to local government employment, industry development, negotiation processes, dog control and a host of other locally significant issues which occur without necessarily having a land-based agreement.

CURRENT RESEARCH THEORY

As a social worker, I reflected upon the role that research plays in empowerment and
disempowerment and was committed to the use of participatory research methodologies (see Chapter 4). I have been guided by the work of Guba & Lincoln 1989 on the use of case studies and by the growing literature on Indigenous research (see Chapter 4). Consilience of knowledge and accessing knowledge through a variety of methods has been a very significant influence. Rejecting the subject-object dualism (see Chapter 2) that underpins much research has enabled research to be a collaborative effort between myself and other participants and has led to dismissing a singular dominant focus of the research. This is illustrated in relation to thinking about Aboriginal housing. During the community and local government interviews, it was progressively noted that Aboriginal housing organisations often represented good people acting with admirable intention, but with a paucity of capital, questionable financial skills, limited skills in asset management, limited capacity for tenant management and deficiencies in training and organisational management and the taking of great personal financial risks as a result of being legal directors of a company. Understanding the difficulties of Aboriginal Housing Corporations also required an understanding of the ideological relationship between capital and community. The relationship is potentially contradictory as the community’s tendency is to understand housing as a ‘use value’ for the services of members, while the capital markets and capitalism tendency is to convert housing into ‘exchange values’ that can be speculated upon for profit and income stream. Capital-influenced and economically driven local government was less willing to invest in Aboriginal housing which maintains housing as a ‘use value’, because this would prevent speculation, profit accumulation, returns on ratepayer capital or income streams.

In places, the ideology of housing corporations as community-based can lead to a belief that housing corporations of Indigenous people are alternatives to mainstream government programs. The concept of ‘user pays’ has meant that there is a belief that significant contributions should be made by the Aboriginal community to housing.
Given the levels of poverty, unemployment and other social problems, the impossibility of this was less frequently recognised. Aboriginal housing corporations were struggling with the contradiction between affordability (to individual Indigenous members) and viability (the continued maintenance and enhancement of the properties). It was recognised that in many Aboriginal communities, as in many rural communities, there are no market forces or competition to build affordable and appropriate housing. The opportunity for profit on Aboriginal-owned land is limited (the legislation ensures ‘inalienability’) where speculative investment is risky, and the income stream is likely to be so small as to not warrant investment. Thinking about and understanding the contradiction was important and occurred progressively throughout the research project. Both Indigenous communities and local government were caught between adopting a ‘social housing’ approach and the dictates of ‘affordability’ and return on economic investments.

This thinking highlights that in real research situations there are often a multiplicity of ends (sometimes competing ends) that need to be considered. Simply applying one model and one mindset (in this case an economic model and a competitive mindset) both distorts the reality and can be disempowering of participants. Both local government and the Indigenous communities recognise the need for affordable and appropriate housing and the failure of a competitive model of economics to provide the basic human need for shelter. The nature of Indigenous Housing was not the major intent of the research—but it was a very significant and participant-initiated concern (both for local government and Indigenous communities).

This led to a consideration of the ethics of research and its relationship to social work (with its emphasis on praxis). Accepting the prevailing methodology and methods of research may have committed the researcher to accepting dominant research
paradigms and a focus upon research ‘purity’ rather than participant-influenced agendas. I was conscious, for example, that Indigenous housing was a tangential feature of the University’s ethics approval. Ethics and methods may dominate participant-influenced agendas. In resolving this tension, I have been greatly aided by the AASW Code of Ethics as it relates to research (1999) which sets parameters for observing the conventions of ethical scholarship but unequivocally expresses that the research will:

Place the interests of research participants above the social worker’s personal interests or the interests of the research project. (4.5.2c)

WHAT WAS THE DOING AS A SOCIAL WORK RESEARCHER WITH RESPECT TO ‘PEOPLE’?

The doings as a social worker involved each of the roles identified by Zastrow. The project was initiated with a legal and library search in relation to local government agreements, regional agreements and the law as it impacts on local government. The results of these searches initiated other lines of thinking and doing. Anomalies were noted including that rates from ratepayers formed a small portion of the budgets of some shires and that Indigenous Land Councils and Housing Corporations were disadvantaged by comparison to other organisations (for example, churches, charitable and benevolent groups and home owning pensioners). International bodies of literature were reviewed with respect to regional agreements in Australia, Canada and New Zealand. A thorough knowledge and reading of local government legislation, Grants Commission requirements and Federal-State fiscal relations was undertaken.

The consultations themselves were undertaken around two consultation designs that I and the Indigenous researchers initiated and developed (Appendix). The designs had much in common in terms of the information being sought. One design was specifically for Aboriginal communities and adopted a participatory research approach and the other
design was for local government where the key persons in local government at the various councils were identified and interviewed. The local government consultation was negotiated and brokered with the General Manager of the shire or municipality and in some situations also included the mayor and senior staff. The attendance at these consultations varied according to size of the local government, the availability and accessibility of elected representatives and local individual, political and social considerations. These consultations were more formal than the Indigenous community consultations and tended to follow the semi-structured assessment tool more precisely.

The objective was to enable the community and local government representatives the opportunity to comment on the current existing relationships and to express areas that they felt could be developed for the mutual benefit of both the Aboriginal community and local government. At the conclusion of the consultations (which were undertaken separately), there was no attempt made to negotiate or mediate the sometimes differing views of the Aboriginal community and local government over local issues. The areas for mediation and negotiation were delineated and a process for the future recommended.

Following the consultations, the research team advocated a ‘blueprint’ for the development of the local relationship between the local government and its Aboriginal community(s).

*Group Facilitation* and *Public Speaking* were part of the consultation phase. The Indigenous consultation varied in numbers as would be expected in the various communities. Of 250 possible people at Nanima (Wellington), in excess of 70 people attended the public meeting organised by the Nanima Aboriginal Council. At Cummeragunja the attendance at the public meeting was six. The public meetings were
supplemented by individual interviews conducted at appropriate places in order to ensure representation across a range of ages, interests, genders and commitment to the community. Community members were accessed through the Indigenous community organisations and a snowball sampling technique was used.

Educating both Indigenous people and local government was an important role. Some Indigenous communities in the research had little understanding of local government and its operations, while some local governments were well informed of the statistical features of their Indigenous communities but less well informed of the realities of everyday life in the Indigenous communities or of the aspirations of those communities. I saw these phenomena in terms of different ways of knowing and considered that part of the research outcomes was an educative role in ‘jumping together’ the different ways of knowing.

Researching was undertaken in the areas of rates, services, employment and Aboriginal peoples’ contribution to, and expenditure from, local government in light of the Grants Commission (1995/96) Annual Report (adjustment grants were not included) and the research consultation data. Conservative parameters were adopted. The analysis did not claim to be precise but rather to give an indication of directions and trends from the available data. Where appropriate, these approximations were extrapolated to give an indicator of total benefits possible over the Binaal Billa Regional Council area. It needed to be noted that councils are answerable only to their constituents and that funds from the Grants Commission were untied.

Researching involves analysis of data and texts which in turn leads, for the social worker, to advocacy and brokerage. The results of the analysis, as expected, indicated that the relationships with individual local Aboriginal communities and local
government varied along a continuum and each community had its unique features. At one end of the continuum were communities and local government where a consultative, co-operative and constructive relationship existed to the benefit of all local government constituents, including Indigenous people. At the opposite end of the continuum there was hostility, antagonism, lack of consultation and lack of constructive interaction between local government and Aboriginal communities.

Some local government bodies ignored the presence of Aboriginal communities within their boundaries citing as their rationale that no rates were charged and therefore no services were provided. These councils overlooked their responsibilities towards Aboriginal members of the public within their boundaries. The funding apportioned to the shire on a population and disadvantage basis by the New South Wales Local Government Grants Commission was not considered by these Shires. As they considered the analysis some shires recognised the error of thinking and the responsibility to all constituencies within the shire boundaries.

The researching led to advocacy. With notable exceptions, Aboriginal people were marginalised from many local government services. Local government bodies failed to negotiate (or negotiated in inappropriate ways). They had failed to develop means by which to include Aboriginal people as full participants in local government and, in some instances, failed to adequately discharge responsibilities in relation to employment obligations to Aboriginal people. Rates, land acquisition, heritage protection, services, housing and employment were the dominant concerns of the Aboriginal communities. There was willingness by Aboriginal people and of many within local government to acknowledge the need for improvements and to look constructively for ways and means to forge and further better relationships.
Within the ten communities researched, there was potential to develop relationships that would advance both Aboriginal people and whole local governments including closer consultation, an increase in the number of Aboriginal employees in local government, enhancing the representation of Aboriginal people elected to local government councils and commercial development in areas such as tourism, housing, environmental protection, small business development, heritage and cultural protection. For each of the ten local governments and communities, the research advocated a tentative plan and mechanisms for furthering appropriate mediations or negotiations.

The research noted funding displacement as an opportunity cost. In communities that were former Aboriginal reserves (Murrin Bridge, Cummergunja) much of the infrastructure (water, sewerage and roads) that would normally be provided by local government had been provided by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Commission (ATSIC). Funds that could have been usefully employed in the training and development of Aboriginal people or placed in business enterprises controlled by Aboriginal people had been used to provide basic services that could reasonably have been expected to be provided by local government. This was a result of legislation relating to land. This funding displacement meant that Aboriginal people continued to be disadvantaged in health, housing, economic independence and service provisions. Possible ways to address some of the structural disadvantages were suggested.

Empowering Indigenous people was a critical ‘doing’. The research identified the factors from the Australian and international literature (see Dolman 1997) for the purpose of achieving satisfactory agreements with varying levels of government as: willingness; bargaining power; unity; information and research; timing; communication; and geo-political realities (claimants are less likely to receive a favourable settlement when there are competing non-Indigenous developmental interests at stake). A subset of
other relevant factors included: experience in settlement development (the degree of existing poverty and despair among claimants and the urgency of development pressures will shape outcomes); knowledge of existing models (the demonstration effect of other local agreements can influence negotiating positions); and public attitudes (public support for claims either locally or nationally can lead to significant alliances).

This set of knowledge was developed into a checklist for negotiating with local governments with respect to a variety of local issues. Some local governments (for example, Dubbo City Council) had a consultation process and model in place to ensure that Aboriginal people were included in local government and had a say in important issues that affected them either specifically or the community more generally. Other local governments were marked by a lack of involvement with the Aboriginal community and in some instances a disregard for their involvement in, or contribution to, local government. In one community, Aboriginal consultation was said to occur on Indigenous matters, but the person who was consulted on all occasions was not accepted by the Indigenous community as being Aboriginal and certainly not as representing the community’s views. The community saw the person as enabling the local government to say they had consulted with the Indigenous community. Aboriginal communities and local government could, and were willing to, improve their relationship.

The research led to brokering and advocacy. Aboriginal people were under-represented as employees in local government in the areas reviewed by this research. The ‘Mainly Urban Report’ (1992, recommendation 30) recommended that local government employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in at least the same proportion as they occur in the workforce at the local government area. The research outcomes are at Table 8.1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Government Area</th>
<th>Total Pop (Grants Commission Figure)</th>
<th>Aboriginal Pop (% Grants Commission)</th>
<th>Shire Workforce as in Consultation</th>
<th>Aboriginal Employees as Stated in Consultation</th>
<th>% of Shire Workforce Aboriginal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balranald</td>
<td>2,950</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coonabarabran</td>
<td>7,270</td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobar</td>
<td>5,240</td>
<td>7.14</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Murrin Bridge)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*NB Nil from Murrin Bridge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubbo</td>
<td>36,430</td>
<td>5.64 (NB council est 10%)</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffith</td>
<td>21,860</td>
<td>2.61% (council est 7%)</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>3 or 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lachlan (Condobolin Willow Bond)</td>
<td>7,720</td>
<td>8.26</td>
<td>180 (include retirement village 85)</td>
<td>2 (include 1 at retirement village) nil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray Cummeragunja</td>
<td>5,290</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td></td>
<td>nil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murrumbidgee (Darlington Pt)</td>
<td>2,450</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2 (Abor commun) 5 (council) 12</td>
<td>1.1% up to 12 additional jobs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagga Wagga</td>
<td>57,310</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>5 (all labouring)</td>
<td>2.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellington* (Nanima)</td>
<td>9,520</td>
<td>8.17</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>5 (all labouring)</td>
<td>4.16% additional 5 jobs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

The research findings were calculated using very conservative cost/benefit parameters ($30,000/job/year). On this analysis, there would be an additional twenty-five to thirty-one positions available to Aboriginal people in the ten councils reviewed—representing an income shift to Aboriginal people from $750,000 to $930,000 per annum. Quite apart from the monetary implications, the advantages are the training, experience, education, pro-social modelling and development that can be accessed by Aboriginal people through local government. These are typically not valued in standard cost-benefit analysis. These are the ‘hidden benefits’ that neither a surrogate market technique nor a productivity technique or contingent valuation technique can reliably calculate.

There was a clear need for Aboriginal people to occupy management, technical and professional positions in local government. The research noted that where Aboriginal...
people were employed by local government, they tended to be in labouring and/or lower paid and lower skilled employment. The consultations also revealed that in some locations the Aboriginal community did not apply for local government positions as they perceived (whether correctly or incorrectly) that their opportunity to obtain employment in local government was negligible. The view was expressed by some Aboriginal people that local government was prepared to employ Aboriginal people on short-term programs funded by other sources but would not employ Aboriginal people as part of their full-time workforce. Some comments by local government authorities tended to confirm the views held by the Aboriginal community.

Acting on this research, the Binaal Billa Regional Council for eight years engaged local government in a voluntary Equal Employment Opportunity Monitor (developed by me as part of this project), so that the employment of Aboriginal people in local government was monitored on an annual basis. The intent was to develop an awareness in local government (in Freirian terms ‘conscientisation’) and assist in obtaining and retaining Aboriginal employment in local government. Significant improvement in levels of Indigenous employment in local government had occurred and the process was controlled within the ATSIC Regional Council. A specific outcome of this research, in relation to employment, was the employment of an Indigenous consultant to develop Indigenous employment in the REROC (Riverina East Regional Organisation of Councils—an amalgam of thirteen councils) area.

Recognition was important to Indigenous communities. As a result the research noted the City of Greater Lithgow and its commitment to Indigenous Australians. It ‘acknowledges and grieves for the loss by Indigenous people of their land, their children, their health and their lives’ and the Council ‘supports Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working together for a treaty or other instrument of reconciliation’
and ‘recognises the valuable contribution…made by indigenous people and look forward to a future of mutual respect and harmony’.

In the ten communities visited, no such commitment existed. Empowered by this knowledge from the research, eight years later this symbolic but important recognition has been implemented in at least six local governments of the Binaal Billa Region and variations of the commitment in two other local governments.

Advocacy and negotiation were particularly relevant to the area of rates and housing. Some anomalies that disempowered Aboriginal organisations were noted. Firstly, where an Aboriginal Lands Council made a claim on unclaimed Crown Land, some local government authorities began charging rates (both land and service rates) from the day on which the property passed to the possession of the local Aboriginal Lands Council. No rates are paid on the unclaimed Crown Land while it remains the property of the Crown, but as soon as ownership is established by the local Aboriginal Lands Council, rates were charged despite there being no development and few (if any) services to that land. Local Aboriginal Lands Councils had a financial disincentive to claim former Crown Land as the land became immediately rated. This led to one Lands Council being in receivership with the primary creditor being the local government who had not collected rates on twenty-four unserviced, undeveloped, former Crown Lands blocks which had been claimed for their heritage value.

Secondly, the majority of Indigenous housing was owned, maintained and/or managed by either Aboriginal Housing Corporations, or the Local Aboriginal Land Council. The majority of the Aboriginal people in the housing were in some way or other dependent upon Commonwealth Income Support benefits and were on low incomes. However, in the general community where housing is owned by an eligible
pensioner the rates are generally charged at half the land rates (by the local government), the state government pays one quarter of the land rates and the other quarter is effectively subsidised by local government. However, where a house is owned by an Aboriginal Housing Corporation or a local Aboriginal Lands Council and is rented by an eligible pensioner, in general, full rates were charged to the Aboriginal Housing Corporation or the Local Aboriginal Lands Council by the local government. The tenant may be an eligible pensioner but this anomaly means that to a significant extent the Aboriginal Housing Corporation or the local Aboriginal Lands Council is subsidising the pensioner in their housing rather than the subsidy being from the state government and local Government. Where a local Aboriginal Land Council could not (or would not) pay the rates to local government, at the expiry of twelve months, the local government could claim the arrears from the State Aboriginal Lands Council who reduced the allocation to the Local Aboriginal Land Council by the amount of the arrears (and the local government claimed amount).

Supreme Court cases involving the Nungara Co-Operative Society Ltd and the Maclean Shire Council (1991) and the Toomelah Co-operative Ltd and the Moree Plains Shire Council (1996) suggested that Co-operative Societies may be considered as public benevolent institutions and could be exempt from rate payments. These legal precedents were largely unknown to Aboriginal communities and provided a powerful bargaining point for Aboriginal communities with local government.

In one consultation, the General Manager acknowledged that he knew of these two legal cases but that the council had not applied the effects of those decisions ‘as we have not been asked to by the Aboriginal community’. Advocacy led to that situation being rectified at a cost saving to the Indigenous community of $80,000.
A further specific outcome of this pilot project was that the Binaal Billa Regional Council sponsored a legal project (undertaken by the lawyer on this research) that drafted a set of model rules that would enable Aboriginal Housing Organisations and other Indigenous organisations to have objectives that complied with the terms and conditions required to satisfy the requirements for the *Charitable and Benevolence Organisations Act*.

Thirdly, the situation on former Aboriginal Reserves varied. In some instances, local government indicated that as Aboriginal Reserves pay no land rates or are rated as one property, no services are provided, or charges are made to that community as if that community was a private individual landholder. The significance of this is that (in some instances) local government perceives its responsibility to cease at the gates of the former Aboriginal Reserve and that the provision of infrastructure and/or services is the responsibility of other organisations (principally ATSIC).

The concepts involved in council rating were difficult to explain to Indigenous communities. Consistent with the concept of moving from the verbal to the visual, a picture representation was undertaken.

Fourthly, rate revenue was a significant, but not exclusive, part of most local governments’ budgets. Local government budgets in rural inland NSW involved a local government equalisation component whereby funds are distributed on the basis of ‘horizontal equalisation’ (based largely on population numbers and road lengths) to ensure that there is recognition of the differential capabilities of local governments in raising revenue and the cost differentials in the delivery of services including to the needy and socially disadvantaged. Thus it can be argued that councils were receiving a revenue stream via the Grants Commission for Aboriginal people who live within their
boundaries and that the ‘no rates, no services’ approach negated recognition of this income stream. In one former Aboriginal reserve using the most conservative of parameters, the existence of that reserve in the local government added approximately $110,000 in funding via the Commonwealth Grants Commission. It is certainly the case that roads, noxious weeds services, library services and other services were available to the Aboriginal communities and that they shared in the general benefits of the shire, but it was nevertheless an important recognition of Aboriginal people’s financial contribution to shire budgets simply by virtue of living within the boundaries of the shire.

The ‘doing’ as a social work researcher (as distinct from other disciplines involved in research) is not concerned only with findings but has an emancipatory agenda that involves advocacy and empowerment. In this research, I was concerned with finding out the nature of the relationship and the dynamics of that relationship, but I was additionally concerned to ensure that the relationship developed. The road would be made by the local government and Indigenous communities walking together towards a shared future where the diverse contributions were valued. The research title that we developed was ‘Talking Together, Agreeing Together, Achieving Together’—and reflected a recognition of the importance of dialogue, agreement and achievement. ‘Doing’ was integral to the research.

WHAT WAS THE BEING AS A SOCIAL WORK RESEARCHER WITH RESPECT TO ‘PEOPLE’?

This research was challenging with respect to being. The initial thinking had been done by the ATSIC Regional Council and the Steering Committee and represented the source of the research as being in the heart and mind of the committee (Weber–Pillwax 2001). Practical commonsense (prudence) and temperance were required at all times. As an
example, at a large community meeting at Dubbo, a serious, loud, disruptive verbal altercation occurred between a younger man and a respected male elder. In the public setting, my immediate thoughts were that I ought to have intervened and adopted a peace-making or mediating role. However, this would have reinforced the idea of the ‘white man’ solving the altercation by intervention. I seemed to be the person most concerned by the altercation and others appeared to be interested observers and, at times, noisy supporters. The public meeting seemed to be in danger of degenerating into an ugly and unproductive verbal fight. I was torn between intervening and imposing control and allowing the matter to resolve itself. I decided not to intervene as my experience with Indigenous communities had suggested that there is often posturing and loud altercations that end in their own resolution. I was enormously helped by an Indigenous sessional worker who urged me to let it run. At the conclusion of what I perceived to be the worst of the ten consultations with Indigenous communities, two senior Indigenous women who had not contributed at all to the consultations approached me to indicate that the directions that had been suggested were the correct ones and that they would see that they were completed. My Indigenous staff member indicated that these women were the real power and authority in the community and that it had been a most successful consultation.

My being was also challenged around the virtue of hope. In some communities, the level of poverty and dysfunction was acute and an atmosphere of hopelessness prevailed. It was challenging to provide realistic, hopeful future options that were not simply the dreams of a ‘white man’ who did not live in the community. I used an approach that identified one easily obtained goal that could stand as a symbol for the community while they considered longer-term and more difficult objectives. For example, in one community, the symbol of good faith from local government was the return of the mission bell which had been removed because its superstructure threatened
to collapse. The community saw this as a real outcome and a symbol of hope and change for the future. This, however, highlights the conflict for the social work researcher who is involved in advocacy and negotiation while undertaking research. There is a limited sense of remaining apart from the subject matter as may be considered essential in a strictly positivist approach. The social worker researcher is involved in action and in that regard undertakes research that is different from many other forms of research in other disciplines. The social worker researcher, at the core of his/her being, desires to know and understand and critically reflect and then wants to change unjust situations. However, the challenge for me was that the symbol (in this case the bell) might create hope for the future but is really insufficient when compared to the overall needs of the community. In the face of gross neglect and poverty, if the symbol is all that occurs—the symbol itself becomes part of the process of maintaining injustices and the prevailing hegemony.

I was challenged around my construction of race and ethnicity. Prior to this research, I had accepted views of race without critically considering the origin of racial and ethnic paradigms and indeed their capacity for replicating and maintaining existing hegemonies and inequalities. I was profoundly challenged at the level of guilt. As I considered the reality of the removal of land and of children and the levels of institutionalised racism (for example the rating system), I began to appreciate that I had been (through ignorance) complicit in this injustice and a beneficiary of it. I began to understand the issues of land and compensation as issues of human rights and justice rather than political or social problems. I began to question the notion of race and its underpinnings in the biological sciences and its outworking in the social sciences. The eighteenth and nineteenth century scientific notions of race that were built on biological or organic characteristics (for example, skin colour, facial features, origins) had led to unjust social, economic and political structures. I began to re-evaluate the way
knowledge from one area (for example, the biological sciences) was used in another area (for example, social sciences) and I began to re-question concepts such as 'social evolution'. I wanted to abandon any notion of race and consider all people as part of the human race. However, the corollary of that view would be to weaken the place of Indigenous people in Australia as they would lose their communal and national identity. As I began to re-evaluate the premises on which race and ethnicity are based, I recognised that to abandon the concept of race/ethnicity entirely would have significant impacts at a personal (sense of significance and identity) and political (sense of solidarity) level. To endorse its current premises has other consequences including perpetuating and entrenching stereotyping and discrimination. A number of Indigenous people considered themselves as bi-cultural (that is Indigenous people as one group and all immigrants as the other group), some Indigenous people considered themselves as part of multicultural Australia with Indigenous people being part of the rich tapestry of diversity that is Australia. Consilience allowed me to accept both positions as being a valid reflection of the being of different Indigenous people without needing to resolve who (if either) was correct.

This challenge to being was also within the Indigenous staff employed as co-researchers. One staff member in very good standing with the Indigenous community had only ‘discovered’ her Indigenous background within the last five years having had an Aboriginal father and a white mother. Hers was a journey of discovery of which this research project was a further part. Like me, she struggled with the sense of guilt (about her more privileged upbringing as a white family in a white community) but also with the sense of having abandoned and denied (at least part of) her birth identity. She wondered about the differences that may have been if she had been identified with the Indigenous community during her childhood. For another of the Indigenous co-researchers, the issue of his being was firmly within the Indigenous community and he...
struggled with the changing nature of that identity and in particular the concept of being listened to and being a co-contributor to the research rather than an ‘assistant’. He began to understand that his life experiences had conditioned him to accepting himself as lesser and with lesser aims and goals. His challenge to being in this context was to consider his Indigenous knowledge as being at least as important to the research process as the ability to do library searches, design questionnaires, read statistical data and so on that are part of Western research design skills.

A challenge to my being was to constantly attempt to ensure that the foundation of the research lay in the lived Indigenous experience that is grounded in real people and real situations as social beings rather than in the world of ideas. This was not the same priority for the local government councils who were familiar with the world of ideas and to applying Western research methods and approaches. This was most challengingly brought out when the research project attempted to develop a ‘negotiating/mediating package’ for local government and Indigenous communities. It was quite simple to develop a package that would show the principles and methods used by councils negotiating with local interest groups (that is the principles of how white people negotiate with Indigenous people) but the project researchers did not have the skills and ability to develop a similar program that showed how Indigenous people negotiated with Western or white councils. Issues of power and authority, timing and decision-making within the Indigenous community and how these were represented to those outside the community were different. Assumptions such as all forms of living things are to be respected as being related and interconnected are supported by Indigenous forms of epistemology (see Weber–Pillwax 2001: 49–50) were not necessarily assumptions shared by councils.

My being was challenged when I considered the extent to which the language and
culture of Indigenous people are living processes. In some communities, the local language has been eradicated entirely since the invasion/settlement of the area. Many Indigenous people expressed their concern that their culture was being lost either through active suppression or through the influence of the dominant culture ‘swamping’ the Indigenous culture. While I recognise that cultures and language change and that change is inevitable and much change is positive, nevertheless it is profoundly challenging to witness the diversity of language and culture being lost. It seemed to me that a reduction of the human language, culture and biodiversity was occurring and being replaced by a blended monoculture rather than a rich diversity of cultures and languages.

The challenge to being involved valuing all the different sets of skills and different contributions arising from the different sources of knowledge. A strictly positivist design would be simple and may have greater reliability and validity but would reduce the type and quality of information and the range of people that could benefit from the research.

A full range of mental/emotional and spiritual/existential factors were observed at the Indigenous community consultations. In some places there was despair and hopelessness that manifested itself in depression and suicidal ideation. To questions such as ‘tell me what it is like living in…?’ and ‘what could make things different?’ there were very different answers that indicated mental/emotional and spiritual/existential elements. The sense of identity was bound to ‘country’. One person said ‘we are the river people—but we see the river dry up through irrigation—and we die with it’. Another commented on how their land was being starved of water and the trees were dying which had Indigenous specific meaning. Others remarked on the forced removal from former reserves which had no services provided to them. They
recalled how these reserves had been their home and the sadness at seeing them in such states of disrepair. One group expressed dismay that the ‘mission’ hospital and the ‘mission’ school bell had been removed by local government without any consultation. These were symbols of stability and the Indigenous community wanted them back.

I came away from some of the Indigenous consultations profoundly moved and uplifted by the fortitude and prudence and especially the charity, faith and hope that I saw—occasionally in tears. From some of the local government consultations, I saw the virtues identified by Lewis in the representatives who were seeking just and positive ways to redress what they saw as poverty and dispossession within the constraints that they had. Others, it seemed to me, lacked any hope and some lacked charity.

Constant self-reflection and self-monitoring, as well as monitoring of the team members, was required. The issue of being (self) was inseparable from the research focus. Subsequent to the project, the Steering Committee member confided that his selection from the tenderers was based less on research skills and research methodologies and more on ‘someone that could know our heart’. I took this to mean ‘being’.

WHAT WERE THE REFLECTIONS ON AND DYNAMICS OF CONSILIENCE OF THINKING AND DOING AND BEING?

I undertake research that I want to do and have practical outcomes for which I have and/or can acquire the skills to ensure the best outcome for the participants. In approaching a research project, I use the practice model that considers thinking and doing and being, the participants (including myself), the environmental scan, the project objective, the process and labour and the evaluation which must include (for me) practical outcomes. In considering this research project, I had deficiencies in the area of
knowing the legal structures related to ratings and local government. I needed to put together a team that had that specific knowledge. I also recognised that I would need well-respected Indigenous co-researchers to provide the entry into communities and to ensure that the research (and myself) was not ‘colonising’. I recognised that the Indigenous researchers would also be helpful with some of the local government consultations as they would pro-socially model intelligent, capable and committed Indigenous people to councils who may not have shared that perspective.

In this research, thinking, doing and being were ‘jumped together’. Knowledge was drawn from:

- Law (the legal person on the team and the legal search);
- Social sciences (myself, Indigenous researchers);
- Local history (Indigenous researchers and Advisory Committee);
- Race and ethnicity studies (myself and the lived experience of many participants);
- Community and social development (myself and the Advisory Committee; governance and administration (my own studies, experience and that of local government);
- Management (my studies in Public Administration, local government, Advisory Council);
- Theories of empowerment (myself, local ethno-biographies, Indigenous researchers, Advisory Council, participants);
- Statistics (myself using Australian Bureau of Statistics); and
- Community profiles (Advisory Council), the lived experience of participants and the co-researchers.
In this research, thinking and doing and being were inseparable at all times. It was not possible to do without thinking, or to think without being moved to action. Fundamental to both was the sense of being that looked forward with a degree of hopefulness.

This research consulted with and heard the ‘voices’ of communities and local governments to shape and change the physical/organic, mental/emotional, social/relational and spiritual/existential conditions they shared. Across the ten communities more than 300 Indigenous people were contacted as well as elected and managerial members of council. While the primary role of the pilot research may have had a system linkage focus, advocacy for disadvantaged communities was an outcome. Structural inequalities were highlighted and social policies, as they impacted at a local level, were analysed and challenged and alternative approaches proposed and (in some situations) adopted. Each of the ten communities received an individual guideline for constructively engaging with their local government. The analysis exposed oppressive myths (for example, ‘no rates, no services’). Multiple methods (focus groups, transect walks, interviews, official data, budgets, employment statistics, a legal literature search and so on) were used across a range of dimensions (housing, rates, employment, relationship and so on). Practical outcomes occurred that have benefited Indigenous people and their wider community.

The purpose of the research was not to find one unifying approach but rather to recognise the substantial differences between the sites and to develop localised responses. The differences promoted thinking about the causes and implications of those differences and were evidence of diversity rather than an incentive to find a unifying and/or underlying principle.

The research had regard to the participants; required a thorough environmental scan;
suggested objectives; enacted processes and labour; and was evaluative.

The research also evidenced the social work commitment to praxis. Research was not enough—it needed to lead to sustained outcomes. The research involved seeking the ‘aha’ experience of the participants, giving voice to all sections of the community, beginning the process of ‘conscientisation’ and inviting solution-focussed rather than problem-saturated approaches. Very basic quantitative methods were used including cost-benefit analysis with very conservative parameters. Critically, ‘break-out statistics’ were used to ensure that arguments were soundly based and to dispel myths and fallacious arguments (for example, ‘no rates, no services’). These multi-dimensional approaches were consilenced. The thinking about the communities and their relationship with the local government led to doing and was fundamentally prefaced on the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities’ being. Consilience offers the opportunity to hold all these ‘facts’ in tension at the local level.

A financial analysis illustrates the importance of consilience of thinking and doing and the importance of ‘jumping together’ different knowledges (in this case—local knowledge of population, financial knowledge and knowledge on the operation of grants). The population of the Cummeragunja Aboriginal community was approximately 150 people. While the Shire declared that it provided limited services to the community (because it pays no rates), the Shire did receive (1995/96) the following funding detailed at Table 8.2:
Table 8.2 Cummeragunja Community Funding from Grants Commission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Funding</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grants Commission equalisation funding</td>
<td>$808,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants Commission local roads funding</td>
<td>$673,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$1,481,358</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

The equalisation funding grants had two components (General Administration and General Community Services) which were based on population. Each component had an additional heavy positive weighting for Indigenous people that increased the grants. The road funding grant was based primarily on road length but also had a population component. The population of the Shire was 5,180 people according to Grants Commission documentation. Making no allowance for other factors and not including the positive weighting for Indigenous people, the Grants Commission funding was equivalent to $285.97/head of population. Given the population of the Aboriginal community, the Grants Commission funding was conservatively $42,896 for Cummeragunja.

Similarly, the Cobar Shire and its community at Murrin Bridge community showed the following at Table 8.3 and 8.4:

Table 8.3 Cobar Community Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shire Population</th>
<th>5,210</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW Local Government Equalisation Grant</td>
<td>$1,454,884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Local Government Local Roads</td>
<td>$831,496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$2,286,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants/head/population</td>
<td>$438.84/head</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author
Table 8.4  Murrin Bridge Community Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population—Murrin Bridge</th>
<th>250</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Murrin Bridge Grants/head x population</td>
<td>$109,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shire expenditure/head at Murrin Bridge</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

The consilience of the financial cost-benefit and qualitative approaches is important. The actuarial analysis provided some insight and was supported by the consultations where clear statements as to levels of service were made. Equally important, however, was the advocacy and negotiations that could result in change and action. Knowledge without action was sterile. Both approaches (positivist and interpretist) are required and are complementary—not in the sense of making a singular approach (as in Wilson’s 1998 reductionist view of consilience)—but in the sense of providing different types of knowledge that can be thoughtfully acted upon.

Consiliencing local and legal knowledge was another example. At Coonabarabran Shire, the local Indigenous Housing Corporation owed $161,000 in outstanding rates to the Shire. Local relationships between the Shire and the Indigenous community were not rated well during consultations and the primary issue was the unpaid rates. The Shire was aware of the legal cases (Nungera and so on) and would seriously consider any application for rate relief. But the Indigenous community was not aware that they could apply for rate relief and did not have the skills to bring such an application. The potential for a local agreement to reduce this debt existed. Alternatively, an application to be considered as a benevolent or charitable organisation would significantly reduce the rates payable.

Consilience of thinking, doing and being as a social work researcher can pose some considerable challenges. I have already indicated the concern regarding the role of the researcher and the ideology of social work with a focus upon praxis. For example, the
ethics application required by the University imposed a set of research restrictions that make pursuing important, community-initiated and tangential avenues of enquiry more difficult. In one consultation, the issues that the community wanted to develop were well beyond the authorisation of the ethics application but were the dominant concern of the community. It highlighted the clash between research ‘owned’ by institutions and researched ‘owned’ by communities. It was important and uncomfortable and I kept evaluating whether I was making prudent and temperant decisions. I do not know if I acted correctly. ‘Pure’ research of a positivist nature seems to have a greater certainty as to process and to predictability. Research for social workers is far more inductive and less certain as to either the pathway or the outcome. I was acutely aware that this research had a political component to it and that I may not have understood the particularities of the politics.

I was troubled by some of the tangents that the research pursued. In developing the proposal, I had to cost certain items (for example, four days for a legal library search in a capital city) but other critical issues developed during the consultations that required attention, thought, action and the application of virtues. For example, the research itself significantly impacted upon one of the co-researchers and this required both lengthy personal support from myself and professional referral.

I was pleased at uncovering some of the myths that are perpetuated at a local level in both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community (for example, ‘no rates, no services’, ‘local government does not want us to work for them’). I remained troubled as to what myths I was still subject to, and whether I had myths that I was acting upon. This raised the issue of what constituted knowledge and how could I tell facts from fiction. Here again, consilience is helpful. By appropriating ‘facts’ from a range of perspectives, there is increased likelihood of uncovering myths. For example, I had the
evidence from the literature that a good outcome in developing local agreements is based on unity within the community. I was speaking with my Indigenous research colleague on a long drive and expressing that the local government was exploiting disunity in the Indigenous community as an excuse for not consulting Indigenous people. I remarked that Indigenous people had to unite at the local level in order to get good outcomes. Adroitly, he reminded me that local government was skilled at negotiation, mediation and managing conflicts (between developers and conservationists, various groups of ratepayers, pro- and anti-brothels and so on) and he wondered why they were so unskilled in dealing with Indigenous disunity. His gentle correction evidenced that knowledge from the literature (about local agreements) was only one way of knowing and that lived experience was equally important.

CONCLUSION
This research involved multiple research methods; qualitative (interpretivist) and quantitative (empirical) approaches; inductive and deductive approaches; understandings and knowledge drawn from diverse theoretical positions; multiple sites; diverse communities; unique local social, political, economic histories; Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants; diverse disciplinary backgrounds (legal and social); and different world views.

The social work researcher appropriating the IFSW purpose of social work (social justice, enhancement of quality of life and development of full potential) in his/her research methods and methodology (see distinction made in Chapter 4) and operating on the PEOPLE model can be an agent of empowerment and liberation.

By thinking, doing and being, social work research, with its multiple roles, with the use of multiple methods, operating from multiple theory bases, appreciating reality,
politics and diversity, may, through consilience, make a real difference. This research evidenced that a consilient approach that values knowledge from many sources sets up conversations (dialogues) between different people and different forms of knowledge. The different knowledges may support and/or critique each other. Consilience allows for the different knowledges to be understood, shared and acted upon. While there may not be one ‘aha’ experience that makes sense of the complexity, a consilient approach to social work research invites participation, recognises different contributions and avoids a hierarchy of knowledge and power based on a preferred form of knowledge. Consilience and the reflective analytic framework recognises the complexity of social research and the dynamic interaction of thinking, doing and being by the participants (including the researcher) within the complex environment.
CHAPTER 9

THINKING, DOING AND BEING AS A SOCIAL WORK ADMINISTRATOR/MANAGER/LEADER

A manager is responsible for the application and performance of knowledge.
— Peter Drucker

Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.
— Peter Drucker

The aim of this chapter is to apply consilience of thinking, doing and being to social work administration, management and leadership. For the purposes of this chapter and as reflected in actual practice, I use the terms administrator/manager/leader to denote a complex function that is required in practice. Theoretical distinctions have been made between these roles (see Wood et al., 2006: 384; Keeling 1972; Zastrow 2003: 21; Drucker, 1981). Keeling (1972) for example, contrasts administration and management in key areas arguing that administration and management lie at opposite ends of a spectrum.

Later substantial works (see Wood et al., 2006:384) do not mention administration at all and make the simple distinction that management is doing things right while leadership is doing the right things. In practice, social work administrators/
managers/leaders perform a range of functions that require the skills of an administrator (in Keeling’s terms) and a manager and leader (as discussed by Wood et al., 2006). Cloused et al., 2006: 8) in writing specifically about management in social work uses the three terms interchangeably while recognising that others will make distinctions and use language differently. This chapter particularly looks at how a social worker as an administrator/manager/leader defined and worked with participants; scanned the environment of an organisation; worked with and modified set objectives; initiated and enacted work process through people and systems; and evaluated outcomes. It will also reflect on core value dilemmas and practical decisions under bureaucratic and socio-legal pressures. To demonstrate the application of the PEOPLE model, I have chosen the Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) program and staffing aspects of the Department of Community Services (DoCS) organisation for which I worked.

READING OF MY PRACTICE EXPERIENCE
I have had three years previous senior management experience in a government department and twenty years as a public servant; formal qualifications at the postgraduate level in public management; over twenty years experience as a social worker; and previous responsibility for 200 volunteers (as the Chairman of North-West Scripture Union). I have used notes, diaries, reports, public documents, procedures, conversations, interviews, meetings, journal notes and program evaluations in this reflective process. Reflecting on the range of these experiences, the analysis for this chapter will particularly focus on my professional social worker administrative and managerial leadership experiences in the DoCS.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ORGANISATION AND MY RESPONSIBILITIES
The NSW Department of Community Services is a NSW State Government Department
whose responsibilities include:

- the prevention of child abuse and early intervention for families;
- child protection and Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) of children who have been removed from their parent/caregivers;
- welfare and disaster relief; and
- building community and social capacity as both a funder of services and also a provider of direct services.

It is a very large complex, multi-programmed bureaucratic organisation that operates within statutory and fiscal requirements and a highly turbulent and politicised environment.

**WHAT WAS THE THINKING AS AN ADMINISTRATOR/MANAGER/LEADER WITH RESPECT TO PEOPLE?**

When appointed to the position, my thinking consciously and explicitly used the PEOPLE Model. I applied 'process' thinking (critical thinking/critical reflection/systemic/logical thinking and lateral/creative thinking) and considered the content (existing knowledge, existing theory, existing understandings and frameworks including personal and professional knowledge) and contextual issues (related to both general matters of paradigms, rules, legislation and specific matters related to the many communities and individuals for whom I had some responsibility).

The social work administrator/manager/leader's work includes setting agency objectives; analysing social conditions in the community; making decisions about services to be provided; establishing organisational structures; administering finances; securing funds; monitoring processes; recruiting and supervising staff; and transforming
social policy. In the context of a government department there are pressures to be an administrator and a manager (in Keeling’s 1972 terms) requiring literacy and numeracy skills; avoiding embarrassing mistakes while seeking success; being both arbitrator and protagonist in different circumstances; both conforming and experimenting simultaneously; using legal and quasi-legal skills while considering economic and socio-economic factors; working with hierarchical delegations while wanting to develop maximum commitment and delegation; and having roles that are defined by both responsibility and tasks. Drucker (1981) described management as ‘getting things done through people’. For me, this definition encapsulates the three major influences and schools of thought on management:

- The human resource focus of management (emphasis on people);
- The objectives based school of management (things); and
- The process oriented philosophy of management (getting things done).

Hepworth, Rooney & Larsen (2002) say the social worker who is a manager of services has a wide and disparate role that requires multiple focuses and multiple roles including the roles of system developer, researcher and systems maintenance role.

While social workers significantly contribute to the welfare and wellbeing of people, their contribution to administration and management of organisations is limited, both in terms of training and practice (see Bilson & Ross 1999, McKay 2002 and Clarke & Newman 1997 regarding the reaction to the domination of managerialism). I had been fortunate to pursue a course of study in public management (but notably not social work management) that had exposed me to the classical theories of management including Fayol and the critique by Drucker (1977), the scientific management of Taylor (1911), concepts espoused by Weber (1947), human relation theories including
Follett (see Zander & Zander 2000), McGregor (1960), Likert (1961) and to concepts of transformational and transactional leadership (Bass 1998). Social work manager/leaders often work in bureaucracies (Watson 1980; Garston 1993). Managers/leaders operate in differing contexts, with differing frameworks and differing styles including autocratic, democratic, laissez faire styles and others (Hershey & Blanchard 1988; Blake & Mouton 1964). Administrator/manager/leaders operate in an environment that requires financial skills and abilities with differing budget and accounting systems (accrual accounting, NSW Treasurer regulations). Financial and legal requirements and procedural matters have turned some manager/leaders from helpers of front-line workers to inhibitors and inspectors of front-line workers. The differences between administration and management have been articulated (for example, Keeling 1972) and have profound practical implications beyond the scope of this thesis example. Drawing on Keeling’s (1972) analysis, I have summarised the distinction between administration and management, and social work in the following table. Keeping these distinctions and related tensions, as a social work administrator/manager/leader, I have tried to act consiliently. This approach provided a ‘working document’ and ‘blueprint’ that was reflected upon in the light of the PEOPLE model in the real situations faced within DoCS. The comparison between administration, management and leadership are summarised in Table 9.1
### Table 9.1 Comparing Administration and Management to the Social Work Leader

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Administration</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Social Work Leader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objectives</strong></td>
<td>Infrequently reviewed and changed; Parliamentary legislative goals</td>
<td>Detailed short-term goals and targets—reviewed frequently</td>
<td>In consultation with participants and mindful of the environment, frequently reviewed and changed to meet participant expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Success Criteria</strong></td>
<td>Mistake avoidance</td>
<td>Success seeking</td>
<td>Creatively, enabling and empowerment of participants to learn by successes and mistakes (doing) while ensuring systemic expectations are met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resource Use</strong></td>
<td>Secondary task To be used within Parliamentary and Treasury Guidelines</td>
<td>Primary task</td>
<td>Focus on the use of, and linkage to, existing resources and the generation and creation of new resources for empowering the participant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
<td>Role defined by responsibility; limited delegation as defined by Treasury regulation and legislation; hierarchic structure</td>
<td>Roles defined by task; maximum delegation;</td>
<td>Egalitarian, anti-hierarchical and participatory structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Roles</strong></td>
<td>Arbitrator</td>
<td>Protagonist</td>
<td>Catalyst and social change agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes</strong></td>
<td>Passive; time insensitive; risk avoiding; procedural; conformity to standards</td>
<td>Active; seeks opportunities; exploits opportunities; results oriented; experimental.</td>
<td>Human rights and social justice focus; empowering; proper process oriented and Anti-Oppressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills</strong></td>
<td>Legal or quasi-legal; Literacy</td>
<td>Economic or socio-economic; numeracy</td>
<td>Enabling and empowering skills; literacy and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Current social work administrator/manager/leaders operate in an environment of managerialism and neo-liberalism. Many have critiqued managerialism and structural issues (for example, Ife 1995; 1997; Cloushed et al., 2006). Similarly, leadership can be constructed in different ways (Bass 1985; Bass 1990; Feilder 1967; House 1977; Cloushed et al., 2006). Partly through my commitment to consilience and the emphasis on human beings, my preference has been to use situational leadership (Hershey & Blanchard 1988) as it encompasses a focus on both the leader and the follower. It recognises that the leader may have power and authority related to position or finance, but it can also be related to charisma, expert knowledge, academic achievement or acceptance. I take the view that power and authority (like structure) is a neutral concept—it is neither good nor bad—but can be used in order to create humanising organisations and maximise individual opportunity. Mullaley (1997) provides approaches to fighting structures by being part of them. For me, the social work leader has values that are consistent with the goals and purposes of social work. There are conflicts and tensions in practice between administration, management, leadership and social work (for example, the value of social justice may be in conflict with a Treasury goal of efficiency, or the needs and program needs at the individual level may be at odds with the corporate goal of uniformity and consistency of service) but they are conflicts and tensions that provide opportunity for humanising organisations and maximising individual opportunity. Consilience allows for the consideration of multiple goals arising from many sources rather than the narrow consideration of one goal arising from one source.
The Participants

According to the position description my co-participants included children at risk of harm, children in OOHC, families (both birth families and foster care families), communities (ranging from urbo-rural through rural to remote), staff, interagency relationships (both government and non-government), the agency (the Department) and the government. Some of the participants were clearly defined and known (individual children in care, current service providers) while others were more abstract (for example, potential employees, service providers and carers). I constructed an ecomap for each of the participants with my understanding of their expectations of me and of the Department. Having thought clearly about each, I met with various representatives at different times to confirm or challenge that initial thinking.

For my own part, I recognised that I had formal responsibilities as indicated in the job description. However, I also recognised that I would be bringing together three areas with three different cultures into one area with statewide objectives. I had a depleted workforce that had been leaderless for some time. In some parts of the region there had been a culture of intimidating or autocratic leadership and some evidence of vicarious trauma of staff and clients occasioned by administrative decisions. I was determined to pro-socially model inclusive and human-centred leadership. As I considered the size of the region, I intended to follow a transformational rather than transactional style of leadership (Bass 1990; Bass & Steidlmeir 1998; see also literature on geographically dispersed teams such as Duarte 2006).

I had serious concerns about my capacity to undertake the position. I considered that I had the virtues (see Chapter 2) required for the position but recognised that I would need to self-monitor particularly with respect to fortitude and hope. I had deficiencies in not having had ‘hands-on’ experience in child protection and child welfare; no recent
experience of industrial or administrative law; no established reputation in the Central West or Orana-Far West; and few established networks of power and influence within the Department. I recognised that I aimed to build a cohesive team that saw clients and service providers of the Department as co-participants and partners rather than adversaries and opponents and that this was contrary to existing practice.

The Environmental Scan

On my first day I undertook an environmental scan informed by a range of written material and access to some key informants. While the environmental scan covered a very wide range of issues including finances, inter-governmental relationships, restructuring/systemic developments, my reflective analysis here is limited to two issues—staffing and OOHC. Of the 100 caseworker positions (providing front-line child protection services), fifteen positions were unfilled, fifteen positions were filled by untrained temporary staff without the required minimum qualifications, four were on return-to-work programs following serious injury or distress and five were stood down or suspended on pay pending resolution of allegations.

On analysis, there were (as at 11/12/00) 1,045 children in the Western Region in OOHC having been removed from their caregiver or birth parents. Of these, 49.7% were Indigenous, which far exceeded the expected rate based on population statistics. There were significant variations. At a small office the figures were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Number of Children</th>
<th>Number in OOHC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Indigenous</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The environmental scan lead to further thinking about the differential rates of children in OOHC. The environmental scan showed that two adjacent communities with almost equal population size, similar age and ethnicity components, similar employment
profiles and similar other characteristics (based on ABS analysis and a standard community profile), had very different outcomes with respect to children in OOHC. The slightly larger community had twenty-one children in OOHC while the smaller community had 58 children in OOHC. Two other areas also had very different proportions of children in OOHC. One area had a population base of 85,000 and had a young age profile with high numbers of Indigenous people and a total of 80 children in OOHC. Another area with a population base of 40,000 people, an older age profile (meaning that there were fewer children) and a lower percentage of Indigenous people, had 108 children in care. Reference to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Socio-Economic Index for Advantage (SEIFA) for the two areas, suggested that the situation ‘should’ have been reversed. The explanation from key informants (the presence of a major psychiatric hospital in the smaller location) was not supported by analysis of the OOHC register. These differential rates for no obvious reason were of concern.

Consiliencing facts from a range of sources was helpful and allowed clear priority processes and interventions to be developed.

These differentials and the environmental scan promoted my thinking as a social work manager/leader regarding child protection. It confirmed my belief that child protection practice involves both individual and social factors. Parton, Thorpe & Wattam (1997) had written:

What is considered child abuse for the purpose of child protection policy and practice, is much better characterised as a product of social negotiation between different values and beliefs, different social norms and professional knowledge and perspectives about children, child development, parenting. Far from being a medico scientific reality, it is a phenomena where moral reasoning and moral judgements are central. (67)

Studies by Givannoni & Becerra (1979) and Hallett & Birchall (1992) revealed that different professionals faced with child maltreatment and neglect scenarios applied
significantly different standards regarding what constituted either child abuse or child neglect. In practice, child protection often focuses upon individuals rather than social, cultural and ideological issues. Gill (1977) writes:

...there is no way of escaping the conclusion that the complete elimination of child abuse on all levels of manifestation requires a radical transformation of the prevailing unjust, unegalitarian, irrational, competitive, alienating and hierarchal social order into a just, egalitarian, rational, co-operative, humane and truly democratic decentralised one. (355)

My reflective/systemic/logical thinking was that as social and economic conditions for some families change, children may be placed at increased risk of harm. Children in families and neighbourhoods that lack the resources to properly care for them may need additional support from agencies like DoCS. There were significant economic, community and social pressures impacting on DoCS business and the issues of safety, welfare and well being of children. These included drug and alcohol use by parents/caregivers, domestic violence, mental illness, changes in family structures and poverty. Researchers identify poverty as the most detrimental socio-demographic risk indicator in determining children’s life chances (Golombok 2000; Shonkoff & Phillips 2000) with the impact of poverty on health, education, housing, access to goods and services, employment and so on (see DoCS submission to the Parliamentary enquiry into Child Protection 2002).

I was required to think about the professional domain. Risk seemed to be replacing need as the core principle of social policy formulation and welfare delivery (Kemshall 2002). Society is increasingly risk averse being predicated on the culture of safety (Furedi 1997) and framed by the precautionary principle (‘better safe than sorry’). Human beings do not always act in acceptable, logical and rational ways and alcohol
and drug issues, mental health concerns, family violence, unemployment, genetic issues, poverty, disability and a host of other factors intersect to make the family a complex place in which children and young people develop. No child grows up in a risk-free environment and it is arguable as to whether a risk-free environment—even if possible—would be desirable. While all children experience some degree of risk, most children are at the lower end of the risk continuum. The management of risk using actuarial and deductive methods has increased. These approaches had an underlying logic and thinking in which there are two ways to be right and two ways to be wrong when comparing actual re-abuse to the prediction of re-abuse adopted from Dale et al (2001 p 87) and shown as Figure 9.1.

**Figure 9.1  Predicting Risk of Re-abuse in Child Protection Matters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Actual</strong></th>
<th>Yes — re-abuse</th>
<th>No — No re-abuse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prediction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes— Re-abuse</td>
<td>Right (1)</td>
<td>Wrong (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No— No re-abuse</td>
<td>Wrong (3)</td>
<td>Right (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In child protection, if a prediction does not predict re-abuse (Box 3), then the consequence for individuals is very serious and may include death or serious injury. Predictions of re-abuses that do not occur (Box 2—false positives) are very costly in dollar and human terms as many children and young people and their families will be subject to unnecessary state intervention. The relative occurrence of behaviours is the base rate which dramatically influences the outcomes of the right-wrong/predicted-
actual decision table. Behaviours with a high or nil base rate are easier to accurately predict than correctly predicting infrequent but possible events.

Despite limitations in human decision making (such as the influence of recency/primacy issues, the confirmatory bias and overconfidence), clinical intuition and a clinical understanding of the unique circumstances is a valuable complement to the actuarial grounding that can occur using risk predictions and base rates.

Informed by the above systemic thinking and the differential OOHC statistics, my thinking about the relationship between clinical judgements and risk measures in the professional domain contained elements of the debate in social work on evidence-based practice or evidence-aware practice (see the later works of Otto & Ziegler 2008: 274; Gibbs & Webb cited in Plath 2006: 66; Trevithick 2005; 2008). There are important philosophical questions as to the elements that constitute evidence-based practice, the nature of evidence itself, the standard against which evidence is assessed and whether evidence-based practice is possible and desirable in complex, multi-dimensional and multi-agency situations. However, the social work manager/leader has to implement practices and approaches in this contested terrain and in the (then) current state of knowledge and evidence. For the social work leader with strong social justice values and a commitment to empowerment—it would be easier to adopt a managerial or administrative approach that applied models, formulas and resources rather than engage with the more difficult task of using resources and processes for the empowerment of participants.

My thinking about the child protection system also highlights the dilemmas for the social work leader. It could legitimately be argued that the majority of the Department of Community Services’ child protection work was short-term and crisis-driven. While
acknowledging that crisis intervention ‘has almost as many meanings as there are people writing about it’ (Bancroft 1986: 113), the aim of crisis intervention is to improve people’s capacity to deal with their problems and involves rapid responses and intense work in the short term. Crisis intervention, influenced by a positivist perspective emphasises problem solving, working on an individual basis, viewing clients as having the problem (crisis) and needing to help return the client back to ‘normal’ (adapt).

Although a number of different models of crisis intervention have been proposed (see Golan 1978; Langsley & Kaplan 1968 cited in Goldstein & Noonan 1999), Aguilera (1994) presents a problem-solving framework may be discerned that has phases of assessment, planning, therapeutic intervention, and resolution of the crisis and anticipatory planning. Arguably, this is the pattern adopted in most DoCS work where clients ‘are treated on a medical model with the aim of getting better’ (Payne 1997: 112). Debate exists (see Lukton 1974, Golan 1986) as to whether crisis intervention theory is appropriate for clients ‘who seem to live in a chronic state of crisis’ (Golan 1986: 325).

My thinking recognised that crisis intervention was the favoured model of managerialism and rather than solve entrenched family, community and social issues, it manages short-term crises. More clients can be seen within time-limited goals and objectives. Managers can become translators of policy into instrumental objectives that are evaluated and monitored to ensure compliance. Resource-intensive therapeutic work over the long term is often overtaken by short-term emergency responses. In short, the urgent replaces the important and the mechanical application of processes replaces the focus on human beings. While a singular modality of intervention is unlikely to fit the needs of all clients of the Department, crisis intervention approaches may not be as suitable for long-term and chronic problems in families. Developing sustained, long-
term work with families who have high levels of dysfunction that may impact upon intergenerational dysfunction rather than managing short-term incidents was a priority.

I thought through the implications in OOHC of the risk and crisis intervention approach in the light of the differential rates of children in OOHC. If many of the children in OOHC that had been predicted as being at risk would not be re-abused, then enormous harm at enormous human, social and financial cost was being caused to children and their families. While agencies and the community may ‘feel’ safe, the estranged children and their birth families are paying the real cost. Short-term safety and long-term welfare and well-being must be considered consiliently. The following situation occurred in October 2000 (prior to my becoming Director of Child and Family Services).

One of my first tasks was to approve an Individual Service Plan at great expense for one of the children in OOHC. I undertook an analysis of the program logic and did a rudimentary cost-benefit analysis (the figures have been updated to 3/8/04 for a subsequent parliamentary submission). Margaret (named changed) was a single mother living with her seven children (aged 12, 10, 8, 7, 5, 4, 2) who paid $75/week for private and poor quality rental in a small rural community.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centrelink Benefit (as at 3/08/04)</td>
<td>$460.20/fn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her Rental Assistance</td>
<td>$20/fn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her Family Tax benefit</td>
<td>$801/fn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL INCOME</td>
<td>$1281.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Depressed, no family support, basic literacy only, no work skills, very, very tired, she had attended the NSW Department of Community Services threatening self-harm.
The children were placed in foster care and Margaret’s income was reduced to $480.20 (Benefit—460.20 and Rental Allowance of $20). A foster carer took all seven children and (assuming the same rental parameter) received a Centrelink Benefit of $1,281.20. The carer also received a tax-free allowance (foster care allowances are non-taxable) of $2,450 as the foster care allowance of $350 per child. The income was $3,731 (or a tax free income of $98,000+ per year). The carer can receive $2,450 more than the birth mother of the children for caring for them. Using this case example and thinking about practice shed light on some significant practice issues. In this particular case I had wondered why the foster parent did not co-operate with the Department in encouraging restoration of children to their birth mother after the mother had shown changes and the capacity to care for her children. I had assumed that it was related to attachment theory operating between the foster child and their foster parent. However examining the program logic and applying an economic analysis from the society domain indicated that there is also a financial incentive (for the carer) for the children to be retained in OOHC and a perverse incentive for the carer not to co-operate with family restoration.

The social work administrator/manager/leader in child protection work is confronted with a number of controversial challenges that require careful thought and are often postulated in a binary (either/or) way. Thinking systemically/logically and laterally/creatively over the range of issues allows them to be reframed and alternative approaches and explanations considered. This type of thinking can reframe the debate about risk and evidence-based practice away from immediate risk of harm to include long-term well-being and to an approach that incorporates both actuarial risk analysis and clinical judgement. Such thinking will look to approaches other than crisis intervention. Rather than celebrating the rising numbers of children in care being evidence of children’s safety, it may well be an indicator of wider social policy failure.
The administrator (in Keeling’s terms) would be risk averse and follow procedures while the manager may be much more risk tolerant and allow for local solutions and the social work leader will look for outcomes that are just and endorsed by the participants.

**WHAT WAS THE DOING AS AN ADMINISTRATOR/MANAGER/LEADER WITH RESPECT TO PEOPLE?**

My first ‘doing’ was to use the PEOPLE model to consider the participants. I considered the participants to be the Department, the communities, the children in care, the children on whom child abuse reports were taken, foster carers, birth families and the non-government agencies in receipt of DoCS funding and myself (that is I considered my own capacity as the social worker/manager, the physical demands of travel; the mental/emotional demands of high-risk and high-intensity child protection work; the social/relational demands including living three hours from my family and becoming a weekend husband/father; the spiritual/existential changes that were needed including resigning from a number of church committees and refugee work). I considered the physical/organic, mental/emotional, social/relational and spiritual/existential. It was important to read the narratives of children removed from parents and caregivers and children that die in care that were contained in official reports (for example, Calvert 2000 and the ‘Bringing Them Home’ report, the pain reflected in the poetry anthology of Eddie Gilbert’s *Inside Black Australia* and to be informed by the networks of children who had grown up in care such as those represented by the children’s and young person’s advocacy group CREATE). This was a deliberate strategy to ensure the centrality of human beings and that the physical/organic, mental/emotional, social/relational and spiritual/existential was not sanitised through the coronial reports, official policies, reports to the Courts and ministerial briefings. Having undertaken the environmental scan including the
directions of the Department, the resources available, the values, the nature of the communities served and the current realities, I prioritised objectives. My highest priorities were (1) staffing and (2) arresting the increase in OOHC growth especially at the identified high growth offices of the region. I made these priorities as I believed that inadequate staff (either in numbers or training or support) results in poor services. Consequently, some children were being unnecessarily brought into care in some locations with the consequent disruption to birth families and children and unnecessary state cost.

Within my first week, I wrote to all staff in my division with an outline of my ‘being’ (who I was) and my one-year objectives (what the region needed to achieve). I indicated that we would need to work together and that our priority would need to be on the relationships and outcomes for our various co-participants. My detailed and written personal objectives included:

- bringing the staff vacancy rate back to less than 10%;
- developing strategies that would recruit staff for long-standing positions that were unfilled;
- reducing the number of children in OOHC by 10% and having every child in care with a ‘Life-Storying Book’;
- having a management structure with reasonable spans of control in place by 30/11/01; and
- having all accounts (except the operating budget) in credit by 30/11/01.

There were few established routines and constant demands from individuals (often complaints), contracted service providers, staff selections, small group and large group public representation, staff management and supervision that required enabling and empowering. My doing in the position involved all the social work roles identified by
Zastrow. At the time of commencing the position, I had no structure of management and one of my roles was to enable and develop first time managers who were newly appointed and were making the transition from caseworker to manager. I also brokered services (the first letter I opened was the sole OOHC service that was giving up its functions in four weeks from the letter as a result of financial difficulties and the need to downsize its operations). I was required to use mediating and negotiating skills at the micro (individual complaints by clients and staff), the mezzo level (negotiating new Memoranda of Understanding with the Health Department, Juvenile Justice, Aged, Disability and Home Care) and the macro level (interstate agreements with Victoria, Queensland and South Australia regarding cross-border issues). The role of educating was done both formally (for example, when training and developing staff in the new legislation and the reforms to OOHC) and informally (for example, mentoring and staff supervision). I commissioned research in relation to OOHC, kinship care and Indigenous foster and kinship care. These were anticipatory initiatives aimed at ensuring that new and emerging issues were considered before they reached a point where a crisis response would be required. I had staffing responsibility for co-ordinating emergency responses (for example, flooding, bushfires and the defusing of World War II explosives found in a deceased estate).

Group facilitation included small project-driven groups (Area Aboriginal Reference Group) and larger on-going groups (for example, Area Managers group, Intensive Support Services, Area Best Practice Group). Public speaking involved representation in a variety of situations including inter-departmental forums, community meetings, action and lobby groups, service-provider groups and at State functions. These often involved public speaking either in person or on radio. As an advocate, I represented the region at a state-wide level and the Department at inter-departmental and community forums. The average number of hours worked over the period was 264 hours/month as
against a notional 140 hours/month. I was concerned that the doing would become so consuming that the opportunity for reflection would be lost. Fortunately, the long-distance driving provided the opportunity to reflect and think about the issues of the region and plan.

I recognised from the environmental scan that the operating budget may be a problem from the perspective of the Department. Over the first few months, I developed a defence for not addressing the issues of the operating budget. An administrator operating to Treasury regulations and Departmental standards may simply have implemented cost savings and cost cutting. As a social worker leader, I took the view that there was a basic inequity and unfairness. The Departmental Resource Allocation model (RAM) was urbo-centric and unrealistic. Part of the agency domain, it was based upon the simple formula (RAM) of the operating budget being 15% of the area salary budget. Having decided that those responsible for the budget allocation were finance-oriented, had little knowledge of non-metropolitan practice and would be unlikely to be amenable to arguments based on service delivery and human well-being, I argued a very simple cost analysis using the reality of practice to mount a defence and advocate for change. I saw this issue as an opportunity to also educate about rural social work practice and negotiate a just outcome for rural areas. Of the many examples I developed, three will illustrate the effects of the doing skills of researching, advocating, activism and negotiating in developing a defence that led to a changed RAM.

**Operating Budget—Example 1**

The salary of a Client Service Manager was (say) $80,000/year and 15% of that figure was $12,000 per year. A Client Service Manager in an urban area with all her/his staff located in the same building had $12,000 as an operating budget based on his/her salary. The Client Service Manager at Griffith in my area was responsible for staff at Griffith,
Cootamundra, Leeton, Parkes, Condobolin and Cowra. The person travelled the equivalent of 48,000 kilometres per year and thereby consumed the total budget provided under the RAM (using the Public Service casual user rate of 24c/kilometre). There were only two of the six locations that were accessible within the day and each of the other four required staying overnight which also needed to be part of the notional $12,000.

Operating Budget—Example 2

Telephonic costs were part of the operating budget. No account was taken of the huge differentials in cost occasioned by rural locations and the need for STD connections. I introduced satellite phones as a safety feature to protect staff in difficult and isolated locations undertaking work which can, at times, be dangerous. Mobile telephones did not have adequate coverage in some rural and remote areas. The purchase cost of a ‘line of sight’ satellite phone handset was in excess of $2,500 each with a call cost of $2.71 per minute. Safety and comfort came at a price. Where mobile services are available, they too came at a price. A one-hour download to a computer from a handheld mobile from Bourke to the Minister’s office cost in excess of $150 even through the CDMA network.

Operating Budget—Example 3

New staff required training which was completed in Sydney. Training of a new staff member required six full weeks of attendance in Sydney at the State award capital city allowance of (then) $212/day and a minimum of six return airfares. These were costs that were to be met from the area’s operating budget. Other DoCS areas in metropolitan Sydney have rail costs only and no accommodation costs.

These examples are indicative of the way the agency domain that emanates from an
urbo-centric basis adversely impacts upon service delivery. These, and other examples, were defensible in the finance reviews that occurred quarterly and caused a revision of the RAM.

Consilience and ‘Difficult-to-Fill’ Locations

One of the major objectives was to staff ‘difficult to fill’ locations. Staffing rural and remote locations crosses societal, professional and community domains. Staffing policy operates within the agency domain. From the PEOPLE model with its focus on thinking, doing and being, I developed and promoted (both within the region and externally) the following statement:

To have an effective service requires the right people, with the right skills, in the right place, at the right time, with the right remuneration, with the right leadership, with the right objectives, with the right processes, doing the right things and with the right supervision and support.

Operating as a social work leader, evidence from a range of sources indicated that obtaining and retaining skilled, qualified and experienced staff was a major issue in rural and remote areas. Rural communities are under-serviced (Chapman & Greenville 2002). Government departments in NSW have adopted a range of strategies to address the inability to obtain staff in many locations. Using the model, my approach was to trial creative and innovative ways of filling (particularly Indigenous) vacancies.

Some locations and/or some jobs are difficult to staff. After thought and consultation with a wide range of others (for example, the Aboriginal Reference Group, Aboriginal staff, current caseworkers, clients, mayors of towns and casual conversations in shops and so on) and some research, I developed the following profiling matrix that was used to determine ‘difficult to staff’ locations:
Failure of merit selection (this is a position has been advertised without success or the candidature does not meet the minimum criteria for the position);

Staff mobility (there is high staff mobility or where staff do not complete the period necessary to ensure satisfactory service delivery to the community);

Experience of staff (staff appointed are typically in their early years or first year of service);

The experience of managers (managers appointed to difficult to staff locations are typically in their first managerial position);

Staff morale (due to a large number of factors, staff morale in the difficult to fill locations may be perceived as being low); and

Availability of casual staff (availability of casual staff can be affected by two major factors—non availability due to the remote location and the reluctance of casual workers to work in locations due to prior experience or the location’s reputation).

Where the matrix of factors co-existed, the community was disadvantaged by either not having the positions filled or by receiving an inadequate service from a distant location or by having positions filled by staff that were inexperienced or ill-qualified. It is a peculiarity of the way society is organised that the most challenging service positions in the areas of greatest social exclusion are often filled by the persons of least ability, or least experience or capacity.

Potential strategies included incentives; tenure with a right of transfer at the end of the tenure period; sabbatical leave; spouse/partner transfer (to accommodate dual income families); alternative work schemes (alternative work schemes involve the trading of junior positions to allow for the appointment of a more senior position); directed transfers; and partnership arrangements (working with local communities and
local organisations to develop partnership arrangements that build the social cohesion and social capital of particular locations).

While there was much ‘doing’ in relation to staffing including resolving disciplinary matters, ensuring a healthy workforce, putting limits on risky travel (for example a ‘no work and drive beyond ten hours’ policy), I will consider three examples related to staffing that illustrate the social worker as administrator/manager/leader using the model.

**Indigenous Child Protection Worker**

Filling the only position as an Indigenous caseworker in a small (1,600 people) town with an Indigenous population of 58% was extremely difficult. It met each of the criteria of the matrix. Additionally, the housing rental cost was in excess of $200/week for a small fibro home in an unattractive neighbourhood and not in the secured and fenced area of the government services compound. The position had been filled for six weeks in a period of fourteen months. Services were being offered from a town some 150 kilometres away on an ‘as needed’ basis. The underlying issues of poverty, neglect, dispossession, substance abuse and oppression were not being addressed with a purely casework model of intervention that responded to crisis situations.

I managed the process but was constrained by urbo-centric legislation and procedures (such as being required to ask all candidates exactly the same questions; requiring two referee checks including a current employer; adherence to centralised advertising; and standardised costs of, and approaches to recruitment—an urban RAM). Within these parameters, a number of additional Indigenous recruiting strategies were undertaken.

The previous appointee had exited following a very short time (six weeks) citing
community pressures. In consultation, she said she could not see anything ‘ever’ changing and she felt ‘unsafe’. The previous worker of six months duration had left the position following threats and violence to the worker’s family (personal comment from that worker to the writer). While these have a physical component, there is a spiritual/existential element as well. The lack of ‘hope’ is a significant factor here. The community objective was clear with the local government mayor demanding a live-in service (personal comment to me from the mayor). However, the physical safety of the staff member and their family had to be assured given the comments of the previous two occupants. A partnership arrangement was agreed to in which the community covenanted to value any new worker and recognise the community responsibility to keep that person and their family safe. This covenant was put to the representative group.

Equally significant was a change to the job description. In child protection, the most difficult decisions involve the removal of children following abuse. These are decisions that can have impact in the physical/organic, social/relational, mental/emotional and spiritual/existential aspects of the wider community and raise a range of emotional and behavioural responses. (A worker that I had responsibility for had their house and the office firebombed. In another community three departmental cars were burnt out while in the Departmental compound and in an urbo-rural community nine Departmental vehicles were vandalised over three nights while in the compound). In small isolated communities, child removal decisions are often volatile and staff are especially vulnerable. The job description for this location was altered so that the highly volatile decisions on removal were taken outside of the community with the consequent protection of the worker in the community.

With these features in place, advertisements were placed in the required newspapers
and additionally in Indigenous newspapers. A brochure was developed for community agencies and placed throughout the community. Aboriginal radio was used with Aboriginal staff from other locations. These were beyond the normal highly centralised recruitment processes and incurred additional expense.

Current Aboriginal staff assisted in identifying people in the community with the relevant skills and abilities to be able to undertake training and work in the Department. The Aboriginal Reference Group (ARG) developed a culturally appropriate information package. An Aboriginal person was identified as a contact person for the position and convened the selection panel for this identified position (although as there was no Aboriginal person with the appropriate training and endorsement—an urbo-centric requirement—the nominal convenor had to be me). The panel consisted of more Aboriginal people on the panel than non-Aboriginal people. The interviews were conducted in a place that was culturally friendly. Questions for the interview were rigorously assessed for cultural appropriateness while still fulfilling the essential and desirable selection criteria as established in the advertisement. Information packages were advertised and available in a wide range of locations within and outside the community. Information sessions on the position were run that highlighted the position description, DoCS Policies & Procedures and assisted the applicant in making a written application. Feedback was given to all that made any enquiry, even if the person did not submit an application for the position. An orientation day occurred with a barbeque lunch at the location and the opportunity for prospective applicants to meet with the panel members prior to the interviews. The panel members had the opportunity to ensure that the applicants met the threefold test for identifying as an Aboriginal person. The information session and the orientation day particularly addressed the issue of the criminal record check which for some prospective applicants was a presumed barrier. This approach lessened the difficulty of the subsequent interview where the very nature
of asking direct questions of Aboriginal people may be culturally inappropriate.

The position was filled and the subsequent training occurred. The essential needs of many Aboriginal communities are to develop community and social skills that build the capacity and social infrastructure of communities. In this example of the model the participants were the community, whilst the Department and the individual were potential staff members. The model was useful in highlighting the physical/organic, mental/emotional, social/relational, spiritual/existential features that would enable the position to be filled and sustained.

**Aboriginal Mentoring and Education**

Indigenous staff members were employed without the same tertiary qualifications expected of all other caseworkers. This approach recognises that there are many forms of knowledge. While they have cultural knowledge and life experience, they frequently do not have the casework skills and wider social work skills needed for performing all of the position. These formal academic deficiencies are evident when communities do not receive funding or other supports because the worker is not able to undertake analysis and make submissions as a result of low literacy or education levels. There has been a clearly identified need in rural and regional NSW for mentoring programs, especially for Aboriginal people.

Mentoring was directly provided for two nominated Indigenous employees of the Department. For both employees, the mentoring revolved around:

- The employees understanding their place in the Child Welfare system;
- An overview of the various movements and history of Child Welfare including theoretical perspectives;
- An understanding of the characteristics of children;
A brief child development overview and the significant influences on children;
Holistic multi-dimensional assessment skills;
Communication and interviewing skills;
Organisational and time management skills;
Creative thinking skills;
Case management skills;
Skills in genograming and ecomapping;
Negotiating skills and risk assessment skills.

The program aimed at developing thinking and doing and being of Indigenous men in a dominant ‘white’ bureaucracy. This mentoring program recognised the difficulty in separating work from the community, particularly where there was a large number of one’s own family living in the community. While the mentees assessed the program very highly (using a positivist assessment) and while all outputs nominated were achieved, the real test was the impact of the program on the work performance, the mentee’s satisfaction with the role, the community acceptance and respect for the mentees and the Department and the contribution made to the community and the lives of children and young people. In this regard, an unsolicited email from the immediate supervisor of the mentees stated:

_We are already seeing the benefits of the mentoring program. Both N… (mentee’s name) and C… (mentee’s name) are pleased with the program and we are seeing the changes in both of them already. I appreciate your efforts very, very much._

**Consiliencing Out-of-Home Care and Staffing through a Social Work Mobile Unit**

The Department of Community Services has difficulty in recruiting, training, assessing and developing foster carers in rural and remote Western areas. This difficulty arises as
a result of high workloads, staff turnover and mobility and small numbers of qualified staff to undertake foster care training. The Department, like other services, had difficulty attracting qualified staff to rural and remote locations. Some of the failure to attract staff is due to the uniqueness of rural and remote practice and the myths, fears and assumptions of potential employees. The objectives of the social work mobile student unit were:

- To expose social work students to rural and remote practice;
- To recruit, train and assess potential foster carers and develop current carers;
- To develop a mobile cohesive student unit;
- To undertake limited life-storying work with OOHC children; and
- To undertake a community assessment of four communities.

At the conceptualisation of the project the anticipated outcomes were the assessment of potential foster carers (with a target of eight); training new foster carers (with a target of twenty-four); developing the skills and values of current foster carers; life-storying work completed (target ideally three children and one trainer per location); four community analyses completed; DoCS to be seen as a preferred employer among university students; and heightened awareness by students of the innovative practices of DoCS.

The use of third year social work students meant that the benefits to the whole student body would be maximised by articles and personal comment highlighting innovation in practice.

The practice model was used particularly in assessing the participants. There were six groups of participants noted—social work students (four in number); the foster
carers (both current and futures); the four local district offices (at the four locations); the four communities in which the offices were located; the needs of the Department; and the social worker/participant (myself). Consilences of objectives and of methods and approaches meant that a range of matters needed to be held together rather than looking for one synthesised approach and outcome. The social work unit was a group in itself with the individual members having both group goals and individual goals. Some of the work was one-to-one assessment (the foster care assessments); other work involved training (the foster care training which was itself a group facilitated by a student); some work involved community analysis (the community profiles), some involved interagency work (dealing with the press, public speaking) and some involved organising and managing. The social work students were considered against the physical/organic, mental/emotional, social/relational and spiritual/existential elements. This impacted upon the timing and sequencing of the program. The needs of the Departmental officers were considered as well as the need for training and upskilling of foster carers and children in care. The program operated over fourteen weeks and was designed to spend four one-week periods in four high priority rural and remote communities.

The evaluation of the first rural mobile student unit were:

**Quantitative Outcomes:**

There were thirty-eight new carers trained as against a target of twenty-four; fourteen new carers trained and fully assessed against the Departmental Step-by-Step assessment modules as against a target of eight; six staff members of DoCS trained in Step-by-Step Assessment and Life-Storying Work; three children’s programs run; six current carers refreshed through training; four community analyses completed; fourteen children with Life-Storying work undertaken as against a target of twelve; four carers trained in Life-
Storying Work; community speaking opportunities (Press, Service Groups); approximately forty hours of travel (by car); and approximately 4,000 kilometres travelled.

**QUALITATIVE OUTCOMES:**

The following comments were made by students engaged in the program:

The main lesson learned was that a difference can be made, and that with inspiration things can change; the Mobile Unit was excellent; The people we met and the concrete results we achieved were well worth the stress of the project; in the beginning the confidence that we had in ourselves as leaders, trainers and as effective social workers was limited compared to the confidence that we have discovered; there are already children who have been placed in the care of newly registered carers; current foster children will benefit from the training of their foster carers and the Life Story work that will continue; overall, the Mobile Student Unit was a most valuable and unique experience; we found ourselves trying to find our potential in an atmosphere where expectations were high and not negotiable.

The impact of the first rural mobile student unit was immediately evident in the use of trained and fully assessed foster carers by the Department within one day of the completion of the program. Other impacts were more difficult to measure and/or required a longer time horizon. As these were third year students with a fourth year of study to complete, the impact measure of whether the mobile student unit has resulted in any, or all, of these students working in rural and remote areas was not known until 2006. All four students are working in rural or regional areas and two are working as caseworkers with DoCs having been competitively selected. I was also conscious of the fact that even if the students in the unit were to take positions immediately in rural and remote areas—they would be new graduates operating in difficult locations and with minimal support.
WHAT WAS THE BEING AS A SOCIAL WORK ADMINISTRATOR/MANAGER/LEADER WITH RESPECT TO PEOPLE?

As noted previously, it is artificial to separate thinking and doing from being. Being incorporates thinking and doing but is more than the sum of the two. Staff, communities, individuals and agencies have their own sense of being. The social work leader is part of an organisation that has a sense of being. DoCS has a set of formal values that it promotes. It has a formal code of behaviour. It has a range of complaint resolution methods and (at the time I was Director) accountability to thirteen different administrative or legal entities (for example, the NSW ombudsman, the Commission for Children and Young People) as well as accountability to individual clients and carers and birth families. The department is subject to media scrutiny and review and criticisms from many sources.

At a practice level, the being of the Department is frequently synonymous with the local staff and local issues. High local turnover of staff, poor local practices, staff burnout or misbehaviour reflect upon the Department. The Department’s sense of being, despite policies and procedures emanating centrally, is embodied by local staff. My ‘mantra’ (the right staff in the right place and so on) became accepted (in varying degrees) throughout the region and furthered the importance of all staff pro-socially modelling the values and beliefs and approaches that we wished to develop.

The being of the participants varied. In the Indigenous caseworker recruitment the being of the new caseworker was not known other than that s/he would be Indigenous. The being was presumed on the model to include a physical/organic, mental/emotional, social/relational and spiritual/existential element and assumptions made based on the needs and requirements of all human beings (for example, safety, relationships and so on). The being of the community in which the new worker was placed was known both
statistically and experientially.

With the Indigenous mentees, their being was known to some extent. Through assessment, engagement and collaboration, new self-concepts were able to be developed that particularly affected the mental/emotional, social/relational and existential/spiritual development.

The social work group involved many different senses of being including the communities, the local officers, carers and potential carers. Here I will focus upon the students. The model was used with the student unit to provide a framework for highlighting key considerations. For example, the physical/organic involved elements such as obtaining suitable accommodation in each location, ensuring provision of food, managing the logistic of time and safety in travel. As the program also operated over one weekend, it also involved the social/relational with respect to recreational activities (a camel ride at Silverton, overnight accommodation in an underground motel at Whitecliffs for example). The social/relational also involved the management of time away from paid work, partners and current responsibilities. The spiritual/existential meant that the students were coming to terms with an identity as a social worker, with remote living and with the blurred boundaries of the personal and the professional (illustrated by a night of drinking that had some professional implications).

For me, as a social work leader, it was a constant challenge to respond to entrenched and intergenerational poverty and neglect of individuals and communities some of which was attributable to the attitude and policies of urbo-centric government. It was a constant challenge to be the departmental representative and spokesperson in the face of legitimate complaints about policy and service delivery. I recognised the importance of the administrator/manager/leader maintaining the cardinal and theological virtues
especially hope and charity. It is, however, one matter to seek forgiveness for a wrong as an individual and quite another as the spokesperson for a Department in the highly charged world of politics. I found it a challenge to my sense of being to not have the freedom to act unilaterally in the best interests of the child/family but to have to appropriate some degree of a corporate identity. It was a challenge to balance the situation of individuals in need with the legitimate need of the Department to protect itself and its Minister. I recognised that there were times where I needed greater fortitude (sometimes in relation to dealing with the Minister’s Office and at other times when dealing with the hostility of individual aggrieved parents, staff members or whole communities) and when I needed to put my job on the line for the sake of prudence, temperance and justice. In this, I was helped by personal circumstances that meant that I had another job to go to if necessary and that the position I occupied had been so difficult to fill that I could act with greater fortitude. As I reflected upon the contractual nature of the State Public Service at the Executive level, I recognised the real ownership by Departments of the person (the being) that occupies positions and the very real potential of that person to serve the interest of the politicians rather than the interests of the public. In this regard, it was great to go back to the writings of Friere, to the writings of liberation theologians, to the writings of David Sheppard (1975) and to Biblical writings in order to resist the opportunity to become part of oppression rather than part of liberation.

My style of management had been transactional (that is conveyed in the everyday transactions between manager and managed or the caseworker and the participants) but in this position I had to read, think and act in a transformational leadership/management role (see Bass 1999 and Avolio et al., 1991). It was simply not possible to transact daily or even weekly with such a wide and diverse constituency. The response was to set the transformational goals and put in place the mechanisms for their achievement. This was
a real challenge to my being as it meant that I was often setting the objectives and providing the mechanisms but did not have a well developed sense of the person or persons or agency that would deliver on the objectives. It was not possible, for example, to know the virtues (in the cardinal and theological sense) of all the carers that would deliver daily foster care services to children in need. I developed a personal and informal checklist around the virtues that proved very useful at my own personal being level in dealing with difficult situations—but it would have been difficult to implement systematically in the organisation.

I found it critical to use the concept of consilience. With twenty-five office locations, 70% of the geographic State, 160 staff and multiple communities and even more individuals with unique and diverse experiences and needs, it become quickly clear that there were no ‘one-stop, universal solutions’ but rather a series of well-considered, well-implemented, principled, creative approaches that recognised diversity and recognised uniqueness.

My greatest challenge to being was being asked to continue in the job for a further twelve months. I had set myself a one-year agenda which I had communicated to all staff on my first day. I had used the analogy with staff that I was going to give the Department one year of my (presumed 78.3 years of) life and that I would leave the area well set up for the next person by staffing the area, getting the OOHC into shape, redrawing the Joint Investigation Response Teams (JIRT), balancing the budgets (except the operational budget), having the ‘transformation’ completed and so on. While I loved the job, the travel in particular and the demands of work had been physically exhausting. Using the model, I considered that the physical/organic element meant that I was physically/organically tired and this was confirmed by my medical practitioner. When I applied the social/relational element, I considered that I had committed to a
course of action (one year) and that to now change that by extending the time would leave me open to criticism that I had not kept my word. The year as a manager had been prefaced on ‘my being’ in which I had asserted that if we committed to a course of action over which I had control—that it would be seen through to the end.

I was also concerned about increasing State centralisation and the consequent diminution of diversity and responding appropriately to unique circumstances. The Department was adopting evidence-based practice where evidence really meant research/empirical evidence delivered though contracted bureaucrats and agencies to the detriment of appreciating the many other forms of knowledge and participant-led needs. At the mental/emotional aspect of my being, I could see increasing control over staff, communities and the individuals where (in my view) one form of knowledge and one approach of contractual social obligation would occur.

I also considered the spiritual/existential. There is a Confucian proverb that says ‘a man that can dig a hole with a shovel is valuable—but the man that can organise a thousand shovels is a thousand times more valuable’. Within my own Christian framework, value is not measured that way. As I was able to set things in place, another administrator/manager/leader would be able to dismantle them. While I could contribute to and make changes within the lives of individuals and communities and make a significant ontological difference, few of the changes would amount to much in an eternal and teleological perspective. I realised that I missed my family life, my work in refugee resettlement, at the residential college and through my local church and that these, for me, were of greater eternal and teleological significance.
WHAT WERE THE REFLECTIONS ON AND DYNAMICS OF CONSILIENCE OF THINKING AND DOING AND BEING?

The challenge for the social worker who is a manager often involves implementing ‘top down’ directives and approaches. The real potential exists for the social work manager to be oppressive and to impose solutions and processes. As a professional social worker and manager in DoCS, consilience of thinking, doing and being across the micro, mezzo and macro levels meant utilising knowledge appropriated from many sources and ensuring that no single source of knowledge or single orientation dominated. It would have been possible, for example, to give a primary allegiance to (say) an economic view of the role and balance the budgets to the detriment of (say) service delivery. It would have been possible to focus on the staff rather than on the outcomes and impacts upon clients. It would have been possible to consider the rising rate of children in OOHC as a cause for celebration of children being safe rather than a measure of wider systemic or policy failure. It would have been possible to take a political perspective and have a primary allegiance to the Department and the Minister rather than to the more ill-defined notion of the public. It would have been possible to have a primary allegiance to foster carers rather than birth families. Consilience means jumping together disparate knowledges and objectives drawn from many sources and appreciating their diversity rather than seeking to impose either a false unity or a synthesis of the knowledges. Of course, one of the deficiencies of consilience in a social work leader is that co-participants may not perceive the administrator/manager/leader as being predictable and consistent. Individual situations that have similarities may not lead to identical outcomes. In a socio-political climate where predictability and consistency of outcomes are valued and desired, the consilience approach means that the individual circumstances and dynamics rather than the imposed procedures and policies are significant in determining action and outcomes. This can be perceived by others as lack
of consistency rather than appreciation of diversity. At the macro level, there is a socio-political need for consistency. At the individual level there is a need for individualised, creative approaches. Centralism and proceduralism may create consistency but negate diversity and creativity and justice.

Consilience accepts that there are both structural and individual reasons and practices for inequality and child protection responses. Structurally, the rising rate of children in OOHC may be unacceptably high and may be substantially about State-intervention in predominantly low-income, poor families. Where once, the racial composition of children (their sense of being as black, white, half-caste and so on) was a reason for State intervention, the current criteria may include calculations of risk, drug and alcohol use by parents, and poverty. This is not an approach that will find immediate and positive resonance with other areas of government which are implicitly being criticised for (say) poor income support or inappropriate housing, mental health or law enforcement policies. Thinking and doing and being in child protection means considering a range of factors (income support, health policy, housing, approaches to domestic violence, gambling policy and so on) that are within the province of others and for whom child protection is not their primary objective. Consilience means jumping together knowledge from many sources and recognising that reducing (say) gambling or poverty may have a very positive impact upon reducing children coming into care and an equally negative effect upon the revenue of the Treasury. Adopting consilient approaches does not guarantee the best outcome but rather highlights the often competitive priorities of organisational and governmental intervention.

The dynamics of consilience allows for differences to be acknowledged and valued without seeking to resolve differences or impose a synthesis or false unity. It also allows for gaps in current knowledge. The mentoring program, for example, was aimed at
‘accelerating learning’ and was driven by the needs (as perceived by the Department of Community Services) of the mentees. The thinking for the program was founded upon two theoretical positions and a gap in knowledge. It was important that Indigenous epistemology and Indigenous knowledge (as discussed in the methodology chapter) be valued and incorporated in order to counter the ‘colonising’ effect of Western-style mentoring. A limited literature and internet search failed to assist with the question of whether there were distinctive differences between mentoring and Indigenous mentoring. There was little documented evidence on experiences, backgrounds and approaches used by current Indigenous workers, particularly in the child protection area and mentoring. Hill, Wakeman, Mathews & Gibeon (2001) identified Indigenous workers as subject to a range of conflicting and contradictory expectations. Workers develop strategies that are either oppositional, separational, integrational or compromised—in order to be able to work within bureaucracies. I jumped together this limited knowledge of Indigenous workers with Freire’s concept of conscientisation and Brookfield’s (1990) six principles of effective practice in Adult Education. In holding these three together, I accepted that the mentee/mentor relationship implied a power differential based on experience but wanted to avoid a power differential based on race or the debilitating effects of ‘colonising’ education. The Freirian and Brookfield approaches acknowledged mutuality and respected differences and exceptionality. The mentees lived experience and cultural knowledge was a resource against which new knowledge presented to them could be evaluated. I was attempting to have a consilient approach where different types of knowledge were valued for what they were all able to bring to any particular situation without trying to set the knowledges up as oppositional, separational, integrated or compromised—but rather having an appreciation as to how the diverse knowledge bases could lead to new, exciting and creative outcomes.

A consilient approach offers a way forward in obtaining, training, developing and
retaining the right people in the right place at the right time with the right skills and with the right conditions of work and right remuneration. Consilience of thinking, doing and being are well-illustrated here. I recognised that the shift in the macro socio-political environment to contractual relationships and a more flexible workforce has also meant a change in the sense of vocation (being)—where many positions are now jobs done for money rather than vocations that have an element of service and commitment. Social work, with its commitment to social justice and (for me) a bias to the poor is an alternative orientation. Practical social policy in the area of staffing rural and remote locations involved addressing this socio-political shift and the urbo-centric decision-making issues that arise from the societal domain. It involved recognising other sources of knowledge and motivation and action that led to localising real solutions. The three examples in the staffing of rural and remote locations have highlighted both the successes and difficulties in balancing good service delivery in areas of, arguably, the greatest need and the greatest oppression. Consilient approaches acknowledge the interconnectedness of thinking, doing and being.

Consilience as a manager involves valuing both the quantitative and qualitative approaches and applying critical reflection. This was particularly the situation in considering the differential rates of children in OOHC. A quantitative approach based on researching the statistics showed anomalies. The explanations (for example, a major psychiatric hospital) from key informants were not supported by other evidence. What was noticeable was that ‘defensive practices’ had developed and that local management was excessively ‘risk averse’ and took the precautionary principle to the extreme. Understanding history provided the additional information that made sense of the rates of OOHC. This office had been subjected to a centralised, intrusive and blaming approach to the death of a child some six years earlier. The incident and its legacy had instilled fear. Although the management and many staff had changed, the historic
legacy led current management and staff to react to any matter with extreme caution and take actions that would inevitably protect a child but would create many false positives. The question which no manager/leader likes to face is:

‘What is an acceptable failure rate and acceptable consequences where human decision making and unpredictable human behaviour is involved?’

Reflecting upon thinking, doing and being requires consideration of outcomes or the evaluation aspect of the PEOPLE model. On my commencement date of 11/12/00, the rate of growth in Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) had been 25% in the previous eight months but it had not been uniform growth within the area. In the following year (to 30/11/01), the increase in the OOHC rate was arrested and OOHC numbers declined by over 10%. This had a marked impact on the lives of individuals and in the societal and professional domains. Additionally on 11/12/01, the staff vacancy rate among the 113 positions—an increase of 13% in front-line staff numbers—was 8% (down from arguably 37%) with no temporary unqualified staff, no return to work staff and no outstanding disciplinary matters. Consilience as a social work leader and in the areas of OOHC and staffing resulted in significant change and an empowered and confident service delivery.

The social work manager faces value dilemmas (for example, whether to be active or passive; risk-taking or risk aversion; corporate goal driven or human rights and social justice oriented) and is challenged by knowledge and demands from multiple sources (corporate and political demands and individual and community demands). Sometimes, key information in making a decision is missing or is unclear and/or contested. Organisational values (intrusion and intervention) may be the antithesis of the values of others or the social work manager. Consilience offers the social work manager the
widest opportunity to appropriate differing knowledges, differing focuses and orientations. It does so—not in a way that necessarily balances them or seeks to unify them—but in a way that allows the truly diverse positions and knowledges to be valued in contributing to the outcomes. The social work manager will have to make decisions—but will be making them on the broadest possible knowledge and value base.

As illustrated by the RAM model examples, there are tensions between fiscal and Treasury demanded outcomes and service delivery outcomes for individuals and communities. There are tensions between the demands of centralised employment processes and the needs of localised employment and recruitment. Sometimes I have met these tensions through following both centralised processes and supplementing them with localised additional processes (for example, the recruitment of Indigenous staff). At other times I have prioritised one set of demands above another (for example, the decision not to deal with the operating budget until the RAM was realistically determined but still provide operational services). I found myself challenged by the different perspectives (the legitimate ‘top down’ demands of the political and administrative system and the legitimate ‘bottom up’ demands of clients and communities). I was challenged by the different ideologies and approaches related to child protection and OOHC (the rights of children, the rights of parents, the rights of carers, the rights of staff) and the ‘evidence’ advanced in support. I was challenged around the consistency of theory and practice, especially considering the documented poor outcomes of children in OOHC and the tendency to take more and more children into care with little examination of the validity and reliability of the risk assessment tools and their applicability. This was particularly the case with Indigenous people. I was profoundly challenged by Partin et al., (1997) who argues that child abuse:

...is a product of social negotiation between different values and beliefs, different social norms and professional knowledge...is a
The social work administrator/manager/leader is a part of that social negotiation. I was informed by the values of social work and my own qualities of being related to the virtues.

CONCLUSION

The conceptual framework of thinking and doing and being of social work and the PEOPLE model has assisted me as an administrator/manager/leader (in DOCS) across the multiple sources of demands and the multiple sources of knowledge, the multiple participants and the diverse theoretical approaches. By applying thinking, doing and being to the physical/organic, social/relational, mental/emotional and spiritual/existential model of participants (both myself and others) and then focusing on the environment and the development of objectives and the consideration of process and labour and the evaluation, complex ‘facts’ can be rendered useful and comprehensible. It has provided (at least for me) a framework for processing a great deal of information, from many sources and with competing demands. It is not designed to result in a synthesised view or even an integrated view but rather a consilient view where attitudes, theories, approaches and power are understood and the best outcomes consistent with thinking/doing/being and the analysis are undertaken.

Social worker administrators/managers/leaders in the area of child protection will need to continue to bring thinking-doing-being to the multi-dimensional and multi-layered nature of their work within a perspective that has a focus upon the critical importance of human beings rather than simply on processes designed to create consistency and uniformity. A singular approach, be it driven by urbo-centric demands
or by economics, or by a singular model of welfare service delivery (crisis intervention) or discipline-specific ideology or by a specific domain needs to be rejected. The complexity and uniqueness of social work management/administration/leadership requires the consilience (jumping together) of ‘facts’ and approaches that value and dignify individuals, families, communities, staff and agencies.
CHAPTER 10

CONSIDENCE IN SOCIAL WORK: THINKING, DOING AND BEING REVISITED

The future is not a result of choices among alternative paths offered by the present, but a place that is created—created first in the mind and will, created next in activity. The future is not some place we are going to, but one we are creating. The paths are not to be found, but made, and the activity of making them, changes both the maker and the destination.
—John Schaar, futurist

This concluding chapter will look back and look forward and is framed around five key questions: What were the needs of and concerns for social work that led to the choice of this topic and is it of importance and significance? Have the objectives of the thesis been achieved and the research questions addressed? Has the model that has been developed helped to improve, and demonstrate an improvement in, practice? What are the limitations of the model of practice? How can other social work practitioners use and develop the model/framework articulated in this thesis to improve social work practice?
WHAT WERE THE NEEDS OF AND CONCERNS FOR SOCIAL WORK THAT LED TO THE CHOICE OF THIS TOPIC AND IS IT OF IMPORTANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE?

As outlined in Chapter 1, as an experienced practitioner, I have been concerned about the relationship of theory and practice and the being of the social work practitioner and their ‘clients’. Social work practice is my concern. In many settings, I have sought to operationalise ‘client self-determination’, the ‘person-in-the-environment’ and the ‘use of self’ as key features of social work which itself has an agenda of change (praxis). Many authors have written of their concern for social work. McBeath et al., (2002) express these concerns in the following way:

With a social work remit increasingly routinised by accountability, quality-control and risk management there is an emphasis on regulation and duties. This has produced the culture of following approved or typical processes resulting in defensive forms of social work wholly uncongenial to the development of human qualities likely to promote the social worker’s engagement in critique and revision of what counts as best practice. In sum, our core proposition is that social work practice and education, to fit an unpredictable non-linear world, should develop means by which professionals nurture the virtues. This would reflexively enhance social work practice. (1016)

I have argued that ‘being’ (or an emphasis on the ‘self’) is underdeveloped and that an ‘empirical-only’ view of the world will limit social work effectiveness. I viewed with alarm the inability to make significant life changes to individual offenders and their families; the significant increase in group programs in prison that have made no impact on the very high rates of recidivism in New South Wales parolees; the failure to make significant changes within Indigenous communities in relation to licit and illicit drug usage; the inability of social work research to materially and consistently enhance the relationship of Indigenous communities and their local governments; and the
managerial ineffectiveness to arrest the rapid expansion of the numbers of children in Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) as well as to attract workers to rural locations. These are but examples of the way social work approaches have been ineffective in the individual, group, community, research and social administration areas in terms of actual practice. I have been concerned that there is an imbalance between thinking and doing and that the concept of being is underdeveloped or even ignored. Some social work practice is ‘unthoughtful’ which leads to dangerous outcomes while other practice is thoughtful but lacks any action. The being of the client and worker are frequently neglected.

As a social work educator, I have recognised that many new social work graduates will work in multi-disciplinary practice and be subjected to a range of challenges (see Petrovich 2004: 429; this thesis: 36). Like Van Soest (1996: 201), I must not only provide knowledge but assist in translating that knowledge into action, which facilitates social change. The development of a model of practice that enables students and social workers to make sense of the ‘overwhelmingly social world’ in a way that acknowledges the concepts of ‘client self-determination’, ‘person-in-the-environment’ and the ‘use of self’ has been a core concern. I have sought a means of acknowledging the importance of the empiricist and interpretivist approaches, the qualitative and the quantitative, the deductive and inductive—the thinking and the doing and the being. Whewellian consilience offered the opportunity to ‘jump together’ complementary and competing elements in a way that allowed priority to be given to the social worker and the participant as well as emphasise change.

HAVE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE THESIS BEEN ACHIEVED AND THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS ADDRESSED?

Many years ago, I set out to practice in a way that was empowering for participants, had virtue (my term then was ‘integrity’), was creative and yet took account of the
environment and the current state of knowledge. The main objectives of the thesis were to develop a practice model based on the concept of consilience and thinking and doing and being; to trial the practice model of thinking-doing-being by demonstrating its application in the social work areas of individual/family work, group work, community development, social research and social administration; and to (reflectively) analyse the dynamics of thinking, doing and being so as to improve social work practice.

The research questions were: What are the concepts of consilience and thinking, doing and being? Can a useful practice model based on these concepts be developed? Can this model be applied to a variety of settings? In practice, how does consilience of thinking, doing and being operate and what are the dynamics? Can the consilience of thinking, doing and being improve social work practice?

Drawing on the analysis of secondary data and reflecting on the author’s practice experiences, concepts of consilience, thinking, doing and being are developed in Chapter 2 leading to the PEOPLE model that has been developed (in Chapter 3 see figure 3.1). I have applied thinking and doing and being across the participants, the environment, the objectives, the process and labour and the evaluation. The model allows for knowledge to be drawn from empirical, intuitive and other sources and invites the participants to acknowledge and assess their situation in multiple ways. It is dynamic and creative rather than prescriptive. It places the emphasis on the people involved.

My reflective analysis framework (see Chapter 4) may be modestly considered as an original contribution of the thesis. By employing this framework, the post-facto reflective analysis was undertaken on examples from the researcher’s practice with individual/family work, group work, community work, social research and social
administration. I had been developing elements of the practice model for more than thirty years. While there were many examples (with individual and family work—more than 4,000 to choose from), the chosen examples illustrated consilience of thinking and doing and being and their development over time and with experience. The analysis of, and the reflections on, the dynamics of thinking, doing and being across five practice areas suggest that the objectives of the thesis have been met and the research questions have been systematically addressed.

DOES THE MODEL HELP TO IMPROVE, AND DEMONSTRATE AN IMPROVEMENT IN, PRACTICE?

The model was developed in response to concerns about social work practice. My intent was to develop a model that could be used across the range of social work activities in individual/family work, group work, community work, social research and social administration. This was, in part, to avoid the situation where social work fractured into different iterations rather than recognise the consilience of thinking, doing and being that ensures diversity within a coherent framework. Appropriately, Chapter 5 focussed upon individual/family work in a statutory context related to child sexual assault and the improvements in Practice can be summarised at Table 10.1.
Table 10.1  Practice Improvements using the consilience practice model in Individual/Family Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Response with Thinking and Doing but Passive Being</th>
<th>Response with Consilience of Thinking, Doing and Active Being</th>
<th>Improvement in Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agenda Setting</td>
<td>Accept agenda and paradigms set by Parole order</td>
<td>Consider the wider human considerations of all family members; involve all in agenda-setting; ensure Parole requirements are met</td>
<td>All participants included; increased motivation to work on family goals;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Offending</td>
<td>Follow the current accepted approach to sex offending</td>
<td>Consider the diversity of sex offenders; consider the multiple roles of sex offenders; engender hope for change; educate all participants on sex offending. Confront realities of offending</td>
<td>Work with violent sex offender within the family; open communication and knowledge to all participants; decrease secrecy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating Outcomes</td>
<td>Monitor quantitative elements (e.g. school attendance)</td>
<td>Use multiple approaches; gauge levels of hope, satisfaction etc via discussion; develop fortitude through activities; expand victim’s social networks; pro-socially model family through respite; pro-socially model non-violent, non-sexual family interaction; no re-offending.</td>
<td>Improved self-esteem; improved opportunities for wider social engagement; pro-socially modelled family life; improved school performance; safety plans;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

The chapter highlighted the way that the family was involved in setting the casework goals and the need for the social worker to display the social work skills as well as the virtues (especially courage and prudence) in relation to a highly contentious casework intervention. It established the way that thinking, doing and being are integrally involved at all points of the social work process as applied to individual/family work and the way that collaboration, engagement and assessment operates. This individual/family approach required the consilience of different knowledges and perspectives and the capacity to use many forms of knowledge and a variety of methods of intervention to achieve the family-driven outcome. The approach required creative thinking that was ‘outside the square’, thoughtful and skillful implementation and a focus on the being of each participant. In the complexity of this
practice example, consilience of knowledges was required in order to both achieve outcomes and ensure safety. The outcomes for the family were those developed by the family within the requirements that they be safe, secure, nurturing and free of both offending behaviour and ‘grooming’. It would have been simple to apply the Court and Parole orders and allow the couple to place at least the victims in care at whatever cost there may have been to the children. A new way of thinking about the impasse was needed. Real and sustained change was required and occurred. It was not without its challenges and difficulties. It was not without risk. It was not assured of success. But the example illustrates that it is possible to develop positive and lasting change by engaging with the family and working within the environmental constraints (for example, low intellect, poverty, poor community resources, high re-offending rates), towards objectives that are agreed by all participants, where the processes and labour are allocated among the participants and with very clear evaluative methods that were both assessable and observable. The model worked in this clinical setting that was chosen for its difficulties and the challenges that it would pose to the model.

Chapter 6 described and analysed the use of the practice model as applied to group work within a medium security prison. The table 10.2 illustrates the practical difference that active being can make when applied consiliently.
### Table 10.2 Practice Improvements using the consilience practice model in Group Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Response with Thinking and Doing but Passive Being</th>
<th>Response with Consilience of Thinking, Doing and Active Being</th>
<th>Improvement in Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant Identity</td>
<td>Prisoner who is defined by law and current situation</td>
<td>Human being defined by virtues and transcendent values</td>
<td>Enabling prisoners to transition to defining themselves within humanity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Group</td>
<td>Educational and instructive</td>
<td>Mildly therapeutic</td>
<td>Meaningful engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison Culture</td>
<td>Accept and replicate a culture of control and oppression</td>
<td>Instil the opportunity for choice and the capacity for change; pro-socially model change</td>
<td>Model a non-control and anti-oppressive alternative culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Development</td>
<td>Accept the parameters and agenda set by contracting agency</td>
<td>Challenge and change the parameters to ensure choice and an alternative approach; refuse reporting obligations to avoid replicating control and command approaches.</td>
<td>Flexible program aimed at the key features of re-entry into the community; non-reporting to agency.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source: Author**

The group involved creative thinking and critical reflection upon the situation and circumstances of the inmates. It drew upon a variety of methods, required multiple social work skills and used both qualitative and quantitative approaches to evaluating the outcomes. The sense of ‘being’ of the group was important. The group involved individuals who had a collective identity (‘prisoner’). The challenges included understanding and promoting the individual diversity of participants who would be individually released and face individual challenges. The great challenge to the social work group leader involved recognising and promoting diversity, differentiation and change within a context that promoted conformity and uniformity. Central to this was the notion of ‘choice’ and operating in an empowering and liberating way within a context that was antagonistic to those concepts. Creativity and innovation had to be tempered by the very real dangers that individual change (a change in the sense of ‘being’) within a control-dominated environment poses to both the individual and the group and the institution. The challenge of ‘thinking and doing and being’ other than a
prisoner—while still in prison—needed very careful implementation as the possibilities of what could be are considered in the light of the daily reality of what is.

The prison group was chosen from many possible, personally-run groups (student groups, staff groups, volunteer worker groups, early childhood playgroups, adolescent groups, church groups and ethnicity-specific groups) in order to test the model in a difficult situation. The model proved to be workable within the very real environmental constraints imposed by a prison setting. Most groups in prison are educational in nature rather than therapeutic. This group was designed to be ‘mildly therapeutic’ rather than educational. The concession to ‘mildly’ was in recognition of the environmental constraints and to the fact that the objectives were established from a ‘control’ mentality where the prison authorities (and the contracting agency) had wanted substantial input to the program and the actual prisoners had had no input to the program. My approach, using the practical model, was to modify the demands of the contracting agency and apply a model of choice for prisoners within the recognised constraints of the environment. This was a significant departure from the approach of other prison group work.

Chapter 7 applied the model to community work in three rural and substantially Indigenous locations. Table 10.3 illustrates the practical difference that active being can make when used consiliently in relation to community work.
Table 10.3 Practice Improvements using the consilience practice model in Community Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Response with Thinking and Doing but Passive Being</th>
<th>Response with Consilience of Thinking, Doing and Active Being</th>
<th>Improvement in Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funder’s Limited Agenda—Illicit Drugs</td>
<td>Adhere to the agenda as is</td>
<td>Expand the agenda to include misused licit drugs</td>
<td>Addressing community-felt issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff for the Project</td>
<td>Employ available qualified staff</td>
<td>Employ and train staff who can relate to, and address issues with community and train service providers</td>
<td>Meaningful engagement with community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Produce project report according to the funder’s requirement</td>
<td>Creatively engage youth and community members in addressing identified issues</td>
<td>Active engagement of the community in addressing issues. Creative youth involvement—CD etc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

Again the example had the objectives determined initially by neither the social worker nor the direct participants of the programs but rather by a national agenda set in Canberra. At the initial stages of the community development project, these objectives were challenged, changed and a diversity of approaches was envisaged. Consequently, engagement, assessment and collaboration varied across the communities and the activities undertaken were different in different locations. This highlights the diversity and uniqueness of each situation and the need to create opportunities in each unique circumstance. The social work/community development activities were people-driven within the context of a national framework. The being involved modifying the national processes in a way that made sense to and focussed upon the local communities. It required a change to the program objectives by including ‘licit drug misuse’ as well as ‘illicit drug use’. This approach enabled activities, at a local level, to be developed that were appropriate and relevant to the local communities. The use of local knowledge and resources was particularly important and the use of the arts (video, music, photographs, handmade books) was as important as quantitatively-driven knowledge and methods.
Much of the creative thinking was done by myself while the implementation was carried out by a project officer. This highlighted that a thinking-doing-being skill set was required (not necessarily in the one person) but the project was delayed until a project officer with the appropriate and complementary skill set could be employed. The use of the model proved workable and improved the social work outcomes for individuals and whole communities.

Social workers are encouraged to be researchers/practitioners (for example, the AASW competencies). Table 10.4 illustrates the difference that active being and consilience can make in social work research.

**Table 10.4** Practice Improvements using the consilience practice model in Social Work Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Response with Thinking and Doing but Passive Being</th>
<th>Response with Consilience of Thinking, Doing and Active Being</th>
<th>Improvement in Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Approach</strong></td>
<td>Accept research methodology and paradigm</td>
<td>Question methodology; many approaches; Indigenous initiated</td>
<td>Include participants in research; praxis as critical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No Rates/No Services Approach</strong></td>
<td>Analyse and report the policy as is</td>
<td>Question the policy and its logic; Point out anomalies and seek change</td>
<td>Advocacy and change of oppressive policy; legal challenge to approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low Aboriginal Employment</strong></td>
<td>Analyse and report the issue with concerns</td>
<td>Point out mismatch between policy and practice. Make a case to employ Aboriginal people</td>
<td>Increase in employoment of Aboriginal people; annual monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship Between Aboriginal communities and Councils</strong></td>
<td>Analyse and report relationship issues with recommendations</td>
<td>Use the analysis to empower and improve relationships</td>
<td>Practical guidelines to work with councils and improved relationship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

While there are research-to-practice initiatives (for example, the NSW Department of Community Services have a dedicated research-to-practice team that take the results
of largely empirical research and translates it into practice requirements) and the evidence-based practice (see, for example, the Cochrane Institute or the Campbell Collaboration) movement substantially concentrates on empirical evidence, there are fewer practice-to-research initiatives from within social work. I wanted to illustrate practitioner-researchers leading and doing research rather than being passive recipients of research. I wanted to demonstrate research that is based in and with participants and practice rather than research initiated by disinterested parties and based in the realm of ideas.

Chapter 8 applied the practice model to social research that was in line with the commitment of social work as praxis. The chapter considered the situation of ten Indigenous communities and the ten local government areas in which they were located by focussing on a range of factors. The purpose of the research was to provide a ‘blueprint’ for future development. This research was non-conformist with some notions of research as objective, techno-rational and scientific/positivist. This research involved multiple methods that were both qualitative and quantitative, an empathy with the growing literature on Indigenous research methodologies, extensive consultation, participatory approaches and recognition of the contextual and political situation. It involved dispelling myths, understanding being (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) and looking forward to a just and differentiated future in a shared location. The practice model focussed upon change and upon the participants. The collaboration, engagement and assessment varied between communities and local government. The outcomes were empowering and made significant difference to some Indigenous communities and recognised the environmental factors that were unique to each community and situation.

Chapter 9 considered the application of the practice model to social work administration/management/leadership by focussing upon these in the context of
staffing and Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) as Director of Child and Family Services in the NSW Department of Community Services. Table 10.5 illustrates the difference that active being and consilience can make in administration/management/leadership.

Table 10.5 Practice Improvements using the consilience practice model in Administration/Management/Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Response with Thinking and Doing but Passive Being</th>
<th>Response with Consilience of Thinking, Doing and Active Being</th>
<th>Improvement in Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resource Allocation Model (RAM)</td>
<td>Accept current model and outcomes</td>
<td>Question model; make a case for change; advocate for change</td>
<td>RAM changes to the benefit of rural participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Protection Intervention</td>
<td>Accept current crisis intervention model</td>
<td>Develop multiple models of intervention including prevention and early intervention</td>
<td>Needs of children rather than systems as paramount concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Recruiting and Mentoring</td>
<td>Utilise State-wide policies and processes</td>
<td>Point out mismatch between policy and practice. Initiate additional local responses. Develop Indigenous mentoring</td>
<td>Decrease in vacancy rates; increase in retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children in OOHC</td>
<td>Accept the rise of 25% in eight months</td>
<td>Reframe OOHC as representing family tragedy; focus upon poor practices; implement remedial practices</td>
<td>Decrease in OOHC by 10% in one year—other areas recorded 15% rises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruiting Non-Indigenous Staff</td>
<td>Accept high levels of staff vacancies in hard to fill locations</td>
<td>Analyse staff vacancies and fears of potential staff. Initiate changes including a mobile student unit.</td>
<td>Vacancies decreased from 37 of 100 professional staff to 8 of 113 staff in one year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

The chapter highlighted: the need to embrace transactional and transformational leadership styles; the use of quantitative data and the search for qualitative explanations consistent with the data; the initiation of new approaches that fulfilled state-wide requirements but were usable and sensible at the local level; and the administration/management/leadership evidenced by prosocially modelling the desired behaviours and outcomes. These involved the use of thinking skills, the use of doing
skills and an understanding of being both in the social worker administrator/manager/leader and in the participants. The chapter focussed upon the differences between a social work leader and an administrator/manager/leader. The outcomes in the examples chosen illustrated that the model provided a way of incorporating information of great quantity and variable quality within the context of multiple and disparate demands, a complex environment, real and possible co-participants, time limits on engaging, assessing and collaborating with participants and groups, variable processes and multiple objectives that were sometimes complementary and sometimes competing.

Consilience of thinking, doing and being and the practice model provided a way to achieve outcomes that were consistent with social work values including social justice. Consistently, across the five areas of social work practice, the PEOPLE model has allowed for creative practice, the opportunity for non-conformity, consideration of multiple demands and expectations, a focus upon the participants and their view of the world, the use of multiple sources of knowledge and a focus upon outcomes. The principles for a practice model were:

1. To place a priority on participants (at the individual/family, group and community level) in line with the fundamental recognition of participant self-determination and as a counter to the imposed and oppressive nature of some social work interventions;
2. To ensure that the participant’s (whether individual, group, community) environment is carefully considered jointly by both the social worker and participant;
3. To ensure that ‘theories for practice’ and any information, approach or perspective were drawn from a wide and diverse range of disciplines that are
most efficacious for the situation;

4. To be outcome- and impact-focussed in order to counter the view that social
work is ineffective and directionless;

5. To be practical and usable across social work settings; and

6. To be consistent with the purposes and ideals of social work.

Each of the areas to which the practical model was applied resulted in an increased
focus upon participants (in line with the concept of client self-determination), involved
careful consideration of the environment (in line with the concept of the ‘person-in-the-
environment’), allowed for information to be drawn from many sources; was outcome-
focussed; was practical and applicable; and furthered the ideals of social justice and the
purpose of social work (praxis/change). Adopting consilience of thinking, doing and,
importantly, being, allowed for better social work.

WHAT ARE THE LIMITATIONS OF THE MODEL OF PRACTICE?

There are many possible and legitimate criticisms of the practice model developed in
this thesis in addition to the limitations identified in Chapter Four. Legitimate criticism
is that the practical model is based on my reflections, personal practice and critical
experiences and that these may be subject to biases and memory failures. It is
subjective and reflective. The model may not work in all practice contexts and it may
need to be modified. Specific criticisms can be made including:

1. That there are alternative understandings of being, thinking and doing and
   alternate lists of virtues as indicated in chapter Two;

2. That more work needs to be done on the consideration of client self-
determination as the environmental scan, the objectives, the processes and
labour and the evaluation are *jointly* decided upon by the participant and the social worker. Is client self-determination rendered a ‘myth’ and should we speak of ‘co-determination’ or ‘a continuum of self-determination’ which may more appropriately equate to the realities of practice?;

3. That the complexity of relationship-building reflected in the practice model as collaboration, engagement and assessment is not adequately and precisely described and the dangers exist that the participant’s thinking, doing and being can be trampled upon such that the practice model becomes an instrument of oppression;

4. That the practice model is inherently conservative in that by attempting to avoid the excesses of fashionable theoretical approaches and questionable ‘new’ knowledge, it fails to appreciate genuine change in human *being* and knowledge;

5. That the criteria used for incorporating theories for practice into the practical model are not rigorously examined. What criteria would be used for considering how absurd, irreconcilable, irrational ‘knowledge’ is to be treated without privileging one form of knowledge and discrediting others? How is knowledge from highly questionable sources (for example, drug company sponsored research or private prison research sponsored by private prison companies) to be treated?;

6. That consilience could be subjected to somewhat similar (but not the same) criticisms that can be levelled at integrative/eclectic approaches (see Chapter 2);

7. That in order to defend social work against the accusation of ‘being useless’, this practice model places too much emphasis on objectives and outcomes rather
than on the participant’s self-awareness and the processes of social work intervention. Is it oriented too much towards outcomes and impact?; and

8. That the model proves to be weak and deficient at the point of objectives. While the intent was for the participant-social worker to jointly decide upon objectives, in a number of the examples, the objectives were set by those outside the social worker-participant relationship. The group, community and social administration and, to a lesser extent, social research examples involved objectives and aims that were established by those outside the direct participant-social worker relationship and this feature may need to be factored into changes to the model.

These are legitimate criticisms and areas for future consideration and development. The priority here has been to develop the practice model and to trial it at the individual, group, community, research and social administration levels.

**HOW CAN OTHER SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS USE AND DEVELOP THE MODEL/FRAMEWORK ARTICULATED IN THIS THESIS TO IMPROVE SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE?**

The model developed in the thesis may be used in different ways and at different times. Both prior to and during work in any practice area, practitioners need to organise their thoughts which may include consideration of applicable theory, legitimate activities, capacity, knowledge drawn from many sources, resource considerations and participant perceptions and approaches. Practitioners will consider a range of social work skills and audit their own skills for the particular field of practice. But, practitioners, by introspection and reflection, need to also consciously activate their being and consider its applicability for practice in that field. This involves identifying their being in terms of virtues. Not unlike a skills audit or an environmental scan of knowledge, the
practitioner will identify their own virtues and areas in which they may need to continue
to develop. It is not unusual for practitioners/educators to assess students on the basis of
their need to develop confidence, commitment, conviction, honesty and their own goals
in life. It is a similar process for the practitioner to consciously and explicitly consider
matters of fortitude, consistently re-appraise temperance, monitor their sense of hope
and continually assess themselves in each situation against virtues such as ‘justice’ and
a commitment to ‘doing good’. Consilience of thinking, doing and being offers the
opportunity for practitioners to make use of theory, use skills and develop relationships
with participants that are ethical and sensibly use ‘self’ or being for the purpose of
developing better practice and better participant outcomes.

The second use of the model is post-intervention. After working in a particular
practice area, or completing the task, the social worker can reflectively develop
responses based on the model (see Figure 4.1). In practical terms this can mean
journaling responses that are ‘readings’ of the practice experience. The reflective
questions may include: What were the readings? How were they used? What knowledge
informed the intervention? What was the process of engagement, collaboration and
assessment? What happened? What skills were used? What was the status of being? Did
the action enhance empowerment and praxis? Using the analytic framework developed
in the thesis and with an emphasis on being, they can apply the model and improve
practice.

The field of social work is diverse and social workers are also diverse. Each reflects
a unique sense of being in both his/her personal and professional life. I have used the
model in a number of settings to encourage both students and social workers to develop
their own personal-professional model of practice that is consistent with the purpose
and values of social work and his/her own sense of being.
As an educator, I have presented the model to final-year students as a way of assisting them to make sense of the overwhelming social world and to place their theoretical learning and knowledge within a practice framework. I have not been prescriptive—but rather have suggested that the consilience model is a way of practicing that fulfils some of the key components of social work in a manner that is inclusive and apply-able without being simplistic, reductionist and oppressive. The overwhelming response has been gratitude that there is a basic model that provides a structure in which to think, do and be creatively while allowing for individuals to develop and enhance their own approach which will vary with the participant social worker’s being, the co-participant’s being, the environment, the objectives, the processes and the desired outcomes.

I am professionally supervising experienced social work staff in PANOC (Physical Abuse and Neglect of Children), Corrections, Community Mental Health and in community development. As part of professional supervision, I have outlined the practice model (in varying depth and as appropriate) as a way of working through particular issues and difficulties in these fields of practice. The response has been positive with individuals moving to modify and develop their own practice models that are consistent with the modelling principles and with the purposes and values of social work. The specific purpose has been to improve practice in that field. This has variously led practitioners to develop specific new knowledge; to re-evaluate their engagement, assessment and collaboration skills; to apply an environmental scan in a more purposeful way; to enhance the co-participant’s involvement; to set meaningful and achievable objectives; to develop specific skills; to prioritise obtaining specific ‘doing’ skills; and to consider their own being and its contribution to the maintenance or resolution of issues of practice. These practitioners self-report that using the model (or elements of it) has improved their practice and enhanced their satisfaction with their
work and contributed to client outcomes.

SOCIAL WORK AND THE FUTURE

This thesis began many years ago through concerns for the direction and future of social work practice. Social work practice could be seen to be fragmenting into numerous specialisations. It could be seen to be becoming increasingly deductive and instrumental in its approaches rather than inductive and creative. Clients/participants, despite rhetoric to the opposite, were increasingly the objects of programs and methods rather than the subjects who exercise their human rights and obligations in collaborative partnerships with their social worker. Social work was, and is, in danger of emphasising codes of behaviour, professionalism, standardised assessment, routinised interventions and focusing upon observable and quantifiable practice outcomes. The objectification of people (both clients and social workers), with its loss of the individual uniqueness of both the people and the situation, arises in part as a result of the application of standardised, deductive, objectives-driven approaches without the recognition of the uniqueness of each person’s being and its contribution to his/her sense of, and understanding of, the world. Practice was, and is, in danger of becoming codified, deductive and evidence-based, procedural, and with the application of standardised and structured approaches that are instrumental. It is important to recognise the contribution of these to social work practice. But it is equally important to recognise other contributions including inductive thinking, imagination, individual diversity, cultural diversity, resource diversity and the unique contribution that the being of each social worker and participant brings to each situation. Integration between the deductive and inductive, the objective and the subjective, the science and the arts, the logical-rational and the imaginative often leads to the search for a singular and reductionist, unifying approach. Whewellian consilience, by contrast, recognises the unique contribution that
both art and science and inductive and deductive approaches make to an understanding of complex and diverse reality. A constructive future for social work lies in encouraging the consilience of different knowledges rather than a search for a ‘false’ and reductionist unity. It lies in the recognition of the multiplicity and diversity of the social world. It lies in recognising the importance of thinking, doing and being. It lies in the recognition of the fullness of human being (physical/organic, mental/emotional, social/relational, spiritual/existential). It lies in the centrality of human being to social work.

In this thesis, I have developed and trialed a practice model that I have used both intuitively and explicitly over many years and in many settings. The model recognises thinking, doing and being (being as prudence, temperance, justice, fortitude, charity, hope and faith). The model recognises the fullness of human being. The model seeks to place people rather than processes as central. The model recognises diversity and draws knowledge from any appropriate source. The model is not the only model nor is it necessarily the best model—but rather it is a model that brings together key elements of social work using Whewellian consilience as a framework.

In my view, the future approach for social work will need to be understood within a context that acknowledges diversity and consiliently understands multiple societal, family, community and individual factors in a holistic way. Practice models will need to be able to accommodate the ‘overwhelmingly social world’ in ways that make it comprehensible but without seeking unity in a reductionist way, and thereby losing diversity and the essence of being human. Social work faces challenges. If empirically only, evidence-based paradigms prevail, social work will move away from its philosophical and humanities base and follow much of the psychology profession down the deductive, quantitative approach to practice. Evidence-based procedures and testing could replace humanity, justice and creativity as the hallmarks of social work practice.
Alternatively, social work as a discipline could fracture into individual/family, group work, community work, social administration and research specialisations with their particular emphases. This would weaken social work and create the situation where narrow specialisation rather than holistic social work practice was valued to the detriment of participants. Aligning oneself with a single paradigm of practice and/or theory means disregarding alternative approaches and knowledge by focussing upon a single or, at least, limited aspects of the situation. In operationalising consilience, the independent contributions from a variety of different but valid ways of knowing are subjected to serious and generous dialogue with each contributing a ‘swatch on wisdom’s quilt’. Consilience requires thinking and doing and being. In a very diverse social world, through consilience, we (participants and social workers) may continue ‘to make the road by walking’.
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Appendix

Community Profile
Interview Design

Stages in the Community-Profiling Process

• Preparing the ground
  Creating a steering group
  Initial planning
  Making contacts
  Learning from others’ experiences
  Identifying resources
  Engaging consultants or professional researchers
  Developing a management structure

• Setting aims and objectives

• Deciding on methods

• Fieldwork
  Production of information-gathering tools, eg. questionnaires
  Training of staff involved in data collection
  Collecting ‘new’ information
  Recording information
  Analysing information

• Reporting
  Writing up fieldwork
  Production of draft profile
  Consultants on draft profile
  Amendments to draft profile
  Production of final community profile
  Dissemination of research findings

• Action
  Consultations over key issues, priorities, actions to be taken
  Drafting community action plan
  Consultations over draft plan
  Production of action plan
  Dissemination of action plan
  Implementation
  Monitoring and evaluation
Methods

1. Previous Community Profiles

2. Community Consultation

3. Unobtrusive Observation

4. Community Walk
Community Profile

Name: ______________________

Research based on

Meeting with:

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

Individuals contacted:
Review existing community profile:

Housing, infrastructure and community facilities:

Health:

Enterprise, employment and training:

Law and justice:

Education:

Heritage and culture:
Community Resources

- **Land**: what is it used for; areas that are unused or derelict

- **Environment**: condition of public and private spaces; extent of air, water, noise pollution; roads, railways, footpaths

- **Population**: size; characteristics—age, ethnic composition, employment; status; household composition etc

- **Housing**: type, size and tenure of property; standard of repair; house prices/rent levels

- **Local economy**: types of industry and occupation; extent of employment/unemployment

- **Services**: statutory (e.g., education, health, welfare, benefits etc); voluntary (e.g., self-help groups, housing, associations, social groups etc); private sector (e.g., banks, shops repair services, pubs, cinemas, cafes, garages etc)
• **Transport**: buses, trains etc

• **Communications**: newspapers, local radio and television, newsletters

• **Power structures**: elected representatives, key groups or activists
## Services to Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aboriginal Input</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statutory services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Police</td>
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<tr>
<td>Library</td>
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<td>Leisure/sports centre</td>
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<td>Local schools</td>
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<td>Planning department</td>
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<td>Health centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Statutory services**
- **Voluntary/community organisations**
  - Tenants/residents group
  - Neighbourhood association
  - Parent and toddler group
  - Advocacy group

- **Community representatives**
  - Ward councillors (parish, district/city, country)
  - MP
  - ATSIC Regional Councillors
  - Other community ‘leaders’
Issues

Employment

Finances

Alcohol/Drugs

Gambling

Family or marital

Medical

Psychiatric

Education

Legal

Accommodation

Social Network eg. transport, leisure, cultural
Relationship with Local Government

Knowledge of History/Aborigines:

Roads:

Rates:

Water/Sewerage:

Garbage

Land Claims:

Consultation:

Main Issues:
### Ratings

1. The relationship of the local Aboriginal community with local government:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1. Awful</th>
<th>5.</th>
<th>10. (Excellent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. Local government’s provision of:

- Roads/signs
- Rates
- Water/Sewerage
- Consultation
- Land claims
- Understanding of Aboriginal people
- Employment
- Representation
- Community services
- Library services
- Cultural activities
- Environmental protection
- Sporting facilities
- Youth centre
- Childminding centres
- Public toilets
- Playground equipment etc
Community Profile

Cohesion:

Aspirations/Hopes:

Frustrations:

Future:

Leadership:

Community Priorities:
(eg. if there was only one thing you could change, what would it be?)

Existing Local Agreements:
Local Government Consultation
Interview Design

Name: ______________________

Research based on

Meeting with:

1.

2.

3.

4.

Individuals contacted:
About the Local Government Area

- **Land**: what is it used for; areas that are unused or derelict

- **Environment**: condition of public and private spaces; extent of air, water, noise pollution; roads, railways, footpaths

- **Population**: size; characteristics—age, ethnic composition, employment; status; household composition etc

- **Housing**: type, size and tenure of property; standard of repair; house prices/rent levels

- **Local economy**: types of industry and occupation; extent of employment/unemployment

- **Services**: statutory (e.g. education, health, welfare, benefits etc); voluntary (e.g. self-help groups, housing, associations, social groups etc); private sector (e.g. banks, shops, repair services, pubs, cinemas, cafes, garages etc); Churches
- **Transport**: buses, trains etc

- **Communications**: newspapers, local radio and television, newsletters, resident surveys

- **Power structures**: elected representatives, key groups or activists
Services to Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aboriginal Staff</th>
<th>Input Consultation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- **Statutory services**
  - Social Services
  - Housing
  - Police
  - Library
  - Leisure/sports centre
  - Local schools
  - Planning department
  - Health centre
  - Youth services
  - Head Teacher
  - Local government

- **Voluntary/community organisations**
  - Tenants/residents group
  - Neighbourhood association
  - Parent and toddler group
  - Advocacy groups
  - Key observers
  - Voluntary Committees of Council

- **Community representatives**
  - Ward councillors (parish, district/city, country)
  - MP
  - Other community ‘leaders’

- **Relationship with Regional Organisation of Councils**

- **Relationship with State/Federal Governments**
Issues—Community

Employment:

Finances:

Alcohol/Drugs:

Gambling:

Family or marital:

Medical:

Psychiatric:

Education:

Legal:

Accommodation:

Social Network (eg. transport, leisure, cultural):
Issues—Local Government

Ratepegging:

Litigation:

Increasing expectations of Local Government:

Funding base:

Population increase/decrease:

Rural economic base

Availability of Federal/State services:
Relationship with Aboriginal Communities

Knowledge of History/Aborigines:

Roads:

Rates: - Land Rates
       Service Rates

Water/Sewerage:

Garbage:

Land Claims: (attitude)

Consultation: (with communities)

Main Issues:

Existing Local Agreements:

Contribution Aboriginal community could
make to Local Government:

Contribution Local Government could
make to Aboriginal community:
Community Profile

Cohesion:

Aspirations/Hopes:

Frustrations:

Future:

Leadership:

Community Priorities:
(eg. if there was only one thing you could change, what would it be?)
### Ratings

1. The relationship of the Local Government with Aboriginal community:

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<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>1. Awful</th>
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<th>10. (Excellent)</th>
</tr>
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</table>

2. Local government’s provision of:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roads/signs</td>
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<td>Cultural activities</td>
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<td>Environmental protection</td>
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<td>Sporting facilities</td>
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<td>Youth centre</td>
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<td>Public toilets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Playground equipment etc</td>
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</table>
Ensure

• Copy of publications if possible

• Copy of any Local Agreements

• Opportunity to ring back (if needed)
Annexure 1

**Children’s Service:**
- Early Childhood Centres (Baby Health Centres)
- Early Childhood Mobile Van
- Family Day Care (registered home based carer)
- Home Based Childcare (private home based carer)
- Occasional Care (casual/unplanned care)
- Vocational Care (holiday care)
- Long Day Care (centre based)
- Preschools (3 to 5 years—session based care)
- Before and After School Care (5 to 12 years)
- Toy Libraries
- Children’s Playground Equipment in Parks

**Youth Services:**
- Youth Centres (eg. PCYC)
- Youth Groups—Church based
- Youth Groups—other than Church based

**Housing:**
- Government Housing (ie. Housing Dept)
- Private Rental Housing (not Government)
- Short-Term Crisis Accommodation
- Aged Accommodation: Nursing Home
- Aged Accommodation: Hostel
- Aged Accommodation: Other (please specify)

**Health Services:**
- Community Health Services
- Council Immunisation Program

**Transport Services:**
- Buses
- Bus shelters & facilities (eg. signs, timetables)
- Taxis
- Community Transport

**Other Services:**
- Art Gallery
- Museum
- Library
- Swimming Pool
- Neighbourhood Centres/Community Halls
- Senior Citizens Centres
- Community Radio
- Kerbside Recycling Collection
- Other Recycling Facilities
Planning & Development:

Roads
Cemetery
Garbage Tip