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On being one of the have-nots: an investigation into the relationship between emotional disturbance and reading disability in one hundred adolescents with case studies of the impact of a set of curricular strategies on ten of the teenagers

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ON BEING ONE OF THE HAVE-NOTS: 
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE RELATIONSHIP 
BETWEEN EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE 
AND READING DISABILITY 
IN ONE HUNDRED ADOLESCENTS, 
WITH CASE STUDIES OF THE IMPACT 
OF A SET OF CURRICULAR STRATEGIES 
ON TEN OF THE TEENAGERS 

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements 
for the award of the degree 

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY 

from 

THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG 

BY 

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ABSTRACT

This research is an examination of a possible link between emotional disturbance and reading disability in a group of one hundred teenagers enrolled in a special education Agency. As part of the research, a set of curricular strategies aimed at reducing the emotional disturbance and remedying the reading disability were examined in terms of their effect on the lives of ten of the teenagers from the sample.

This research was based in the naturalistic paradigm, taking care to respect the multiple realities and values which exerted their influence in shaping the policies, interactions and outcomes at the site.

An important aspect of this research, fully consonant with the naturalistic paradigm, was its emergent design. The inquiry was initiated as a result of the working hypotheses formed by the candidate during his many years of sustained involvement on the site. A review of the literature served to confirm some of these hypotheses. The data, collected over a six-year period and consisting of archival material, test results and interviews with the main stakeholders at the site, served to shed further light on the question of the possible link between emotional disturbance and reading disability. The case studies of the teenagers from the sample emerged as a result of focusing on the impact of a set of specifically designed curricular strategies which were aimed at modifying their emotional disturbance and remedying their reading disability.

An important insight gained from this inquiry is that emotional disturbance and reading disability are two facets of the same problem, namely, the deprivation of the fundamental human need for emotional security. Two significant inferences drawn from this insight are that:
(a) emotionally disturbed and reading disabled children can be helped only when measures are taken to ensure that their basic human need for emotional security is satisfied; and,
(b) an educational institution can facilitate the satisfaction of a child's need for emotional security by designing curricular strategies which serve to repair and maintain the key relationships in that child's life.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE INQUIRY

1. THE AIM OF THIS STUDY

This study seeks to illuminate the connection between reading disability and emotional disturbance, and to explore curricular strategies that may be used to reduce the emotional disturbance and remedy the reading disability. This study had its origin in the candidate's experience of some fifteen years at the site, teaching emotionally disturbed teenagers. During these years, he noticed a striking pattern in their learning difficulties: a significant number of the students were handicapped by a reading disability which put them at least three years behind their non-disturbed counterparts. This study is, therefore, an attempt to examine the implications of this pattern of reading disability in emotionally disturbed teenagers, and to assess the impact of a set of curricular strategies which seek to address the behaviour and learning problems of a group of such adolescents.

The study examines the socio-economic and educational background of one hundred emotionally disturbed teenagers. It then proceeds to focus on the impact of a set of curricular responses on the behaviour and learning patterns of 10 of the 100 teenagers. These ten students are used as case studies, and their background, their reaction to the curriculum and the progress they make in acquiring reading skills are described in detail.
2. THE RATIONALE FOR THIS STUDY

The rationale for this study is to be found in the fact that by conservative estimates (e.g., Bower, 1981, 1982; Kauffman, 1985; Rowe and Rowe, 1992, Stott et al., 1975), "probably 6% to 10% of the school age population is in need of special services due to disordered behaviour" (Kauffman, 1985: 29). If, as implied in this study, these students are also handicapped by significant reading disability, the findings of this research will be able to throw some light on the nature of the nexus between emotional disturbance and reading disability. The focus of the study on the curriculum strategies and remedial techniques that may help these students will be of practical use to regular classroom teachers who have the responsibility for dealing with two or three emotionally disturbed children in each classroom of thirty students. Further, it is hoped that this research will benefit special education teachers by:

- raising their awareness of the connection between reading disability and emotional disturbance, and
- pointing out techniques of dealing effectively with both the emotional disturbance and the reading disability.

It is also worth remembering that while the literature on the causes of reading failure describes several investigations which range over a period of fifty years and which explore the physical and psychological factors that account for reading disability (e.g. Bennett, 1938; Clay, 1979; Dykman and Ackerman, 1991; McGee et al., 1985, 1987, 1988; Robinson, 1946; Roswell and Natchez, 1964; Solomon 1953), there has been - apart from a few exceptions such as Day and Peters (1989), Levy, Horn and Dalglish (1987), Rowe and Rowe (1992) - a dearth of research which examines reading disability and reading remediation from the point of view of emotionally disturbed teenagers and their unique
experiences of life. It is, therefore, felt that this research will fill a gap in the literature of reading disability and reading remediation in emotionally disturbed teenagers.

Again, while most of the studies cited above have used the rationalistic paradigm, this research is completed in the naturalistic paradigm, and is therefore, able to describe in detail the reality of the teenagers and their families from a variety of perspectives. The characteristics which this study has acquired as a result of its use of the naturalistic paradigm are described in Section Five of this chapter.

3. THE SETTING OF THIS STUDY

The study was carried out at a special educational agency, (Referred throughout the thesis as The Agency) located in Engadine, New South Wales. The Agency was founded in 1939 by Thomas Dunlea, an Irish-born Catholic priest from the Arch-diocese of Sydney. His aim was to provide security and education to orphaned and disadvantaged youngsters who came to his parish of Sutherland (The Agency, 1993). At present, it is a junior secondary residential school, devoted exclusively to the education of emotionally disturbed students in Grades 7 to 10. It is situated at the southern end of the Sydney Metropolitan Area, and at any one time, has an enrolment of 40 disadvantaged male teenagers. The majority of the boys come from the western parts of the metropolitan area and from Wollongong. Eightyone percent of the boys are from one-parent families. The behaviour disorders exhibited by these boys have caused over 40 percent of them to be suspended from their local high schools, and a very large number of these students have had at least minor brushes with the law. More than 30 percent of the boys are sent to the agency by juvenile courts with terms of up to 18 months for such offences as car-stealing, breaking
and entering, being uncontrollable and being in moral danger. Coming as they
do from backgrounds of severe economic and emotional deprivation, these
teenagers tend to have the most negative attitude towards their schooling.
Generally speaking, their low self-image and the frustrations they have
experienced in previous school-settings colour their view of schools as arenas of
failure, and scholastic achievement as being useless to the attainment of their
already low career expectations. In short, the students exhibit the classic
symptoms of alienation - powerlessness, normlessness and estrangement

The physical setting of the Agency may be described as follows: It
occupies approximately four hectares of land. On it are a complex of two-storey
buildings which were extensively renovated with Australian Commonwealth
Government grants in excess of one million dollars in 1991-92. There are three
living units in the upper storey (with about 10 boys in each). Another living unit
with individual rooms for about 15 teenagers is in a building across the road
from the main complex. The upper floor of the main complex also houses the
science laboratory and the music room. On the ground floor there are a set of six
classrooms, the school library, a number of administrative offices, a technics
block, a computer room, an art room and a theatre hall with facilities for drama
classes. One wing of this building houses the living quarters of the Catholic
religious order who run the Agency. On the southern end of the property is a
large chapel facing a tranquil grassed area with the grave of Fr. Thomas Dunlea,
the founder of the special education agency. On the western side of the property
there are extensive playing fields and surfaced recreation areas which are
floodlit. On this side are also the school swimming pool, the tennis and
basketball courts and a large indoor gymnasium. Overall, the impression which
a visitor gets is of ample residential, educational and recreational facilities (see map, Appendix A).

4. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THIS STUDY

This thesis draws on two broad theoretical domains, namely, theories which explain effective reading and how it is acquired, and theories which try to explain emotional disturbance. Within these broad theoretical domains, the thesis is guided by a sociopsycholinguistic view of reading and an ecological perspective on emotional disturbance. In the chapter reviewing the literature, I have given the reasons for the choice of these two perspectives. Briefly, the two choices have been the result of the emergent nature of the research design of this thesis. My study of the relevant literature as well as the working hypothesis I had formed as a teacher of emotionally disturbed teenagers at the Agency, seemed to point towards these two particular theoretical views of emotional disturbance and reading disability. Furthermore, the sociopsycholinguistic perspective on reading as well as the ecological perspective on emotional disturbance were selected for the theoretical framework of the thesis because it was felt that they explain the process of reading and the phenomenon of emotional disturbance in a more comprehensive manner than the other perspectives that have been advocated by various theorists. Another reason for the preference shown for these two particular perspectives in this thesis is that they form the fundamental theoretical underpinnings in the educational policies and processes adopted at the setting where the research for this thesis was based.

The choice of these two broad theoretical perspectives have affected the research decisions in a number of areas: following the ecological view of emotional disturbance has meant that a significant emphasis has been placed on looking at a range of key aspects in the life of the students, such as:
• the structure of the families of the students;
• the key interpersonal dynamics in the families;
• the socio-economic condition of the families;
• the neighbourhoods in which the families are located; and,
• the effects of educational turbulence on the learning and behaviour of the students.

Similarly, when researching the various aspects of the reading disability of the teenagers, following the socio-psycholinguistic view of reading, the emphasis has been on:
• the ways in which the students were helped to improve their comprehension;
• the holistic approach to learning adopted by the teachers; and,
• the ways in which the students were provided with opportunities for using their reading ability in a variety of social contexts.

Besides making use of the ecological perspective on emotional disturbance and the sociopsycholinguistic perspective on reading, the thesis also makes use of self-concept theories and the work of Abraham Maslow in the field of need-fulfilment. This again, is a consequence of the emergent nature of the research design. As the candidate delved into the literature and studied the initial set of the data, the role of fundamental need-fulfilment and the importance that self-concept played in these apparently related phenomena among his students became increasingly obvious. A study of the literature on self-concept and need-fulfilment served to confirm in the mind of the candidate what he had observed from the actions and remarks of his emotionally disturbed, reading disabled students over a number of years, namely, that they suffered from serious and prolonged deprivation of emotional security and, that consequently, they seemed to have a significantly lower self-esteem than their 'normal' counterparts.
5. THE METHODS USED IN THIS STUDY

As has been stated earlier, this study is based in the naturalistic paradigm. As a result, it has a number of characteristics which differentiate it from research performed in the rationalistic paradigm. Some of these characteristics, as explained by its chief proponents, Guba and Lincoln (1981, 1982, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) are described below:

(1) The Setting

This study takes place in a natural setting - in this case, the four-hectare site of a special educational agency where the students spend 24 hours a day for five days of the week for forty weeks each school year. This setting is selected for the study because of the naturalistic ontology. This ontology suggests that realities are wholes that can be understood only if studied in their contexts, and only if due acknowledgement is made of the impact of the interactions that take place in that context.

(2) The Instrument

This study makes use of human beings as the primary data-gathering instruments because it believes that only humans can fully appreciate the complexity of the realities that this study is bound to encounter during its course, and because only the human instrument is able to appreciate the dynamics of the values which encompass the setting, the enquiry, the respondents and the instruments themselves.

(3) The Type of Knowledge Used

In addition to making use of propositional knowledge, this study also makes use of intuitive knowledge. This is based on the naturalistic assumption that intuitive knowledge will better enable the researcher to grasp the complexities and subtleties of the multiple realities which he will be encountering throughout the course of this study.
(4) The Preference for the Qualitative Method

Quantitative methods, by their very nature, tend to fragment realities, and these methods are marred by the unsustainable assumption that such fragmentation exerts little impact on those realities. On the other hand, the qualitative method followed in this thesis, takes into account -

• the integrity of the realities of the students and their families; and

• the complexity of the mutual influences exerted by a whole range of factors in the families, in the neighbourhoods and in the Agency; on the processes and outcomes of the inquiry.

At the same time, it should be remembered that while this naturalistic inquiry uses mostly qualitative methods, it does not eschew the use of numerical figures (e.g., percentage of the teenagers who live in single-parent families or who have suffered from a history of physical abuse,) which serve to illuminate the complex aspects of the realities which are being studied.

(5) The Type of Theory Used

This study prefers to have its substantive guiding theory emerge from the data and be grounded in the data, rather than to initiate the enquiry with an a priori theory. This is because the intention to work from a grounded theory has enabled the researcher -

• to take into account many more aspects of the complex realities which he encountered during the enquiry; and,

• to appreciate the interplay of the values of the various participants at the site.

(6) The Use of an Emergent Design

Being an enquiry based in the naturalistic paradigm, this study allows the research design to emerge from the interaction between the researcher and the respondents in the context of the special education agency, because this is the only form of research design that would do justice to the multiple realities
and the value-interactions that are bound to influence the outcome of this research. This aspect of the methodology is described in greater detail in Chapter Three. The following highlights of the emergent design of the thesis may suffice at this stage:

- the candidate's experience of teaching the emotionally disturbed, reading-disabled students led him to a working hypothesis on the link between emotional disturbance and reading disability;
- he reviewed the literature on emotional disturbance and theories of reading to check if there was any basis for his working hypothesis;
- from the insights gained from his teaching experience and his review of the literature the candidate modified his working hypothesis and checked the archival data to see if the hypothesis was supported by the data;
- he then proceeded to check his increasingly stronger working hypothesis against the interview data derived from the staff and students of the Agency;
- as the data pointed in certain directions, further interviews and tests were conducted with the principal stakeholders;
- these processes, which had taken place as a result of the dictates of the emerging research design, led to certain conclusions which serve to illuminate the relationship between emotional disturbance and reading disability.

(7) Preference for the Case Study Approach

The case study approach is especially suited to the reporting of the multiple realities which form the fundamental ontological assumption in the naturalistic paradigm. This approach is also effective in demonstrating the variety of interactive influences operating in the setting and in noting the impact of the values current in the setting and the design, as well as the values held by the researcher and the respondents. The case study approach as applied in this enquiry is analysed at greater length in Section 6 of this chapter.
(8) The Type of Interpretation Used.

In keeping with the fundamental assumptions of the naturalistic paradigm, this study interprets its findings idiographically, that is to say, it acknowledges that the conclusions it draws are tentative, and are dependent on such contextual factors as time, place, and the value systems which prevail at the setting.

(9) The Means Used for Establishing the Research Boundaries

Since the naturalistic paradigm eschews *a priori* theory and acknowledges the need for the research design to emerge from the interaction of the researcher and the respondents in the natural, value-laden context, it is logical to allow the research boundaries to be defined by the emerging focus of the enquiry, rather than by deliberate, *a priori* manipulation by the enquirer. In this research, the boundaries were determined to some extent by the thorough knowledge of the context and of the respondents which the researcher had acquired by sustained involvement at the site, working with emotionally disturbed teenagers over a number of years. However, for the most part, the research boundaries were defined by the emergent data serving to answer as fully as possible the question with which the inquiry had started, namely, 'what is the relationship between emotional disturbance and reading disability?'

6. THE USE OF THE CASE STUDY APPROACH IN THIS ENQUIRY

The argument in favour of case studies over group studies has focused on the problem of the individuality of the subject versus the generality of the syndrome (Allport, 1962; Johnston, 1985). I was attracted to the case study method in this research because of the opportunity it provided for an in-depth investigation of the emotional and reading problems of a particular group of adolescents, and the possibility of arriving at a more complete and well-
organised picture of the totality of factors which were brought into play as the individual teenagers - each one with his own unique background - interacted with a set of curricular strategies operating at the setting. I also believe that because it was intensive, the case study approach enabled me to bring to light the important variables, processes and interactions which might point the way for further studies into the emotional and learning problems faced by certain teenagers, and the types of curricular interventions which might be of benefit to them.

7. A SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In summary, this study sets out to illuminate the relationship between emotional disturbance and reading disability, and it examines a set of curricular strategies for their effectiveness in helping a group of emotionally disturbed and reading disabled teenagers. The theoretical framework of this thesis is built upon the ecological perspective on emotional disturbance and on the sociopsycholinguistic view of reading. The methodology followed is that of qualitative research which makes use of an emergent research design. The final section of this investigation uses a case study approach, which again, is consonant with the naturalistic paradigm.

The next chapter is a review of the literature on six aspects of this study. Chapter Three describes in detail the method used in this enquiry. Chapters Four and Five present the results of the study, and Chapter Six deals with the conclusions derived from the whole enquiry.

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CHAPTER TWO

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

PART ONE: EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE

1. INTRODUCTION

This part of the chapter is a review the literature on emotional disturbance, especially as it affects adolescent students. It has involved sifting through reports of the most significant research that has been carried out during the last thirty years in the fields of Special Education and Educational Psychology.

2. DEFINITIONS OF EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE

As Reinert and Huang (1987: 3) note, "the term emotionally disturbed was first used in the literature over eighty years ago without being clearly defined." Since then it has served a variety of needs for those providing services to children such as teachers, school counsellors, physicians, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and for those involved in researching children's emotional and behaviour problems. However, it still does not have a universally accepted definition. Before proceeding to analyse some of the more commonly used definitions, it may be helpful to consider Bower's (1981: 19) continuum of stages in the severity of emotional disturbance:

Stage One: Children who experience the normal problems of everyday living.
Stage Two: Children who develop some symptoms of emotional problems as a result of a crisis or trauma.

Stage Three: Children whose emotional problems persist beyond normal expectation.

Stage Four: Children who show symptoms of persistent emotional problems, but who can be helped to adjust in a school setting.

Stage Five: Children who show severe and chronic symptoms of emotional disturbance, and who may be best educated at a residential school setting.

One interesting feature of Bower's continuum is that it acknowledges that even "normal" students (Stage One) may exhibit some of the behaviours usually associated with emotional disturbance, such as hyperactivity, aggression, defiance of authority, etc., but if such behaviours are rare, and arise from the stresses and strains associated with growing up, there is no cause for concern. On the other hand, the behaviours of children in Stages Two and Three become more and more noticeable in the classroom. However, Bower's position is that these children do not require specialist help, and can be retained in the normal classroom. With the students who exhibit behaviours described in Stages Four and Five, specialist help becomes necessary. The present study deals exclusively with students in Stage Five. However, students in Stages Four and Five would be the ones who would be covered by the definitions quoted below:

1. "Children with behaviour problems reveal consistent age-inappropriate behaviour resulting in social conflict and personal unhappiness. In the school setting they show a marked inability to persist in the performance of a task, often disrupt the class, are distractible and present a constant irritation to the teacher because of their inability to follow directions and maintain a learning set" (Bajuk et al., 1992: 95).
2. "A moderate to marked reduction in behavioural freedom, which in turn reduces his ability to function effectively in learning or working with others. In the classroom, this loss of freedom affects the child's educational and social experiences and results in a noticeable susceptibility to one or more of these five patterns of behaviour:

(a) an inability to learn which cannot be adequately explained by intellectual, sensory, neurophysiological or general health factors;

(b) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers;

(c) inappropriate or immature types of behaviour or feelings under normal conditions;

(d) a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression;

(e) a tendency to develop physical symptoms, such as speech problems, pains or fears, associated with personal or school problems"


3. "Emotional disturbance is a state of being marked by aberrations in an individual's feelings about him/herself and the environment. The existence of emotional disturbance is inferred from behaviour. Generally, if a person acts in a manner that is detrimental to him or herself and/or others, he or she may be considered in a state of emotional disturbance" (Newcomer, 1980: 6-7).

4. "A child is considered to be emotionally disturbed when, in the absence of a primary diagnosis of mental retardation, neurological, sensory or other physical impairment, she cannot derive reasonable benefit from the normal curriculum in the regular classroom without making excessive demands on
the teacher's time and energy as compared with other students" (Paul & Epanchin, 1982: 18-19).

5. "Behaviour disordered (is) a term used to describe individuals whose behaviour is considered inappropriate, excessive, chronic, and abnormal. Educationally, behaviour disordered children have difficulty establishing satisfactory relationships with others, and behaving appropriately." Anderson et al. (1990: 212).

6. "Conduct disorder (is) broadly, persistent serious anti-social behaviour" (Williams, 1991: 88).

Williams considers terminology such as "emotional and behavioural difficulties" and notes that "Ebd is a relatively new term in a field that is bedevilled by terminology. It is not difficult to recognise emotional and behavioural difficulties, but very difficult to define them. This is reflected in the number of alternative terms existing, such as maladjusted, psychologically disordered, emotionally handicapped, socially maladjusted, emotionally disturbed, etc. The introduction of the word 'behaviour' into the term represents an attempt to gain clarity by the use of observable characteristics. Most of the alternative terms have been criticised on the grounds that they are not only imprecise, but also exemplifications of the medical model of thinking, implying that the condition is located in the child, whereas current thinking emphasises the importance of the relationship between the child and the environment as a determining factor in Ebd" (Williams, 1991: 152).

It is also worth noting that the descriptors used by various authors when defining emotional and behaviour difficulties of children give the reader a clue
to the theoretical base from which they analyse the problem of emotional disturbance. Thus, the proponents of the psychodynamic theory who analyse behaviour for psychological meaning use such terms as "emotional disturbance", "maladjusted children", "troubled children" and "children in conflict". On the other hand, theorists who advocate biophysical or behavioural approaches define students from their particular viewpoints and prefer terms with connotations of "behaviour disorders".

It is also worth remembering that while the focus of these definitions is on the behaviour of the emotionally disturbed student in the classroom, disturbance itself is a "global problem, not a situationally specific one" (Rich, 1982, p. 61). If a student is habitually hyperactive or aggressive or disruptive in the classroom but not elsewhere, then it is not the student who merits a closer examination, but the classroom and the teacher. In the vast majority of the cases, however, the chronically hyperactive or aggressive student will exhibit hyperactive or aggressive behaviours in a variety of situations at home as well as at school.

Eli Bower, who has researched and written about the education of emotionally disturbed students over a period spanning several decades, has pointed out that one or more of the characteristics which were noted in the definitions quoted above, could be found in almost all normal children to some extent and at some stages in their development. However, what marked out the emotionally disturbed children from normal children is that the former exhibited these characteristics to a marked degree and over a considerable period of time. These two aspects of emotional disturbance are further explored in the next section.
3. TWO CONDITIONS FOR EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE

Attention needs to be focused on the two conditions which Bower deemed essential for labelling any student as emotionally disturbed. These two conditions are chronicity and severity. Chronicity refers to the pattern of behaviour which has been relatively stable for a considerable period of time. Severity refers to the seriousness of the problem behaviour. Severity and chronicity are inter-related in as much as the greater the severity of the behaviour problem, the less frequently it has to occur before it is considered indicative of disturbed behaviour. An example may illustrate the point: if a high school student was involved in a serious fight with a fellow-student, but had a hither-to unblemished record, he might require an admonition and there the matter might rest. But, if the same student was involved in serious fights with fellow-students four or five times a week, his behaviour should merit serious attention, including referral to psychological services. If, on the other hand, a student walked into a classroom with a gun in his hand and threatened to kill a fellow-student or a teacher, his action should merit immediate attention even though it is the first time he has committed such an offence. This is because of the severity of what he has done.

However, there are scholars who question Bower's notion of these two dimensions of emotional disturbance. Mack (1980), for example, deplored the impact of the qualifiers - "over a long period of time" and "to a marked degree" - on the identification of emotionally disturbed children and on the delivery of appropriate services to them. His contention was that the strict application of the qualifiers deprived many students of the special educational services which they needed.
Thus, despite, the number of researchers and the considerable amount of time devoted to studying the problems of emotionally disturbed children, fundamental questions regarding definition and identification still remain to be answered. However, as Kauffman (1985: 24-25) suggests, "the definition of emotional disturbance eludes objectification for the same reasons that happiness and beauty defy definition, even though happy behaviours and dimensions of beauty can be described clearly. Thus, although the best possible definition should be earnestly sought, the clear description of behaviour characteristics appears to be a more productive goal."

4. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED STUDENTS

Educators, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and others in the helping professions who provide services to children in special education are aided in their efforts to identify emotionally disturbed students from certain characteristics in their behaviour.

Centre and Mckittrick's (1987: 4-5) review of thirty research studies which examined the characteristics of students with behavioural disorders led them to list the following behaviours as being typical of such students:

"anxious, attention-seeking, argumentative, boisterous, critical, deceptive, defiant, destructive, disobedient, disruptive, enuretic, fighting, hot-tempered, hyperactive, impatient, impertinent, insulting, irritable, manipulative, masturbates, negative, obstinate, provokes others, restless, show-off, shy, socially inept, tantrums, threatens, truant, uncommunicative and uncooperative".
The Revised Third Edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (1987), known commonly as DSM III-R, categorises various aspects in the behaviour of the emotionally disturbed young as Disruptive Behaviour Disorders, i.e., "behaviour that is socially disruptive and is often more distressing to others than to the people with the disorders" (p. 49). Under Disruptive Behaviour Disorders, DSM III-R lists the following:

1. Attention-deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), which includes an inability to complete learning tasks, an inability to concentrate on any activity for more than a few minutes, and a proneness to be easily distracted.

2. Conduct Disorder, which includes stealing, running away from home, truanting from school, lying, arson, breaking into someone else's house or car, being physically cruel to animals or people, initiating fights, and using weapons in fights.

3. Oppositional Defiant Disorder, which includes often arguing with adults, often actively defying adults or refusing adult requests, annoying other people, being often angry, resentful, spiteful or vindictive, and using obscene language.

The World Health Organisation's International Classification of Diseases has a sub-section (ICD-10) for classifying Mental and Behavioural Disorders. ICD-10 describes conduct disorders as being "characterised by excessive levels of fighting or bullying; cruelty to animals or other people; severe destructiveness to property; fire-setting; stealing; repeated lying; truancy from school and running away from home; unusually frequent and severe temper tantrums; defiant, provocative behaviour; and persistent severe disobedience." (World Health Organisation, 1992: 267)
Steinberg (1987: 113) found that conduct-disordered young people exhibited the following characteristics: "They are often socially unskilled, mismanaging relationships and activities in which they are motivated to succeed as well as those (e.g., keeping appointments) they want to subvert; they are often male ... ; the boys, but not the girls, may be slightly below average intellectually; educational difficulties, lack of academic success, and in particular, reading retardation is common in both boys and girls with conduct disorder."

The above lists of characteristics were presented in the form of a number of broad but well-defined categories by Herbert C. Quay (1972, 1979) and Quay & Peterson (1983). Their studies of student behaviours through observational and statistical analyses led them to categorise four dimensions of emotional disturbance:

(a) **Conduct Disorder**

This is characterised by aggressive, hostile behaviour - both physical and verbal - towards peers and authority-figures such as parents and teachers, and covering a range of behaviours from disruptiveness and irresponsibility, to defiance of authority.

(b) **Personality Problem**

This is characterised by anxious, withdrawn, depressed behaviour that makes the student moody, overly sensitive and unable to express feelings appropriately. A common symptom manifested by this type of student is the tendency to withdraw or to run away from unfamiliar or threatening situations.
(c) **Inadequacy-Immaturity**

This involves problems with concentration and is manifested in lack of interest, laziness, disruptiveness and a chronic failure to complete learning tasks.

(d) **Socialised Delinquent**

This involves gang activities, including car-stealing, mugging and truancy in the company of other youngsters. According to Schaefer (1980: 835), "the predominant behaviour of delinquent youth has been aptly described as malicious (enjoying the discomfort of others), negativistic (defined by its polarity to society's norms), hedonistic (pursuit of immediate pleasure rather than rational, long-term goals), and non-utilitarian (no rhyme or reason to much of the behaviour)."

Among the four profiles suggested by Quay, it has been found that the **conduct-disordered** make up the largest percentage of emotionally disturbed students (Bor et al., 1992; Coleman, 1986). According to a number of writers, (e.g., Apter and Conoley, 1984; Emery, 1982; Fleck, 1985; Rizzo & Zabel, 1988; Wallenstein, 1985) a relatively consistent background situation in the lives of conduct-disordered children is a dysfunctional family unit. As Apter and Conoley (1984: 44) note, conduct-disordered children are often from homes "where consequences for their behaviour tend to be inconsistent and unpredictable. Punishment is frequently quite harsh but delivered so sporadically that the children learn that much of their behaviour is tacitly condoned". In a large number of cases, one parent may be absent and this could result in economic hardship and a lack of adequate childcare arrangements. The child may have to cope with a number of adults in the family who have little commitment to his/her welfare. The authors point out that "children learn to
care by being cared for. Those who do not receive acceptance and nurturance will not have the desire to please others - after all, they have never experienced the feeling of being part of a loving co-operative unit. These children seem to be unable to be reached through normal channels because the 'normal channels' of positive expectations are so unused in their lives. They may also be angry children whose needs for love and kindness have been so consistently rebuffed that they are left embittered and suspicious" (p. 45).

5. THE PREVALENCE OF EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE AMONG STUDENTS

After extensive studies with disturbed students in California, Bower (1981, 1982) found that about 10 percent of the school population need intervention for behaviour or emotional problems. He criticised the figure of 2 percent which was established by the U.S. Office of Education and is considered the official figure for the prevalence of emotional disturbance among American students. Bower believed that the figure under-estimated the problem seriously. This is also the conclusion reached by Kauffman (1980, 1981) who notes "Statistics show that about 0.5 percent of school-age children are receiving special educational services as seriously emotionally disturbed - only about 1/4 of a very conservative estimate of prevalence" (1981: 58). DSM III-R (APA, 1987: 54) states: "It is estimated that approximately 9% of males and 2% of females under the age of 18 have the disorder".

As a result of an extensive research on school children in London, Stott, Marston and Neill (1975) reported that 13 percent of the boys and 7 percent of the girls were emotionally disturbed. In an Australian study commissioned by the Catholic Education Office in Victoria, Szaday, Pickering and Duerdoth (1990) surveyed 4353 primary and secondary teachers and
examined their ratings on 120,344 students. The data showed that teachers rated 5.3 percent of primary school children and 3.8 percent of secondary school children as experiencing emotional and behaviour problems and requiring specialist assistance. A similar survey of Queensland Catholic schools by Quinn, Sultmann and Elkins (1988) had also shown a prevalence rate of 3.8 percent. A survey of the Queensland state schools in which teacher ratings were obtained on 1,309 students from a pool of 7,703 students in primary and secondary schools, Bor et al., (1992) found that while 16.99 percent of the students were rated as experiencing adjustment difficulties, 3.7 percent of these students were rated as experiencing severe behaviour problems. According to Hay, Gilmore and Lockhart (1992), the percentage of students identified as seriously disturbed and or disruptive in Australian studies is on average 3 to 4 percent.

6. TYPES OF RESEARCH ON EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE

The search for etiological factors in emotional disturbance has occupied the interest of many experts in psychology and education, and they have employed a range of research techniques. The techniques which have been most commonly used include longitudinal studies, field studies, retrospective studies, and one-time assessment of samples of 'normal' children and those children who have been designated as 'emotionally disturbed'.

A number of longitudinal studies have been completed in the past twenty years in the field of emotional disturbance. Such studies include those of McGee et al. (1986), McKinney (1989); Rubin & Balow (1978); and Wallenstein (1985). A classic example of a longitudinal study in this area was the research undertaken by Lefkowitz, Eron, Walder and Huesmann (1977). During 1960 they studied various aspects of aggressive behaviour in 875 eight-
year old children in Columbia County, New York. Ten years later, they tracked down and interviewed 427 of them. The evidence led the authors to conclude that "Aggression at the age of eight is the best predictor we have of aggression at 19 irrespective of IQ, social class or parents' aggressiveness" (p. 192). Incidentally, these conclusions have been supported by a number of later studies (e.g., Lochman et al., 1989; Nuttal & Kalesnik, 1987; Stattin & Magnusson, 1989).

The field study has been used effectively by several researchers (e.g., Lewin et al., 1983; Jones, 1992; Stumphauzer, Aiken and Veloz, 1977), to study aspects of emotional disturbance. In this method of investigation, extensive use is made of interviews, questionnaires and direct observations made of the subjects in their natural environment. The drawback with this approach is that it is extremely time-consuming and requires the dedicated work of a highly-trained research team.

The retrospective study involves investigating the case histories of adult subjects in order to identify common factors in their background. Such studies include those of Johnston (1985) and Lewis (1965). Johnston, for example, studied three reading-disabled adults by interviewing them regarding their experience of learning to read while they were at school, and how they coped with their reading disability. However, the conclusions from retrospective studies are marred by questions surrounding the reliability of the data, by the restriction imposed on researchers because of the a priori decisions they have to make concerning the relative importance of various factors, and by the lack of certainty that the relevant causative factor is actually included among the many factors that may be under study (Isaac & Michael, 1981).
Another method that is commonly used in etiological research consists in conducting one-time assessments of a sample of individuals who may or may not represent a specific population. Usually, large amounts of the data are collected, and the investigation focuses on the extent to which variations in one factor correspond with variations in other factors based on correlation coefficients. An example of this type of study is the one conducted by Bor and his associates (1992) who surveyed 702 primary and secondary school teachers at 459 state schools in Queensland to study "teachers' perceptions of students' adjustment difficulties". As Isaac and Michael (1981) have pointed out, while this method allows for the measurement of several variables and their inter-relationships in realistic settings, it only identifies what goes with what. It does not identify cause-and-effect relationships.

7. THE MAIN THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS ON THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE

This section examines the research into the etiology of emotional disturbance in adolescence. For researchers the task of identifying causative factors in emotional disturbance is complicated by the highly speculative nature of the exercise (Kauffman, 1985). Identifying the antecedents of a particular behaviour pattern involves sorting through a a seemingly inextricable tangle of variables. As Bartoli (1990: 630) writes, "The overwhelming complexity of the biological, environmental, social, emotional, familial, cognitive, linguistic, cultural, historical, economic and political factors that make up the wider ecology of the human being threatens to defeat even the most organised and persistent researcher." According to these writers, the variables in human behaviour being so numerous, the correlates of a particular behaviour would in effect be unique, and possess very little validity to warrant useful generalisation.
Another difficulty still further complicating etiological research is the broad range of behaviour problems reported among emotionally disturbed adolescents. These problems range from juvenile delinquency to anorexia nervosa, from rebellion against parental authority to schizophrenia, and from learning problems to drug abuse and suicide. Brown, McDowell and Smith (1981) point out that because emotional and behaviour problems are multiple, complex and reinforce each other by their interaction, the time spent searching for etiological factors could be utilised more effectively by concentrating on treatment.

Other writers, such as Bos and Vaughn (1991) argue that research with a view to theory-generation is beneficial to the children who suffer from the condition as well as to the practitioners who deal with them. Indeed, the field is crowded with researchers who have ventured to propose etiological factors to emotional disturbance and to form their own particular theoretical constructs to explain the presence of emotional disturbance in students. This section describes four such theoretical perspectives: biophysical, psychodynamic, behavioural, and ecological.

(a) The Biophysical Theory

The biophysical position is that "emotional disturbances are observable behavioural expressions of some malfunction of the central nervous system" (Schroeder & Schroeder, 1982: 155). Rimland (1969: 706) defined a biogenic disorder as "a severe behaviour disorder that results solely from the effects of the physical-chemical environment. Biological factors may exert their effects, pre-natally, during labour and birth, and at any subsequent time".
According to biophysical theorists, behavioural problems fall into two broad categories: the genetic and the environmental. Rosenthal (1963) believes that an overactive thyroid, predisposes a child to behaviour disorders, but only when there is an unfavourable environmental factor which acts as a triggering mechanism. Gray (1988) attributes behaviour disorders to the dominance of the right hemisphere of the brain in troubled youth.

Ritvo et al. (1970) defend the biophysical interpretation of emotional disturbance by pointing out the presence of emotionally disturbed children in every culture, in every socio-economic group and in families with a range of inter-personal dynamics. Campbell et al., (1982) and Halperin et al., (1986) reported improvement in the behaviour of 70 to 80 percent of the children with conduct disorders who had been treated with stimulant medications independent of whether neurological dysfunction could be demonstrated. Werry (1982) found that stimulant medications used with conduct disordered children resulted in reduced levels of motor activity, increased attention, decreased restlessness and improved co-operativeness.

Others such as Varley (1984) have demonstrated that stimulant medications failed to affect any permanent change in the nature or intensity of conduct problems and hyperactivity. Kauffman (1985: 135) argues that to assume all behaviour disorders "have a biological origin and therefore, that all such disorders are best handled by medical intervention is erroneous. Not only is the tie between behaviour disorders and biological causative factors tenuous but a biological cause may have no direct implications for change in educational methodology".
(b) The Psychodynamic Theory

The psychodynamic viewpoint sees emotional disturbance as resulting from the child's failure to withstand the psychological strain produced by critical adjustment periods during early childhood" (Hewett & Forness, 1984, p. 92). The psychodynamic perspective is a conglomeration of several levels of psychological thought ranging from Freudian psychoanalysis and its offshoots on the one hand, to the humanistic psychology of Adler (1963, 1970), Maslow (1962, 1965, 1970, 1987) and Rogers (1959, 1969) on the other. In the Freudian view, there is hardly any disorder that cannot be traced back to the oral, anal or phallic stages of psychosexual development. Emotional disturbance, according to this position, originates from the unsuccessful completion of these three stages of development. Naturally, the advocates of the psychodynamic theory focus on what is going on inside the mind of the child rather than with his outward behaviour. In the words of Rogers (1959: 3-4), "There are children - boys and girls with very different background and personalities, and some of these children steal, and some of them run away from school, and others find satisfaction in sucking their thumbs, or in saying obscene words, or in defying their parents; but in each instance it is the child with whom we must deal, not the generalisation we make about his behaviour."

Seeking to understand the inner workings of the student's mind, psychodynamic theorists employ a variety of projective techniques such as the Rorschach Inkblot Test, Children's Apperception Test, sentence completion, human figure drawings, etc., to evaluate the extent of emotional disturbance in the child. In their educational interventions, the proponents of this approach focus on three areas: adult-child interactions, peer group interactions, and learner-curriculum interactions (Cheney & Morse, 1974; Long, Morse &
Newman, 1980). This is based on the belief that the child develops his potential and learns efficiently by means of his interaction with a nurturing environment.

(c) The Behavioural Theory

While advocates of the biophysical theory and the psychodynamic theory focus on the "inside" of the child, the proponents of the behavioural theory concentrate on "outside-child" issues. Behaviourists credit the theoretical framework for their psychological perspective to B. Watson and B.F. Skinner. These pioneers focused on the importance and complexity of the relationship between behaviours and their consequences. Thus, behaviourists see the emotionally disturbed child as exhibiting deviant behaviour learned through a process of interaction with the environment that gives deficient feedback (Hobbs & Lahey, 1983). Two fundamental assumptions in the behavioural approach are (a) that it is the behaviour itself that should be the focus of observation and treatment, and (b) that behaviour flows from environmental events (Kauffman, 1985). The behavioural model aims at a natural science approach by insisting that behaviour should be defined and measured with precision, and that the variables assessed to be maintaining or encouraging the behaviour should be controlled systematically (Cullinan et al., 1982; Polsgrove & Nelson, 1982; Polsgrove, 1983).

The emotionally disturbed student - whom the proponents of this approach consider as suffering from "behaviour disorders" - would be evaluated through such means as checklists and behaviour rating scales. Prominent measures include The Behaviour Problem Checklist (Quay & Peterson, 1967, 1983), the Pupil Behaviour Rating Scale (Lambert, Hartsough & Bower, 1979), the Child Behaviour Checklist (Achenbach, 1991) and the Conners Rating Scales (Sattler, 1992).
Methods used by behaviourists to elicit the desired behaviour from the students include shaping, modelling and contingency contracting. Shaping is the systematic reinforcement of a series of behaviours, each of which approaches closer and closer to the desired behaviour. Modelling is a technique through which desired behaviours are taught through demonstration and rehearsal (Walker et al., 1983). Contingency contracting makes use of liked activities to increase the frequency and duration of disliked or less liked activities. For example, the teacher might say to the student, "first complete your mathematics exercises and then you can play the mathematics game on the computer".

The Behaviourist approach has been criticised on the following grounds: a) that it focuses on oversimplified aspects of behaviour but is unable to account for more complex aspects of the human experience such as love, hatred, despair, etc.; b) that it fails to account for subjective experiences in its explanation of human behaviour; and, c) that its use of conditioning techniques to alter the behaviour of others implies that the values held by the practitioner are superior to those held by the subject.

However, the behaviourist approach to dealing with emotionally disturbed students has grown in popularity because it emphasises the possibility of change and growth through environmental modification and provides educators with a relatively straight-forward technique of targeting and helping to alter the negative aspects in the behaviour of these students.
(d) The Ecological Theory

This orientation is based on the recognition that "each growing child is the focus of multiple interacting social and physical forces, and is influencing and being influenced by these forces in a process of continual change" (Rizzo & Zabel, 1988: 38). According to the proponents of this theory, emotional disturbance "is a condition in which the components of an eco-system are so much out of harmony that the stability of the environment is threatened" (Montgomery & Paul, 1982: 214). Since the disturbance is caused by conflicts arising from the interaction of the child and his entire ecosystem, treatment should encompass both the child and the entire community. As Kauffman (1985: 5) remarks, "An ecological perspective takes into account the interrelationship between the child and the various aspects of the environment. The problem of disturbed behaviour is not viewed simply as actions of the child that are inappropriate, but rather as interactions and transactions between the child and other people." In other words, the ecological approach focuses on the nature and quality of the interactive process, as well as on the child and his environment.

A typical evaluation technique used by proponents of this system includes the following five stages: (1) describing the environment (e.g. the family, the various behaviour settings in the school, such as the classroom, the cafeteria, the playground, etc.), (2) identifying expectations (e.g. the specific expectations of individual teachers in a high school classroom), (3) organising behavioural data (e.g. the background and skills of people involved in contrasting setting, i.e., settings that are successful and settings that are unsuccessful, and comparing the behaviour of the students in these settings) and (4) analysing the data gathered from the above procedures, and (5) establishing
realistic goals for the student as well as for key individuals in the micro-communities (Montgomery & Paul, 1982).

Ecological approaches to the education of emotionally disturbed children have included changes in the ecosystem of the classroom by re-organising the physical aspects of the classroom and restructuring classroom procedures (Bullock, 1981; Hewett & Taylor, 1980); the alteration of the home ecosystem through greater parental involvement in the child's education, and greater community support for parents; and changes in the school and community ecosystems by such means as mainstreaming and de-institutionalisation (McWhirter, 1988; Smith, 1989). Rizzo and Zabel (1988: 39) describe how attempts to change the behaviour of a child may impact on family dynamics: "In some instances, because a level of stability may exist in the adaptations a family has made over time, family members may resist or sabotage efforts at changing a child's behaviour because of an implicit recognition that other elements of the family may thereby be changed. If a rebellious youngster's behaviour improves, an angry and abusive parent my no longer be able to sustain rationalisations for punishing the child and venting hostility. Alternatively, it may be possible to change a child's rebellious behaviour by working indirectly with the angry parent whose frustrations and conflicts are provoking the child's rebelliousness."

A successful ecological approach to the education of emotionally disturbed children is found in Project Re-Ed, developed by Nicholas Hobbs (1979). The targets in Project Re-Ed include not only the child but also his family, his school, his suburb and the social agencies which are all parts of the child's ecosystem. Project Re-Ed is characterised by concern for the physical
well-being of the child, opportunities for emotional support and counselling, and behavioural shaping (Hobbs, 1975, 1979; Swap, Prieto & Harth, 1982).

7. CONCLUSION

This part of Chapter Two has reviewed the literature on emotional disturbance from six different perspectives.

It started with a discussion of the problems involved in formulating a definition of emotional disturbance. It then went on to elaborate on two dimensions of emotional disturbance, namely severity and chronicity. A range of opinions regarding the main characteristics in the behaviour of the emotionally disturbed child was then investigated. It then proceeded to examine the prevalence of emotional disturbance among students. This led to a review of the principal investigative methods used to study emotionally disturbed children. Finally, a review was made of four of the main theoretical frameworks which scholars have employed to understand and treat emotional disturbance in students.

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PART TWO: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON FIVE ASPECTS OF READING AND READING DISABILITY

The five aspects of reading and reading disability covered in this part of the review of the literature are:
1. Theories of reading
2. Reading disability as it relates to emotionally disturbed students
3. Need fulfilment and learning
4. Self-concept and its effects on learning
5. Case studies in the field of reading

1. THEORIES OF READING

In the last thirty years, research into reading has been greatly influenced by the input of findings from the twin disciplines of psychology and linguistics. Such input has been valuable in providing researchers and practitioners with new insights into the reading process. Models of reading may be divided into two broad groups: the "bottom up" models which emphasise the decoding aspect of reading, and the "top-down" models which emphasise the interactive and comprehension aspects of the reading process (Hamill & Bartel, 1990: 99).

Models which emphasise the decoding aspect of reading view the reading process as consisting in decoding the text letter by letter and word by word. Advocates of this model (e.g. Gough, 1981, 1983, 1985a; Gough et al., 1981; La Berge and Samuels, 1974) believe that the reader comprehends the text by processing the information through several levels of knowledge. Needless to say, the learning method advocated by the proponents of this model is a drill-oriented, step-by-step acquisition of a hierarchy of skills which include phonic analysis, structural analysis, sight word recognition and context analysis.
As Gough (1985b: 688) writes, "The hallmark of the skilled reader is the ability to recognise accurately, easily, and swiftly isolated words... This skill can only be attributed to the ability to decode, .... most words are not predictable and so can only be read bottom-up". In a major review of the literature on phonological recoding and reading acquisition, Jorm and Share (1983) concluded that phonological recoding is essential to the acquisition of reading skills because it acts as a self-teaching mechanism which enables the child to learn to identify words visually. Tunmer and Nesdale's (1985) research led them to the conclusion that phonemic decoding skills were directly and causally related to decoding abilities, and in their turn, decoding abilities were directly and causally related to comprehension. Di Veta and Speece (1990) found that blending and spelling training led to the improvement of phonetic skills in learning-disabled primary school boys. Brian Byrne's (1991) review of the research completed over the past decade, led him to conclude that phonemic awareness was critical for the development of reading development. A study by Parker, Hasbrouk and Tindal (1992) confirmed the strength of traditional oral reading fluency as a reliable and valid reading index for remedial and special education.

The second broad group of models of reading is characterised by a strong emphasis on the interactive, meaning-focused aspect of the reading process. Proponents of these models include Cambourne (1979, 1989, 1990); Goodman (1973a, 1973b, 1985, 1986, 1989); Kolers (1972), Levin & Kaplan (1970), Neville & Pugh (1977), and Smith (1973, 1985, 1986). Paulo Freire (1985: 18-19) summarised this view when he said, "Reading is not walking on words, it is grasping the soul of them." These scholars argue that the prime purpose of reading is the reconstruction of meaning. According to Goodman (1973: 22), reading is a "psycholinguistic process by which the reader
reconstructs as best he can a message that has been encoded by its writer as a graphic display." According to this view, "Improvement in reading skills is not due to greater precision [in decoding print], but to better sampling techniques, firmer control over language structure, broadened experience, and increased conceptual development, which make possible more accurate first guesses" (Athey, 1985: 48). Jackson & Biemiller's (1985) study of the strategies employed by precocious young readers found that their efficiency in carrying out 'lower order' tasks such as letter naming and individual word identification was a "facilitative and not a pre-requisite condition" for fluent reading of the text with good comprehension. A similar result was obtained in Australia by McKay & Neale (1991) who analysed the reading strategies used by very young fluent readers, and concluded that top-down processing strategies played a vital role in efficient reading.

Goodman (1973) refers to two levels of language - surface structure and deep structure. In the case of reading, surface structure refers to the written representation of language, and deep structure refers to meaning. These two levels of language are related through the system of rules known as grammar or syntax. Syntactic context is vital to comprehension. We would not be able to understand the meaning of any word without reference to the syntax, because, as Goodman points out, reading is a "psycholinguistic guessing game" whose chief characteristic is the interaction between the mind of the reader and the printed words in their syntactic context.

Goodman asserts that the rules of syntax are learned by using the language. His theory is strongly based on the assumption that language is learned in the context of experience. As Carroll (1985) has pointed out, the essential skill in reading is similar to the essential skill in listening, namely,
getting the meaning of the message. For this to occur, the reader as well as the listener need to be able to use their language systems efficiently. In order to tap meaning from a text the reader uses three major cueing systems. These are grapho-phonetic cues, syntactic cues and semantic cues (Goodman, 1984). Ruddell & Speaker (1985) refer to the reader's ability to use these cueing systems as Decoding Knowledge, Language Knowledge and World Knowledge.

Decoding Knowledge refers to the reader's ability to process visual cues, such as letters, words, and punctuation marks, and to utilise his knowledge of spelling and sound patterns. According to Ruddell & Speaker (1985: 766), "The knowledge for using visual information must be developed and automated if the beginning reader is to become more efficient...Once word recognition becomes automatic, the reader can then devote more attention to comprehension and produce a more meaningful Text Representation."

Language Knowledge includes syntactic and text structure knowledge. Ochs and Schieffeling (1982) have shown that language acquisition takes place in a variety of social settings, and Scolon (1979) has demonstrated that syntactic knowledge develops prior to the development of reading skill. The syntactic cue system consists of the knowledge of how words, phrases and clauses are put together to convey the message intended by the writer. Baker and Stein (1981), as well as McGee (1982) have found indications that children develop basic knowledge of text structure during pre-school and early primary school years; and Adams (1992) has reported on the skillful way in which the proficient reader uses syntactic cues to aid in the acquisition of meaning.

World Knowledge contains information about life and the world based on the reader's direct as well as vicarious experiences. Schema theory
(Rumelhart 1981; Rumelhart and Orotny, 1977; Rumelhart et al., 1986) has been a useful means of gaining insights into the process by which a reader comprehends a text. According to Rumelhart, this process consists of an interaction between the writer's ideas encoded in the text and the reader's world knowledge. Stevens (1982) has demonstrated how children's comprehension can be improved when appropriate world knowledge is taught prior to the reading of a text.

In the last thirty years much interesting research has focused on the processes involved in the comprehension of a text as it is being read. Scholars have shown that a variety of semantic knowledge is available to the reader. As noted above, one such semantic aid is the schema. According to Montague and her associates (1990: 190), "schema theory postulates a mental processing mechanism that guides the comprehension of textual material". Schemata are memory structures which represent generic concepts. Rumelhart (1975, 1980, 1981) suggests that each reader has many schemata stored in his memory and they aid him in comprehending what he hears, sees and reads. As a person reads the title of a chapter, for example, all the relevant schemata which have some connection with the ideas represented by the chapter-heading are brought into play so that he can go on to hypothesise about what he is going to read, and as he reads, check his hypotheses against what the text has to say. According to Rumelhart, the reader will comprehend what he reads, to the extent to which he is able to use a set of relevant schemata to reconstruct the writer's meaning from the text.

Several scholars (e.g., Bower, Black and Turner 1985; Rumelhart 1975; Stein and Glenn, 1977; Thorndyke, 1977) have suggested that a common strategy used by readers to comprehend a text is to use schematic representation of stories. Rumelhart was the first to postulate a formal grammar for stories.
According to Stein (1982: 326), the theoretical premise is that story schema or story grammar comprises an "organised set of knowledge used during the encoding, representation and retrieval of information from stories". This grammar can be applied to different stories to aid comprehension (Thorndyke, 1977). Mandler and Johnson (1977) suggest that readers use such general aspects of a story's framework as setting, theme, plot and resolution to aid their comprehension of a particular story. Studies by Montague et al. (1990) led them to the conclusion that one characteristic of poor readers is that they have only a rudimentary schema for narrative prose.

Some researchers have focused on the structural aspects of texts. Kintsch and Van Dijk (1978), and Pearson and Camperell (1985) suggest that inherent in all texts are three structural levels which they call microstructure, macrostructure and superstructure. Microstructure refers to the sequence of propositions found at sentence level; macrostructure refers to propositions found at paragraph level, and superstructure refers to the general form and content of the whole text. According to Kintsch and Van Dijk (1978), the comprehension process is guided by the reader's previous experiences with similar superstructures, and the reader comprehends the details by the use he makes of the macrostructures and microstructures in the text.

Spiro, Bruce and Brewer (1980) explored the influence of context on comprehension. They concluded that the reader is influenced by a number of intrinsic and extrinsic aspects, such as the totality of the reading matter in which the text is located, the task requirements of a given situation, and the interests, attitudes and pre-existing knowledge of the reader. Prior to Spiro and his associates, Sulin and Dooling (1974) had shown how background knowledge is an essential factor in the comprehension of a text, and how the interests and
attitudes of the reader influenced the manner and depth in which he comprehended a given text.

In the words of Anderson et al., (1985: 7) "reading can be compared to the performance of a symphony orchestra", and like such a performance, reading is a holistic process which involves the interaction between the reader and the text on several levels (Bos and Vaughn, 1991). Of these, the most significant interactions which result in comprehension are between text-based processes and knowledge-based processes. The reader is actively engaged in tapping meaning from the text by forming and testing hypotheses about the writer's intended meaning. According to Freebody (1990: 316), the interaction of the text-based processes and the meaning-based processes should be understood in the wider social and cultural context of the reader and the writer. He summarises the skills involved in becoming a successful reader in four questions: "1. How do I crack the script? 2. How do I understand this discourse? 3. How do I use this textual understanding in this immediate context? 4. What does this understanding and use do to me as a reader and as a member of this culture?"

At this stage, mention should be made of the impact which the work of social reconstructionists (e.g., Adams, 1975; Bigelow, 1989; Horton, 1990; Kliebard, 1986; Luke, 1991; Shannon, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992; Tierney, 1989; Willensky, 1990) have had on literacy education, especially in the past decade. According to these writers, literacy education should serve to raise the consciousness of the students regarding the creation and maintenance of the social and economic structures which traditionally have served to benefit the rich and the powerful. Literacy education - indeed, all education - should be aimed at empowering students to bring about changes which lead to a just
society. In the words of Patrick Shannon (1992:47) social reconstructionists believe that the "economic, intellectual and social distinctions among peoples are artificial; that they are the result of unequal and unearned power. Under these unequal and unjust conditions the school's and teachers' job is to intervene ... to bring about equality of opportunity and benefit. They believe that the role of schooling in a democracy should be to redistribute useful social and academic knowledge equally among all citizens in order to prepare students to make the substantial choices of their lives in and out of schools" Luke (1991:114-115) is even more specific about the role of the school and the literacy educator in redressing the injustices created by the established social order: "Children are located in a complex matrix of genderal, racial and ethnic, class and cultural configurations and variously positioned in discourses that rationalise gender, colour, class and cultures. That politically most powerful discourse which reigns over all children and which certifies and divides them according to those primary discourses of difference - gender, class and colour - is pedagogic discourse. The child is circulated through the educational economy of value from which it derives part of its self-knowledge, identity and possibility. Within that regime of differentiation, the child is positioned by interlocking and often incompatible discourses of popular and community culture. Child writers, readers and literates are produced by and within such discursive networks. The school makes a pivotal contribution to these networks." Needless to say, the net result of the work of the social reconstructionists has been the politicisation of literacy education.
2. READING DISABILITY IN EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED STUDENTS

Research carried out in Britain and U.S.A. in the early decades of this century (e.g., Bird, 1927; Burt, 1917) had given rise to the suspicion that there was some relationship between emotional disturbance and poor performance at school. Further research in the Fifties and Sixties (e.g., Chazan, 1965; Collins, 1961; Morris, 1959; Stott, 1958) confirmed that "backward" students were handicapped in varying degrees by such temperamental conditions as excitability and repressed behaviour, as well as by such nervous conditions as anxiety states and hysteria.

Evidence dating back to the 1930s seemed to point to a causal link between reading failure and emotional disturbance. It should be noted that the term then prevalent was "maladjustment" and not "emotional disturbance". Monroe (1932) showed that reading failure causes emotional disturbance by diminishing the child's confidence and increasing his anxiety. In Fernald's (1943) study of 78 children, only four had shown signs of maladjustment before they started school. Preston (1940) cited examples of children with serious reading disability "who were badly maladjusted, but who recovered on being taught to read". His study of 100 reading-disabled children in Grades One to Ten led him to conclude that reading failure causes "a blighting insecurity in the school world" and gives rise to serious maladjustment. Mangus (1950) studied 1232 children in Ohio and found that the experience of failure in such a fundamental skill as reading, damages the child's self-confidence and self-respect, leads to rejection by the more successful children in his age group, produces symptoms of maladjustment, and makes him more vulnerable to neurotic and delinquent behaviour. Feagans et al. (1991) studied the
interactions of reading-disabled children with their parents and found that these children exhibited greater behaviour problems in their interactions with members of their own families. Dykman and Ackerman (1991) studied 182 children with DSM III-diagnosed attention deficit disorder and found that 94 of them, i.e., 52 percent of the sample, were poor readers. Bentley and Conley (1992) found that students with literacy difficulties were likely to be disengaged from schooling and other social experiences; that they often showed a tendency to act out emotional conflicts in the classroom and engage in anti-social behaviour.

Seeking to answer the question whether emotional disturbance causes reading failure, Gann (1945) found that severe reading disability should be considered not only a learning problem, but also a personality problem. He suggested that for some groups personality therapy would be essential in order to overcome the reading problem. Other researchers (e.g. Axline, 1947; Bills, 1950) agree with this view. Ellis (1949) concluded that effective treatment for reading disability "would seem to involve the total personality of the child rather than some set of particular sensory or intellectual faculties". In a study on the relationship between reading failure and behaviour disorder, Graubard (1973) found that the higher the child's score on the misconduct dimension of a behaviour checklist, the greater also was his reading retardation. McMichael (1979) examined the sequential relationship of maladjustment and reading failure in a study of 198 boys in the first two years of schooling. He concluded that anti-social behaviour preceded reading disability. His findings called into question the suggestion that reading failure leads to anti-social emotional disorders. Other researchers (e.g., Kyriacou & Rowe, 1988; McGee et al., 1986; Rowe, 1988; Rowe & Rowe, 1992; Wheldall & Merrett, 1988) have noted how
the maladaptive behaviours of certain students in the classroom adversely affect their learning progress in general and their reading achievement in particular.

As to the question of the link between reading difficulties and specific types of maladjustment, in a review of the literature, Vernon (1957) found no real evidence that backwardness in reading was associated with any particular type of emotional disturbance. However, after studying 53 children in a small village school, Gregory (1965) found a significant connection between reading failure and "restlessness" throughout the school. He suggested that the connection between restlessness, reading failure and anxiety should be further explored. Morris (1966) found that boys and girls suffering from reading difficulties in the junior school exhibited different reactions to the problem. The boys tended to be more irritable, more anxious and more restless than the girls. Williams (1969) pointed out the need to be flexible when devising remedial programs for disabled readers because a large percentage of them suffer also from emotional problems. Staats and Butterfield (1965) demonstrated that increasing the reading level of an adolescent male resulted in improved school behaviour. Brier (1989) examined the literature on the relationship between learning disability and delinquency and found that the ratio of learning disabled students who became delinquents ranged from 12% according to some studies (e.g. Lenz et al., 1980; Pasternak and Lyon, 1982), to 50% according to others (e.g. Robbins et al., 1983; Young et al., 1983). The results of a number of correlational studies (e.g. Day & Peters, 1989; Dykman & Ackerman, 1991; McGee, Williams & Silva, 1987, 1988; McKinney, 1989) have found a consistent link between attention disorders and poor reading achievement.

Researchers have also uncovered certain characteristics in the reading patterns of emotionally disturbed readers. Das, Bisanz and Mancini (1984)
found that older students "tend to be more specific in their expectations and hence efficient in their use of attentional resources" compared to younger students. Swanson's (1984) work supports the hypothesis that disabled and non-disabled readers differ in their capacity to focus their attention on specific reading tasks, and in their capacity to perform word recall tasks. Torgerson and Kail (1980) explored the specific causes of reading disabilities as far as attention and memory are concerned. They list these causes as relating to:

(a) serious processing limitations  
(b) deficiencies in knowledge  
(c) failure of the student's home environment to support his learning efforts.

Pelham and Ross's (1977) study showed that reading disabled students appear to be more easily distracted by irrelevant information which in turn made it difficult for them to attend to relevant details and to recall relevant information. Other studies (e.g. Dykman et al., 1983; Hallahan et al., 1982; Hallahan & Sapona, 1983) point to the need of reading-disabled students for stronger stimulation and their need for more frequent self-assessment and teacher assessment, in order to maintain on-task behaviour while reading.

In a review of the literature, McGee et al.,(1986: 597) remark that "all hypotheses have drawn support from the literature and the proposed mechanisms underlying the relationship between disability and behaviour disorder appear to be equally plausible." Rowe and Rowe (1992) attribute this to the methodological and analytical problems which have plagued empirical research in this field, especially the attempts to address the "causal" and "which comes first" types of hypothesis. What is undeniable, however, is the strong and
consistent correlational link which research over the past fifty years has established between emotional disturbance and reading failure.

3. SELF-CONCEPT AND ITS IMPACT ON LEARNING

Mouley (1970) defines self-concept as "the complex system of attitudes and values which the individual has developed concerning himself in relation to the external world with which he has psychological contact" (p. 453). The individual who sees himself as "honest" has favourable experiences involving honest behaviour; the teenager who considers himself a "punk", on the other hand, has negative attitudes toward the social and moral codes.

According to Bajuk, Relich and Richardson (1992: 98), self-esteem, a term that is often used interchangeably with self-concept, is actually the emotive quality of self-concept. They regard it as an "evaluation of one's self based on feelings".

Combs and Snygg (1959) suggested that two factors influence how a human being will act in any given situation: (1) how he perceives himself, and (2) how he perceives the situation in which he is involved. They refer to the totality of a human being's perceptions as his perceptual field which includes perceptions about himself (phenomenal self), and perceptions about everything outside himself (phenomenal environment). Applying this insight into a learning situation, we may say that a teenager who perceived his phenomenal self as a competent reader and saw his classroom, i.e., his phenomenal environment, as affirming rather than threatening, would find that a reading lesson was a satisfying and successful experience. Another teenager who saw himself as a "hopeless" reader, and felt that there was little sympathy for him in the
classroom, would find the situation stressful and demoralising because of his particular perceptions of his phenomenal self and his phenomenal environment.

A number of writers (e.g. Congreve, 1966; Grolnick and Ryan, 1990; Juhasz, 1989; Staines, 1958; Strang et al., 1967) suggest that a child's self-concept grows mainly from the actions and words of significant adults in his life and from the inferences drawn from his experiences at home, in the school and in other social settings. Several of these writers also note that the self-concept is learned and that once learned, it persists with a high degree of stability. Thus, according to Gurney (1988), even an unsatisfactory self-concept is likely to prove highly resistant to change, mainly because such a change would threaten the organisation of a fundamental frame of reference for the individual. Lecky (1945), who did much to pioneer the study of self-concept, after describing how a low-achieving student can use the stability of his self-concept as a defence mechanism when confronted by the traumas of repeated failure, remarks that the non-reader refuses to read for the same reason that he refuses to become a thief - he has a reputation to maintain before others, and more importantly, before himself.

As far as self-concept is concerned, the individual is faced with two sets of problems: he has to maintain harmony within himself, and he has to maintain harmony with the environment. In order to understand the environment, he must keep his interpretation consistent with his experiences, but, in order to maintain his individuality, he must organise these interpretations in such a way that they form a system which is non-threatening and internally consistent. According to Bruner, Goodnow and Austin (1965), when students feel good about themselves, they avoid cognitive strain. Bachor and Crealock (1986) suggest three variations on the cognitive strain theme: (a) positive feelings may play an
important role in one's willingness to try; (b) positive feedback facilitates the
effort to seek correct solutions to problems; and (c) when a person is feeling
happy and he is given an 'important' task, he makes a greater effort to complete
the task successfully.

According to Carl Rogers (1969) children lacking a healthy self-concept
may be subject to serious emotional distress. Such individuals are easily
threatened by external events which make them excessively anxious. Heyman
(1990) and Priel and Leshem (1990) found that children with learning
disabilities were handicapped by a lower self-perception in the cognitive
competence domain when compared to their normally achieving peers. Bachor
and Crealock (1986) have suggested that test-anxious students produce lower
results. This anxiety leads many students to resort to such defence mechanisms
as repression, projection or rationalisation in order to maintain the internal
consistency of their self-concept. Butowsky and Willows (1980) found that
among disabled readers there is a generalised expectation of failure in both
academic-like tasks (anagrams) and in non-academic-like tasks (line drawings).
Smith and Dechant (1961) observed that because reading is an important
developmental task in western culture, failure in learning to read could block the
child's attempt to satisfy his need for self-esteem within the culture. A number of
studies ( e.g., Bryan & Pearl, 1979; Gronick & Ryan, 1990; Gurney, 1988;
Rogers & Sakolfske, 1985) have found lower self-esteem in subjects with
learning disabilities, compared with non learning-disabled samples.

Abramson et al., (1978) refer to the behaviour pattern of learning-disabled
students as 'learned helplessness' which is characterised by (a) low expectation
of success, (b) insufficient time and effort expended on learning tasks, and, (c)
the belief that failures are caused by personal deficiencies and successes are due
to external forces beyond the child's control. These attitudes which have their
roots in low self-esteem, in their turn reinforce further the negative self-concept of the student (Priel & Leshem, 1990). According to Raviv and Stone (1991), some learning disabled individuals compensate for their low self-perception in the academic domain by seeking fulfilment in such areas as athletics and sports.

Bryan (1974a, 1974b, 1990) found that their peers described learning disabled students as unpopular, worried, frightened, never having a good time, sad, not neat, and often ignored or rejected by the other students. From their study of learning disabled students Larrive and Horne (1991) concluded that peer acceptance was significantly lower for this group than for the average and high ability groups. In order to protect themselves from the full implications of the interpretations they make of their continuing negative experiences in the classroom, these students may reject the source of most of their failure and frustration, namely, the school.

Berry (1974) suggests that the home environments of such students contribute their own sets of problems in the area of self-concept. He found that parents who are socially maladjusted are likely to have children whose social skills are not well developed, probably because socially awkward parents provide poor role models, and are unable to teach their children the skills which would make them socially acceptable. Raviv and Stone (1991) report that there is a significant relationship between parents' perceptions and adolescent self-image scores. In a study of 2154 high school students in North Dakota, Young and his associates (1990) confirmed the hypothesis that negative life experiences - at home as well as in the school - had a deleterious effect on the self-concept. Castan (1992) notes that low self-esteem is a common characteristic of children referred by families and schools for behaviour problems. The lack of stability in the perceptual field, the emotional, and very often, physical chaos in their home
environment, and the scape-goating which is a common feature in such homes, lead to confusion in the minds of these children about their own identity.

The student whose self-confidence is already under severe strain because of repeated failures in a range of settings comprising the home and the school, reacts to his failure in learning to read by increasing his anxiety level, by lowering his level of aspiration, by modifying his ego-structure and - on the practical level - by withdrawing from the learning situation and resorting to disruptive behaviour (Bentley & Conley, 1992; Bryan, 1990; Lecky, 1945).

4. READING DISABILITY AND NEED FULFILMENT

We may look at the problems of emotionally disturbed and reading-disabled students from the perspective of need-fulfilment. Though many lists of human needs have been proposed (Cofer & Appley, 1974), the most significant for the purposes of this study are those of Murray (1947) and Maslow (1948, 1970, 1987). Murray's list, despite being quite detailed, does not indicate any order of priorities among the needs. Maslow's system, on the other hand, postulates a hierarchical order among human needs.

Thus, according to Maslow, the individual will act to satisfy his physiological needs before his safety needs, his safety needs before his love and belonging needs and so on up to the top of the pyramid where the need "to know and understand" are satisfied only after the lower order needs have been attended to. The pyramidal shape in Maslow's conceptualisation of human needs is significant. It demonstrates not only the hierarchical nature of needs but also the broad base of physiological and safety factors necessary before other possible needs are likely to be answered. In Maslow's (1987: 17) own words: "It is quite true that humans live by bread alone - when there is no bread. But what
happens when there is plenty of bread? ... At once other and higher needs emerge, and these, rather than physiological hungers, dominate the organism. And when these in turn are satisfied, again new and (still higher) needs emerge, and so on. This is what we mean by saying that the basic human needs are organised into a hierarchy of relative prepotency." The following is Maslow’s categorisation of human needs:

1. physiological
   ↓
2. safety, security
   ↓
3. love, belonging
   ↓
4. self-esteem
   ↓
5. self-actualisation
   ↓
6. knowledge, understanding
   ↓
7. aesthetic, creative

The first four needs - physiological through to self-esteem - are described as deficiency needs. This implies that the individual reacts to a deficiency in food, security, affection or esteem, and is unable to concentrate on the satisfaction of the higher order needs until these lower order needs are satisfied. Thus, the hungry person eats and then is hungry no longer; the insecure person tries to achieve security; the lonely person is unhappy until he finds affection,
and when these needs are satisfied, he strives towards satisfying his need for self-esteem.

Maslow called the higher order needs - self-actualisation, knowledge and understanding and aesthetic satisfaction - *Growth Needs* or *Being Needs*. Maslow asserted that for an individual to strive to satisfy these needs, he must first have satisfied his deficiency needs at least to a reasonable degree.

It is also worth noting the broad categories of *personal*, then *social*, and finally at the highest level, *intellectual* needs in Maslow's conceptualisation. An important assumption in Maslow's theory, and one that has been proved by subsequent studies (Keys, 1952), as well as from the daily experience of human beings everywhere, is the notion that progress through the hierarchy of needs occurs only as more important needs are satisfied. Thus, in the Minnesota semi-starvation study (Keys, 1945) the responses of the subjects were focused so sharply on food that all their other needs were temporarily relegated to a position of secondary importance.

Almost at the peak of Maslow's hierarchy comes the need for the acquisition of knowledge and understanding. The role of curiosity, the search for meaning - even the meaning contained in a text of print - will be given free rein only after personal and social needs have been satisfied. Hungry or frightened children, those suffering from a serious deprivation of affection and esteem, are gravely handicapped when it comes to the acquisition of knowledge, in just the same way as starving human beings can think of little else except food, and all their energies and faculties are put to use in order to satisfy that basic need. A number of studies (e.g., Castan, 1992; Jones, 1980; Jones, 1992) confirm that reducing unproductive student behaviour and increasing student
learning can occur simultaneously if consideration is first given to meeting student needs. These studies lead one to Maslow's conclusion that the lower-order needs of students must be met before learning can take place.

5. CASE STUDIES IN READING RESEARCH

(a) A Critique of the Case Study Method

The case study method has been used in psychology and education on the basis that the individuality of the subject merits consideration just as much as the generality of the conditions that are being studied (Allport, 1962; Bem and Allen, 1974). This is because of the "assumption that there can be substantial individual differences in experience and in important dimensions of behaviour (both overt and covert) which are as critical as the commonalities between individuals" (Johnston, 1985: 155). In the case study method, it is possible to focus the attention of the researcher on the unique nature of the individual's life experience, to compare this experience with those of similarly-placed others, to try out approaches which are particularly apt for each individual, and even to formulate some conclusions which may have a wider applicability to other subjects of similar background and disposition. In short, this methodology is fully consistent with the fundamental ontological assumptions of the naturalistic paradigm - respect for multiple realities.

According to Isaac and Michael (1981), because the case study approach tends to be intensive, it enables the researcher to bring to light the significant variables, processes and interactions which could easily be lost sight of in a mass study. The authors, however, hasten to caution against its inevitably narrow focus on a very small sample. In another criticism levelled against the case study approach, Madge (1975) points out how much the
personal preferences of the researcher can interfere with objectivity both in method and in conclusions.

In countering the above criticism it is worth pointing out that the present investigation is based in the naturalistic paradigm and therefore, the personal biases of the researcher would be described up front together with the subjective nature of the interaction between the enquirer and the respondents, the aim being to let the data speak for themselves.

(b) A Survey of Case Studies in Reading Research

W. C. Olsen (1938: 331) was in no doubt about the importance of the case study method in education. "From the point of view of prediction and control of the growth and the behaviour of an individual, the case study is the most scientific method now known. ... The case study in relation to education is a method with a respectable past and a promising future." However, despite these optimistic predictions, there have only been a handful of case studies in the field of reading. According to Johnston (1985), this is because by and large cognitive scientists who research aspects of reading have made little use of the case study method for generating theory and practice.

A case study approach was used in research into reading as long ago as 1878 when W. P. Morgan described "a case of congenital word-blindness" in the British Medical Journal. In the 1930's two American scholars published reports of case studies of students with reading difficulties. Blanchard (1935) studied four cases for psychogenic factors in reading disability, and Liss (1935) studied one case. These researchers concluded that dynamic processes in the personality organisation which determine its mode and means of adaptation, are related to and influential in the reading experience.
In 1970, Michal-Smith's study of dyslexia in four siblings appeared in the *Journal of Learning Difficulties*. In 1981 John Yates published an anecdotal account of how his daughter learned to read at home by the age of four years and four months. A similar case study was carried out by Schmidt and Yates (1985) who documented the learning process involved in a pre-schooler becoming a proficient reader. Both these case studies supported the psycholinguistic notion that learning to read is a similar process to learning to speak. Sharon Pinson's (1982) case study of a four year old fluent reader concentrated on the strategies employed by the young reader to comprehend the stories he read, and found that he drew heavily on semantic and syntactic cues, while grapho-phonetic cues, though well mastered, were of secondary importance, and were used most carefully when unfamiliar vocabulary was encountered. Ruth Smith's (1990) case study of her six-year old daughter focused on the child's developing reading abilities in Grade One, and reflected on the processes involved in learning to read. Weatherill's (1983) case study of an eleven-year old reader using mainly retrospective miscue analysis was, like Pinson's and Smith's work, able to gain valuable insights into the strategies employed by a child who is a relatively competent reader. Case studies by Fueyo (1989) and Weis (1987) explored the development of writing skills in young children from a psycholinguistic perspective. Crago (1989) and Ingham (1984) used the case study method to investigate the use of literature in developing the interest and reading skills of two young students. Peter Johnston's (1985: 174) study of the reading problems experienced by three adult males in Boston describes how "the complex set of conditions within which [they] operate is inextricably interwoven with their cognitive activity". Johnston's report also pointed out the possibility of using the case study approach to examine the effects of reading
disability from the point of view of the individual sufferer and the totality of his life experience.

6. DRAWING THE THREADS TOGETHER

In Part A and Part B of this chapter I have reviewed the literature pertaining to six aspects of this study, namely,

1. studies on emotional disturbance in students
2. theories of reading
3. the relationship between reading disability and emotional disturbance
4. the significance of self-concept as a factor in learning
5. the connection between need-fulfilment and learning
6. the case study as a method for investigating reading development.

The review of the literature on emotional disturbance pointed out aspects of definition and identification, the methods of study and the most common theories on the etiology of emotional disturbance. Having examined each of these theories, I am inclined to adopt the ecological approach for the following reasons:

(a) It takes into account all the possible factors that could be responsible for emotional disturbance in individual students;
(b) it does not treat the student in isolation but treats each element in his ecosystem;
(c) it does makes good use of the insights which have been developed by the psychodynamic and the behaviouristic schools of thought;
(d) it is an approach that I have been observing for a while at the site of this study, and I can see how this particular approach addresses the significant aspects of the students' lives both at home and at school.

The examination of the theories of reading points to the need for clear ideas regarding the nature of the reading process, the significance of comprehension in reading, and the ways in which, according to researchers, readers are able to comprehend a text. The sociopsycholinguistic view of reading is emphasised as being better able to describe the reading process, and as having more useful suggestions to offer to the teacher of reading-disabled students than the traditional, skills-based views of reading.

The survey of the literature on the connection between reading disability and anti-social behaviour led to the conclusion that while there is no agreement as to the causative link between reading failure and emotional disturbance, there is a weight of evidence accumulated during the last fifty years, which suggests that most reading disabled children suffer from some degree of emotional disturbance, just as most emotionally disturbed children suffer some degree of reading disability. The evidence from the literature further suggests that a web of co-related factors may be contributing to the maintenance of both emotional disturbance and reading disability, and that the search for such factors should begin with the ecosystem of the affected student.

The literature survey on the concept of the Self as a factor in learning led to the conclusion that self-concept is learned from life experiences and from the treatment received from significant others, that it has great stability and that repeated failure in a learning situation would tend to make children withdraw
from such a situation and adopt evasive and disruptive behaviour in order to avoid the more painful effect of facing a severely battered self-concept.

The literature on need-fulfilment highlighted Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and pointed to the importance for students of satisfying lower-order needs before educators can hope to engage them in the task of learning. The implications for the present study are obvious. Emotionally disturbed students, with their several unsatisfied lower-order needs cannot be expected to benefit from the best of teaching programs, until those lower-order needs have been met.

The review of the literature on case studies suggested the possibility of examining reading disability in a small group of students and of being able to draw useful conclusions.

This analysis of the literature alerted me to the possibility of a theoretical explanation of the intuitions which I had been developing after 15 years on the site working closely with these types of adolescent students. A possible working hypothesis which emerges from this survey of the literature is that reading disability may be exacerbated by the inability of some students to engage in learning because they suffer from the non-fulfilment of important lower-order needs. The deprivation of these lower-order needs as well as the consequent emergence and development of a poor self-concept could also be contributing factors in the maintenance of their emotional disturbance. Emotional disturbance aggravates learning difficulties, while learning difficulties compound the problems of emotional disturbance, the net result being a vicious circle of learning failure and disruptive behaviour. This working hypothesis goes on to postulate that any program which seeks to remedy the
reading disability of emotionally disturbed students should incorporate measures aimed at facilitating the satisfaction of the lower-order needs of the students and for improving their self-concept, as without these pre-requisites, even the most carefully devised learning programs may be rendered ineffective.

The next chapter describes in detail the methods used in this study, while Chapters Four and Five examine reading failure in a group of 100 emotionally disturbed students using the case study method which is grounded in a naturalistic paradigm, and examines a set of curricular strategies designed to ameliorate the emotional disturbance and remedy the reading disability in ten of the one hundred teenagers in the study.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY OF THE INQUIRY

This chapter describes the methods used in the thesis to collect, analyse and interpret the data.

1. THE METHODS USED FOR COLLECTING THE DATA

A. THE ARCHIVAL DATA

The Agency's archives contain information on the socio-economic and educational background of the students who have been enrolled in the Agency since 1939. Following the emergent design of the thesis, an important step in the data collection process was an examination of the files relating to the teenagers who are involved in the current study. This involved a search through each of the hundred individual student's files to cull from them the information which would illuminate the connection between the emotional and reading problems of each student. This information, therefore, referred to a number of areas in their lives: Their family background, their educational background, the problems which they had faced in their previous schools, relevant aspects of their behaviour at home and at school, etc., as described in detail in the section dealing with coding the data.

To protect their privacy, the students were assigned a number from one to a hundred, and their home addresses were denoted only by the postcodes of the localities in which the families resided at the time of the teenagers' admission to the Agency.
B. STANDARDISED READING TESTS AND BURKE READING INTERVIEWS

To collect data about the literacy problems of the one hundred teenagers, each one was given the Gap Reading Comprehension Test (See Appendix B). This test was selected because it seeks to probe the comprehension strategies used by the reader, and in spite of the caution which must be used when examining the results of standardised tests, the Gap Reading Comprehension Test gave an indication of the strengths and weaknesses of the young reader. Once the student had completed the test, he was interviewed about his choice of responses in the test. This was done in order to probe his concepts about the purpose of reading and to get an insight into the thinking processes he employed in order to arrive at his choice of words for filling the gaps in the test. These questions included the following: "According to you, what is the purpose of reading?" "What was your aim in reading this particular paragraph?" "In the sentence 'Horsemen .......... for years thought of the highway as .......... own special property', why did you write "could" in the first gap? (The correct response, of course, is "had"). When you write "their" in the second gap, who does "their" refer to?" Thus, while the standardised version of the GAP test was used at the stage of data collection, the post-test interviews and the use made of the students' answers went beyond the traditional use of a standardised reading test.

The teenagers in the study were also given the Burke Reading Interview (see Appendix C). The Burke Reading Interview seeks to find out the student's use of comprehension strategies, his criteria for competence in reading and to get an idea of how and at what age he learned to read. The questions in the Burke Reading Interview were supplemented with questions regarding the
student's experience of learning to read in the primary school, and how he tried
to cope with learning problems while he was in primary school.

C. THE INTERVIEWS

After analysing the archival data of the 100 teenagers in the sample from the perspective of emotional disturbance, it became necessary to gain some insights into the way that the major stakeholders in the setting thought about the nature of emotional disturbance and reading disability. There were a number of related reasons for this decision. Firstly, it was assumed that the beliefs of the key stakeholders in the Agency's context would affect the way that emotional disturbance was perceived, interpreted and treated in this context. It was further assumed that the beliefs about emotional disturbance and reading disability held by each of these stakeholders would spill over into all areas of the Agency's work, that these beliefs would be instrumental not only in determining the policy and curriculum of the Agency with respect to emotional disturbance, but would also be instrumental in creating the very ethos of the whole setting. As one of the focal purposes of this study was to explore the link between emotional disturbance and reading disability in the setting, of the special education Agency, these interviews serve several purposes:

- To confirm/support/reject what the archival data show;
- To confirm/support/reject what the survey of the literature shows;
- To describe the context of emotional disturbance and reading disability at the setting in terms of the way that the main stakeholders perceive them so that it is possible
- To explain why the policy and curriculum of the Agency are what they currently are.
The interviews also served to ensure that the credibility of the data could be checked and that the information derived from the perceptions of the main stakeholders at the site could be triangulated.

The interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders involved in the Agency's educational, residential care and family services programs. The interviews were held at the site. The teachers were interviewed in their classrooms during their free periods; the social workers were interviewed in their offices, the residential care workers were interviewed in a private area of the staff room, and the students were interviewed in their classrooms. There were at least two sessions with each of the interviewees, and they were provided with transcripts which they could double-check for accuracy. The questions asked in these interviews are described in detail below.

In interviews held individually, the respondents were invited to share with the writer their views on the behaviour of the teenagers under each of the following categories as derived from Quay and Peterson (1983):

- **Conduct disorder** as manifested by defiance, aggressive and violent behaviour, uncontrollable behaviour and behaviour which merited suspension from school.
- **Conduct disorder**, as manifested by defiance, aggressive and violent behaviour, and behaviour which resulted in suspension from school.
- **Personality Problem** presenting in such behaviour as truancy and depression.
- **Inadequacy-Immaturity** manifested mainly in the form of attention deficit, a chronic inability to complete learning tasks, disruptive behaviour, etc.
• **Socialised Delinquency** as indicated by the tendency of some of the teenagers to associate with delinquent peers and to participate in illegal activities.

Emotional disturbance, as manifested by the students at the special education agency was further explored by seeking the respondents' views regarding the influence of certain factors in the backgrounds of the boys. These factors were originally derived from the analysis of the archival data, and the analysis itself was influenced by a review of the literature on emotional disturbance and reading disability.

The questions (See Appendix D) in this section referred, therefore, to the following factors:

(a) **Family Structure**

Whether the family members, especially the mother and the teenager in the study, experienced added problems because of the fact that in the majority of cases, the male figure was absent from the family, and how ultimately this type of family structure would affect the attitude of the teenager to learning.

(b) **Socio-Economic Situation**

The respondents were asked what in their opinion were the effects of the socio-economic problems which confronted the teenagers' families, and what effect these problems had on their learning behaviour.
(c) **Interpersonal Dynamics in the Family**

In this section of the interview the respondents were asked about their views regarding:

(a) violence in the families of the teenagers and the effect such violence had on their behaviour and learning patterns;

(b) alcohol and/or drug abuse in the families and how it affected the behaviour of the students from such families;

(c) physical and/or sexual abuse in the family and the effects of such abuse on members of the family, especially on the teenager who had been identified as being emotionally disturbed;

(d) chronic illness in the family and the typical responses of teenagers from such families to their role as learners; and finally,

(e) bereavement and its effects on the families and the teenagers who had to face the recent death of a member of the family.

(d) **The Ecosystem of the Suburbs in which the Families were located**

Questions in this section referred to the influence of the socio-economic conditions present in the sub-culture of the individual localities on the attitude of the teenager regarding his learning and his interactions with others.

(e) **Educational Turbulence**

The participants were questioned on their opinions regarding the influence of frequent changes of residence and schools on the learning behaviour of the teenagers and on the problems they would encounter as they tried to adapt to the new surroundings at home and at school.
The respondents were then interviewed regarding the Agency's curriculum and the curricular strategies which were used specifically for helping the emotionally disturbed teenagers.

These strategies were identified from observations of the curriculum in practice and from initial unstructured interviews with the respondents. Once these strategies were identified, more structured interviews were conducted with each of the respondents regarding three broad categories of curricular strategies. These were:

(a) strategies aimed at improving key relationships in the lives of the boys;
(b) strategies aimed at improving self-concept; and
(c) strategies aimed at improving literacy skills.

When exploring the strategies aimed at improving key relationships, the interviewees were questioned on their opinions regarding:

(a) the role of social workers in the Agency's program;
(b) the school policy of sending the boys home for weekends;
(c) the concern the school shows in trying to re-establish the key relationship between a teenager and a parent who has been absent from that teenager's life for a period of time;
(d) the positive nature of the communication between the staff and the families of the boys; and
(e) the regular review meetings which are held to assess the progress or otherwise of each of the teenagers in the program.

The following strategies aimed at improving self-concept were discussed with the respondents: (a) skill-based physical activities, and (b)
scholastic activities which were aimed at ensuring success and encouraging the teenager to learn better.

The interviewees were then asked their opinions regarding a set of strategies used by the school to improve the literacy skills of the teenagers. Thus the respondents' opinions were sought regarding (a) the organisation of the classes according to ability rather than according to age; (b) the discipline strategies which were aimed at fostering responsibility among the teenagers for their own actions; and (c) a set of specific instructional strategies such as the role played by the teacher who helped individual teenagers with their reading, the type of approach to literacy adopted by the class teachers, the use of microcomputers to encourage the teenagers to develop better literacy skills, and the use of such audio-visual aids as the listening post and the video cassette recorder to encourage the boys to develop an interest in reading.

Finally, the respondents who played a key role in helping each of the ten boys in the case study were questioned about the effect of the curricular strategies on these teenagers' behaviour and literacy skills.

2. THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE INTERVIEWS

(1) The Teaching Staff of the Agency

Altogether seven teachers who volunteered were interviewed. They included the Principal of the Agency who has eight years' experience dealing with emotionally disturbed teenagers, two teachers each of whom had taught at the site for more than ten years, and four other teachers who together had accumulated 17 years of teaching experience in the school. One of the teachers had been a student at the Agency in the late 1960s and was now in charge of the music program. To protect their privacy, each of the teaching staff was assigned
a number preceded by the letter T. Thus, for example, T1 refers to the Principal and T6 refers to the ex-student who is currently the music teacher at the Agency.

(2) The Social Workers

There are three social workers employed at the Agency, and they were interviewed for the thesis. Each was assigned a number preceded by the letters SW. Thus SW1 refers to the head social worker who had earlier been Director of the Agency for over four years. Every year, each of the social workers has had a list of approximately 14 of the boys with whose families they liaised on behalf of the agency. Because of this, the social workers brought to the interviews a perspective that took into account the attitude of the families regarding the education of the teenagers. Their perspective complemented the opinions of the teachers as the latter tended to focus their attention on the behaviour of the teenagers during the school hours.

(3) The Residential Care Workers

There are three residential care workers in the Agency and in the record of interviews they are referred to as RC1, RC2 and RC3. They look after the boys once school is over, accompanying them to after-school sporting activities, supervising them during the evening meal and the study time, and finally, ensuring that the boys get to bed at around 9.30 p.m. The residential care workers have the opportunity to observe the group dynamics among the boys away from the pressures of the classroom, and in settings as diverse as the basketball court, the dining room, the recreation area, the study hall and the living unit. Hence, their perspective regarding the boys add to the overall understanding of the emotional and literacy problems of the teenagers.
(4) The Teenagers

The teenagers were interviewed in groups when information was being collected regarding aspects of emotional disturbance and the key factors underlying the disturbance. Thus G90 refer to groups interviewed in 1990 and G91 refer to groups interviewed in 1991. The reason for interviewing these teenagers in groups was that many of them find it difficult to articulate their emotional or learning problems on a one-to-one basis, but find it easier to participate in a group airing of the problems. However, when information was being collected regarding the reading disability of the teenagers, they were interviewed individually, because the questions were of a less threatening variety and were prefaced with the rather innocuous questions from the Burke Reading Interview. There was also the intention of building up a profile of each teenager in the study.

3. STAGES OF DATA COLLECTION

As has been stated earlier in the chapter, this thesis is based on an emergent design. The stages of data collection, just like other aspects of the thesis, were influenced by the insights gained from the review of the literature and the intimate knowledge of the site and the participants which the researcher brought into this investigation.

(1) The Archival Search

This was the stage during which certain hypotheses formed during the review of the literature were put to the test. One of the key factors in emotional disturbance as revealed from the literature was that there seemed to occur an emotional blockage in the child at some stage of his development, and that the most common underlying cause for this blockage was a set of family dynamics which prevented the child from experiencing emotional security. The literature
also indicated that a child deprived of such a vital need as emotional security would find it extremely difficult to concentrate on fulfilling his intellectual need for academic learning, and this was why such a child would be a disabled reader. The files in the archives were studied with a view to corroborating or repudiating these hypotheses and the relevant information was collected over a period of several months.

(2) The Preliminary Unstructured Interviews

These interviews were conducted with a sample of respondents from each category. The purpose of these interviews was to acquire an understanding of the opinions of these professional care-givers regarding the manifestation of emotional disturbance among the boys, the possible factors involved in producing the emotional disturbance, the extent of the literacy and learning problems faced by the teenagers, and the types of interventions offered by the Agency in order to help them.

(3) The Structured Interviews

These were conducted individually with each of the three categories of staff members, i.e., teachers, residential care workers and social workers. The questions used in these interviews have been described in Part One, Section C of this chapter. As indicated there, these questions were based on the hypotheses formed from (a) a study of the literature, (b) a study of the archival data, and (c) a study of the responses from the unstructured interviews. The interviews referred to in this section were conducted over a period of two years and involved a series of discussions with most of the respondents over that period of time.
(4) The Reading Tests and Burke Reading Interviews

During this stage of data collection results of a standardised reading test were obtained by administering the Gap Reading Comprehension Test to each of the one hundred teenagers in the study. Each student was then followed up with the Burke Reading Interview and further questions which probed the likely links between the problems in school and the problems at home. The following processes were undertaken in order to derive the maximum useful information from the Gap Reading Comprehension tests and the Burke Reading Interview:

1. The answers to the GAP test were checked against the manual and each student was given a reading score.

2. The answers which the students gave in their GAP test were analysed in order to identify the use they made of the syntactic and semantic cueing systems for tapping meaning from the texts. Thus, in the sentence "Juvenile delinquency in London is very largely a mode ....... weekend dissipation", when a student wrote for rather than of as his answer, it was taken as a sign of his having some problems with the use of syntactic cues. In a similar way, in the sentences "Long ago in the land of Sweden there was a little girl who sang. She sang with the ....... as they chirped in the hedges", when a student wrote flute instead of birds, it was taken as a sign that he had problems with the use of the semantic cue contained in the word chirped.

3. Each student was asked to read aloud Paragraph Five of the Test in order to assess the use he made of the graphophonic cues.

4. A follow-up interview was used to question the students about their answers to the GAP test. This interview enabled the researcher to gain an understanding of the concepts which the students held regarding the purpose of reading. The students were then given the Burke Reading Interview with three additional questions (see Appendix C) two of which probed their perception of the effect of domestic problems on their approach to learning, and the third tried
to identify their impressions of their roles as learners in a classroom. It was said that these three questions were added to the Burke Reading Interview as a result of the emergent nature of the research design. While interviewing the students about their emotional and reading problems it became increasingly clear to the researcher (bearing in mind Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of human needs from the literature review), that the underlying factors in both emotional disturbance and reading disability could be essentially identical, and that these identical factors could be the deprivation of emotional security in the case of most of these teenagers, and their consequent lack of self-esteem. The three additional questions were aimed at probing the teenagers on these aspects of their problems.

(5) Collecting the Data regarding the Agency's Response to the Needs of the Teenagers

During this stage of data collection the emphasis was on three sources:

1. The in-house publications of the Agency which are circulated among the staff and are available to the local educational community;
2. The observations recorded by the candidate as a teacher and researcher at the site; and
3. The interviews with the key stake-holders at the site.

(6) The Case Study of the Ten Teenagers

This was the final stage of the data collection and it involved the use of archival material as well as interviews with the key staff and the teenagers involved, regarding the effectiveness of the curricular strategies in reducing emotional disturbance and improving literacy skills. The teenagers in the case study were selected randomly at the rate of one student for each group of ten.
This method of selection allowed for a representative cross section of the teenagers in the original sample to be studied in greater detail. As the study progressed, some of the teenagers left the program. Instead of replacing them with other students, it was felt that the truncated case studies of such students should be preserved in the thesis because they would be illustrative of the crises-ridden lives of many of these teenagers. Wherever possible, contacts were maintained with these ex-students over the telephone. The social workers who had these teenagers on their list of clients were particularly helpful in tracking them down and getting the relevant information. Another staff member whose expertise was helpful at this stage was the Transition Co-ordinator who has the responsibility for keeping in touch with the ex-students of the Agency.

4. RECORDING, CODING AND ANALYSING THE DATA

Once the data had been collected, they were transferred to computer files either in the form of documents on the word processor or as databases. Thus, the archival information was stored on the computer in the form of two sets of databases. The database format was also used for recording and storing the information obtained from the standardised reading tests and the Burke Reading Interviews. The document format on the word processor was used for recording and storing the data obtained from the various interviews.

After the data was recorded and stored, it was possible to proceed to a systematic coding of the data. The files on the databases were already divided into a set of categories. The database containing the information about the admission of the teenagers to the Agency on the basis that they were emotionally disturbed, contained the following categories:

- a number for the teenager,
- the postcode indicating the suburb in which the family resided at the time of the teenager's admission to the Agency,
- the name and position of the person who initially referred the teenager to the school,
- the name of the social worker from the Agency who conducted the pre-admission assessment, and
- the professional opinion regarding the behaviour of the teenager from the reports of sent in by school counsellors, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and other officials from the New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services.

The second database storing information about the family background of the teenagers contained the following categories:
- a number identifying each teenager,
- the postcode of the suburb in which the family resided,
- the type of family structure,
- the economic situation of the family,
- the most pressing aspects of the family dynamics,
- the number of schools which the teenager had attended before coming to the Agency, and
- the number of addresses at which the family had lived.

In the third database information was stored regarding the reading abilities of the students as derived from the standardised reading tests and from the interviews. This database contained the following categories:
- a number identifying the teenager in the study,
- the postcode of the suburb in which the family resided,
- the reading level registered by the teenager as a result of completing the Gap Reading Comprehension Test, and
- a summary of his responses to the Burke Reading Interview and supplementary questions.

The information contained on the various databases was analysed using computer searches to find answers to such questions as "What percentage of the teenagers were reported to have been suspended from school for misconduct?" or "What was the percentage of the teenagers who lived with the natural mother in a single parent family?" or, "How many of the teenagers were more than 4 years behind their age peers in their reading level?"

The interview data was coded according to the name and role of the interviewee in the Agency, and the section of the study that was discussed. The next step was to go through all the interviews and cut out from each the different sections dealing with the various aspects of the study. Thus, all the comments of the teachers, social workers, residential care workers and groups of teenagers on, for example, the effects of educational turbulence on the students' attitude to learning, were collected together and examined in order to understand the perceptions of these various groups regarding that section.

By this stage the study was reaching a point where all the data collected, recorded and analysed were starting to suggest answers to the questions with which the whole study is concerned, namely, "Is there a link between emotional disturbance and reading disability? If so, what, precisely, is the link? In what ways did a set of curricular strategies reduce emotional disturbance and reading disability in the teenagers in the study?"
5. PROCESSES INVOLVED IN MAKING SENSE OF THE DATA

The first stage in this process was to marshal all the data together and then write a draft of the results chapter using as much of the data as was logically possible. This enabled the researcher to see the data as a whole, to identify the areas of convergence as well as divergence, to reflect on the total picture formed by the data and to report on that reflection in the form of personal comments at the end of each section of the results chapter. The draft which resulted from this activity was submitted to the Thesis Supervisor, and discussed in detail. It was also presented at peer briefings held in the university with other Ph.D. and Masters Honours candidates. As a result of the critique provided by these colleagues and by the Thesis Supervisor, it was possible to go back to the data and work on a second and third draft of the chapter, with each draft making clearer meaning out of the original data. Each of these drafts were again presented to the Thesis Supervisor and to my thesis-writing colleagues for further criticism and suggestions.

Chapter Four and Chapter Five are the end-products of re-working and polishing these drafts. The process has not been dissimilar to that of carving a sculpture out of an amorphous block of marble.
CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA:
PART ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

The data from the study is presented in Chapters Four and Five. Chapter Four itself is divided into three parts. Part One analyses the data on the background and behaviour of one hundred emotionally disturbed teenagers with a special emphasis on their emotional disturbance. Part Two proceeds to examine the data on various aspects of the reading disability in the same group of teenagers. Part Three describes the curricular strategies employed at the Agency to reduce the emotional disturbance and the reading disability. Chapter Five then proceeds to present the data regarding the results of the remediation strategies on ten of the teenagers in the study.

A diagrammatic representation of Chapter Four and Chapter Five follows:

1. emotional disturbance in one hundred teenagers
   ↓
2. reading disability in the same group
   ↓
3. curricular strategies aimed at reducing the emotional disturbance and the reading disability
   ↓
4. the effects of these strategies on ten of the teenagers
The aim of this Chapters Four and Five is to create from the data as accurate a picture as possible of how the one hundred teenagers and the various factors which influenced their lives interacted with the curricular experiences offered at the Agency, and how these interactions led to particular outcomes for individual adolescents. It must be made clear at the outset that the evidence which the data provide for improvement or lack of improvement in literacy skills as well as for a reduction or increase in emotionally disturbed behaviour, is sketchy and fraught with ambiguity.

However, because of the care taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the data through the processes of triangulation and peer debriefing, it is felt that the picture that emerges in these pages is an accurate representation of the reality of the teenagers and the context of Agency, and that it enables the researcher to speculate on how the various factors interact. This may provide a basis for some working hypothesis for others to test.

SECTION A: EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE IN 100 TEENAGERS

I. ASPECTS OF EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE

Quay and Peterson's (1983) categorisation of the four dimensions of emotional disturbance has already been mentioned in Chapter Two. These four dimensions were used to categorise the students in the study. The archival data as well as the data from the interviews are set out below.

After analysing the archival records of the one hundred teenagers in the sample from the perspective of emotional disturbance, it became necessary to gain some insight into the way the major stakeholders in the setting understood the nature of emotional disturbance. As mentioned in Chapter Three, there were
a number of related reasons for this decision. Firstly, it was assumed that the beliefs of the key players at the setting would affect the way emotional disturbance was perceived, interpreted and treated in this context. It was further assumed that these beliefs would be instrumental not only in determining the policy and curriculum of the Agency with respect to emotional disturbance, but also would be instrumental in creating the very ethos of the whole setting. As one of the focal purposes of this study was to investigate the link between emotional disturbance and reading disability in the setting of the special education agency, the interviews regarding emotional disturbance served several purposes:

- To confirm, support or reject what the archival data showed;
- To confirm support or reject what the literature on emotional disturbance showed; and
- To describe the context of emotional disturbance at the setting of the special education agency in terms of the way that the main stakeholders understand and perceive emotional disturbance, so that it is possible to explain why the policies and curriculum of the Agency are what they are.

**Dimension One: Conduct disorder**

This is characterised by physically and verbally aggressive behaviour towards authority-figures as well as towards peers. In this sample of one hundred teenagers, the great majority belonged to this category. It should be noted at the outset that the teenagers in the sample do not fit neatly into any one single category, that aspects of the four dimensions were evident in the behaviour of the same boys at various times and that several of the boys showed in their behaviour aspects of at least two of the dimensions as categorised by Quay and Peterson. The relevant archival material consisting of the reports from
psychologists, school counsellors, teachers and social workers described the behaviour of 93% of this group of teenagers in such terms as the following:

- "Violent"
- "Throwing temper tantrums"
- "Unco-operative and hostile"
- "Showing very poor impulse control"
- "Suspended from school for unacceptable behaviour", etc.

The teaching staff who were interviewed noted the following: The Principal (T1) remarked that aspects of conduct disorder were the most common symptoms of emotional disturbance among the students, and were manifested in their inability to follow directions, in their rudeness to staff, and in their ill-treatment of other students. Another member of the teaching staff (T3) felt that "aggression, lack of control of personal feelings, a tendency to violence and crudeness in behaviour" were the most evident aspects of conduct disorder among the boys. T2 remarked that some of the teenagers showed total defiance of any direction given in class. She also felt that the teenagers were much more violent than the students in any 'normal' high school: R., one of the students in the sample, had thrown a desk at her; A., another teenager from the sample, when taken to the Ten Pin Bowling Centre in Sylvania, had picked a fight with L. (one of his classmates) and had punched L. so hard that "blood was pouring out". In T2's opinion, many of the teenagers were in the Agency because they had been suspended from their local high schools for such violent and uncontrollable behaviour as throwing rocks at teachers, defying directions from the school executives, being unruly in school, fighting with fellow-students, etc.

The social workers tended to see conduct disorder from the perspective of the family: One (SW3) remarked that it manifested itself in the "defiant,
aggressive, abusive behaviour of the child towards his own family." She felt that these boys became uncontrollable as a result of being frustrated both at home and at school as they started feeling that they did not get the attention for which they craved. Some of them were so frustrated that they truanted from school or ran away from home. She said that nearly everyone of the teenagers on her list had been suspended from school. Another social worker (SW1) remarked that while the school insisted on obtaining pre-admission reports about the students from other agencies and professional persons, the focus of this Agency tend to be not with the conduct disorder of the individual student, but "with the whole eco-system in which he has to function".

Of the residential care staff, one (RC3) remarked that a common refrain among most of the boys in the living unit was, "You can't tell me what to do". He felt that the boys tended to be aggressive and violent mainly to other students and they just lashed out with their fists. Another residential care staff member who was also a living unit co-ordinator (RC2), felt that "95% of the boys lacked self-control", and this made it extremely difficult for them to follow directions. They showed their lack of control by "throwing lockers around, climbing partitions in the dormitory, throwing pool sticks, fighting for no apparent reason, using abusive language towards teachers".

In their group interviews, some of the boys (G90) remarked that the common signs of conduct disorder that one could see in the Agency were "frustration on the face, clenched fists and swearing".

The experiences of the staff who worked closely with these teenagers led them to the perception that conduct disorder was a major problem in the behaviour of these emotionally disturbed adolescents. Their perception was in
accord with the findings of Anning (1993), Apter and Conoley (1984), Coleman (1986) and Hutchins (1990) about conduct disorder being the most common of the many problems faced by emotionally disturbed students.

**Dimension Two: Personality Problem**

This is characterised by anxious, withdrawn, introvertive behaviour which is marked by severely depressed moods and a tendency to truant (DSM III-R, 1987; Quay & Peterson, 1983; Von Isser, Quay & Love, 1980). The archival data described the behaviour of 55% of the sample in the study in the following terms:

- 'severely depressed'
- 'masochistic'
- 'suffering from anxiety problems'
- 'extreme or habitual truancy'
- 'absconding'
- 'on the run for x number of weeks'
- 'suicidal'

The principal (T1) felt that while this dimension is becoming less common among the students, the Agency continued to receive a significant number of teenagers who were passive-aggressive. Another teacher (T3) felt that the boys who manifested the symptoms of this dimension experienced an inability to talk about personal matters and to interact well with peers. T2 remarked that she had several boys who were in the depressed category. She felt that the most common characteristic of their depressed state was their lack of self-esteem which in turn was the result of the family problems they faced, the physical and sexual abuse to which some of them had been subjected, and
the great difficulties they experienced while trying to cope with their learning
tasks in the classroom. This teacher recounted the case of one student who had
missed 9 months of schooling because of truanting, and of another who had
attended school only four days during the whole of 1990.

One of the social worker (SW1) re-iterated his view that the pre-
occupation of the agency was not with the personality problem but with the
dynamics of the whole family because "most of the presenting personality
problems are linked with the functioning of the family". Another social worker
(SW3) felt that truanting is a problem with a large number of our students, and
that many of them had been suspended from their schools.

A living unit co-ordinator from the residential care staff (RC2) felt that
at least 10% of the children were "always gloomy, isolated, not communicating
what is on their minds". Like T2 above, this staff member felt that the
depressed state of the teenagers was a result of the pressures that they had been
under, and the frustration and failure which they had experienced: "In general,
these children feel that they cannot get anyone to listen to them." Another
residential care worker (RC3) remarked that the students who were depressed
generally tended to avoid others and head off to bed early. Some of them were
taciturn and did not reply to questions, while others resorted to "clowning" in
order to hide their unhappiness. The same worker also felt that while the
students did not talk much about their truanting, everyone knew that it was
something that did happen before they came to the Agency.

The boys (G89) talked about the times that they had truanted from their
schools - one had not attended school for a year, and another used to walk out of
the school soon after the roll call and remain out. This continued for a full
school term. This group of teenagers felt that the reason that many boys were depressed was that they had to cope with so many problems, such as the mother walking out of the family, or the boy himself being treated as the scapegoat in his classroom.

Comments on the above data

55% of this sample of teenagers were presenting signs of depression. It is difficult to overlook the link between their problems and the breakdown which they were experiencing in their families. The tendency of the boys to withdraw from the learning situation when they were actually in the classroom, their lack of self-esteem and their record of chronic truanting suggest that they were experiencing severe difficulties in coping with the problems created by their dysfunctional families.

Dimension Three: Inadequacy-Immaturity

This dimension involves a chronic apathy about what is going on around the person, and in the classroom situation this translates into sluggishness, laziness, day-dreaming and passivity (DSM III-R, 1987; Quay, 1972). In the archival data, the behaviour of 26% of the students in the sample was described as being characterised by

- 'serious attention deficit disorder',
- 'poor attention span',
- 'poor impulse control',
- 'poor academic motivation',
- 'distractible',
- 'living in a fantasy world',
- 'restless and impulsive' etc.
The principal (T1) felt that for many of the students this dimension was commonly manifested in a lack of control over emotions and a fear of failure that prevented them from taking the risks which are inherent in any learning process. In the opinion of another member of the teaching staff (T3), inadequacy-immaturity was evident in the following: the extremely short span of attention that the students bring to any learning task, their tendency to daydream, their fondness for explicit sexual talk, and their lack of inhibitions in showing their sexual obsessions. T2 remarked that in her class she had several teenagers who could not still for three minutes; there were others who could not concentrate on any learning task, and others who needed to talk all the time.

One of the social workers (SW3) said that until she came to work in the Agency she had heard little about "attention deficit disorder", but her dealings with the boys and their problems had made her aware that this was a "very common problem for our boys". Another social worker (SW1) noted that every day the Agency witnessed "many instances of poor impulse control among the boys". He went on to add that in social work jargon, while the 'index child' was seen as the problem by the rest of the family, "social workers do not usually agree with the views of the family in laying blame on the child".

The residential care worker for the senior boys (RC3) noted that many of the students could not sit still and do their home work: "They take lots of trips to the toilet, they want to know the time frequently, they 'vege out' on the bed for 45 minutes or so". Based on his experiences with these teenagers, RC2 was of the opinion that the boys' attention deficit problems were the result of their inability to cope, and that as long as they had some hope of succeeding in what they were attempting to do, they were prepared to make at least some effort.
The boys (G90) remarked that it was difficult to get any learning done in a class with students who had problems with concentration and self-control. In such classes, there would always be someone who wanted to laugh or tell jokes instead of getting on with the learning task. Some boys felt it was easy to study alone outside the classroom, because then they could be away from the disruptive students. Boys who had problems with concentration felt that no matter how hard they tried, because of their inability to concentrate, they would always do poorly in tests. One such student described instances of sudden memory lapses when in the middle of important tests his mind would go blank and he could not remember anything that had been studied even a few minutes earlier.

**Dimension Four: Socialised Delinquent**

This dimension involves a tendency on the part of the teenager to gravitate towards delinquent peers and delinquent activities (DSM III-R, 1987; Gibbs, Arnold, Ahlborn & Cheesman, 1984; Quay & Peterson, 1983; Wilson & Arnold, 1986). According to the archival data, 18% of the teenagers in the sample were described as being involved in such delinquent activities as

- 'arson',
- 'shoplifting',
- 'breaking, entering and stealing',
- 'vandalism' and
- 'associating with delinquent peers'.

According to the principal (T1), the students in the Agency come "from the fringes of society; their families are from the ranks of the disadvantaged in the Australian community. The rest of society endorses the kids' low self-image."
They are socialised into delinquency by their families and peer-groups". According to one of the teaching staff (T3), the boys talk about meeting other delinquents in their spare time, and about experimenting with drugs; they feel comfortable in delinquent company, and are proud of associating with delinquents.

One of the social workers (SW1) felt that a number of the boys in the current group had not been through the courts at all, and of those who had been, his opinion was that "those who offend are not necessarily those who are caught".

A living unit co-ordinator from the residential care staff (RC2) felt that the boys were victims of their own social culture: that many of the boys come to believe that delinquent behaviour enabled them to receive acceptance from their peers, and they found satisfaction from being able to beat the system. Another residential care worker (RC3) commented that alcohol abuse, drug abuse, car stealing, membership in gangs, etc. were all signs of the attraction the boys felt towards a delinquent life style.

II. CONTRIBUTING FACTORS IN EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE

The archival data on the sample of one hundred students indicated the influence of the following factors in contributing to the emotional problems of the teenagers. The interviews with the staff and the students served to draw attention to the key role that these factors seemed to play in the lives of the students. The factors are:

(a) family structure
(b) the socio-economic situation of the families
(c) key interpersonal dynamics in the families
(d) the location of the families
(e) educational turbulence

1. THE FAMILY STRUCTURE

A. Presentation of the Data

The archival data on the teenagers suggested several pointers to their emotional and educational problems. An analysis of the family structure showed the following:

- living with both natural parents: 15%
- living with natural mother only: 60%
- living with natural father only: 21%
- living with other relatives, e.g., grandparents: 4%
As the data indicate, 81% of the sample live with single parents - either with the mother only, or with the father only. This family structure can be a source of problems for the parents as well as for their teenage sons. My interviews with the teaching staff indicated that their experiences of working with these types of students led them to believe that some of the problems faced by such families would be: the lack of a father figure for the children, low living standards, and difficulties in disciplining the children (T1, T2, T5). Other teachers felt that the single parent would have difficulties coping with the loneliness and the emotional exhaustion (T3, T4), and that all this would have a deleterious effect on the emotional well-being of the teenager, and on his attitude to learning. Based on his experiences in dealing with these teenagers and their families, the principal (T1) felt that the emotional problems make the family increasingly dysfunctional. According to him, this is because the lack of emotional support renders the mother an easy victim of depression, and a prey to tranquillisers like valium and serepax or to alcohol and other drugs. Some single mothers even went to the extremes of attempting suicide. In the principal's words, "this is why the Agency sees that its most important task is to get the families functioning again". This view of the importance of the family in shaping the lives of emotionally disturbed teenagers is supported by evidence from research conducted on hostile, rejecting disorganised family relationships and their negative influences on children (Doke & Flippo, 1983; DSM III-R, 1987; Moore & Arthur, 1983 and Wills et al. 1983).

In the opinion of several members of the teaching staff (T1, T2, T4), because of the problems experienced by the single parent - alcoholism, frequent quarrels, financial difficulties, anger and upset created by the frustrations of coping with life and bringing up a teenager - the boys showed a tendency to stay away from home late into the night, and sometimes into the early hours of the
morning. According to one teacher (T6, who was a student at the Agency when he himself was a teenager), the parent tolerates late hours because "it gets the boy out of her hair for a while". The principal (T1) felt that this was due to a combination of factors: the mother's lack of control over the children, peer pressure from the teenagers in the area, the lack of wholesome recreational facilities in the neighbourhood, etc. "Some of the experiences they have while out all hours of the night with mates can be quite devastating for them. E. (one of the teenagers in the sample), for instance, watched a prostitute being attacked and killed with a broken bottle by a drunk in one of the alleys of King's Cross (Sydney's Red Light District) one Saturday night. When E. returned home, he was violently sick and couldn't eat or sleep on the following day. He is still very depressed because the incident is still vivid in his mind, and reminds him of how his 22 year old brother was murdered in a pub-brawl in Wollongong a couple of years ago."

When the sole parent does find a partner, the problems with her teenager become even more complex. As one teacher (T3) observed, "At the beginning, it's a time of bliss. However, the possessive nature of the kid's relationship with his mother means that soon a whole lot of negative forces are unleashed, and most of the new relationships wither quickly." According to other teaching staff (T1, T4, T5, T6), these negative forces include resentment and antagonism as in the case of S. (a teenager in the sample) who for the last five months has not talked to his step father whom his mother had married less than six months earlier. Their experience of dealing with the families of these teenagers lead the staff to believe that defiance of the step father's authority is common in these families. The step father on the other hand would be frustrated and resentful at having to tolerate the hostile behaviour of the teenager. T6 noted that children who have been physically abused by their
natural fathers found it extremely difficult to accept any adult male into the family.

Some teachers (T1, T2, T3, T4 and T6) commented on the unhappy and difficult childhood of many of the parents themselves. In the words of one (T2), "They don't have any idea on parenting their children. Some resort to institutions because that's how they themselves have been brought up". Another (T4) reflected on "the snow-balling effect of problems" and how the parents react to these problems in the only way they know: for example, the mother has "a succession of relationships with men who are all alcoholics or wife-bashers, and there will be consequent family/social turbulence." The principal (T1) felt that "in 80% of cases, people haven't dealt with the traumas of their own lives, especially the trauma of their childhood."

A number of the teaching staff commented on the impact of the family structure and its attendant problems on the education of the teenagers. The principal felt that it would be very difficult for emotionally insecure children to concentrate on their learning tasks. Another member of the teaching staff (T4) noted that the economic, emotional and social deprivation from which the children suffer, has a negative effect on their education. T2's experience of dealing with the families of emotionally disturbed teenagers for a number of years led her to the belief that "Most of the parents themselves had poor experiences during their schooling. As a result, they have very negative attitudes towards schools. For example, they will criticise teachers, refuse to attend parent-teacher conferences called to discuss the kid's behaviour, and become hostile to the school management as the punishments on their kids become more frequent. Parents have low expectations from their kid's
schooling; they show with their own actions that they don't care about the kid's education."

The interview with the social workers confirmed the views held by the teachers that when the family was dysfunctional, it was difficult for the children to concentrate on their learning tasks. According to one social worker (SW2), the sole parent would suffer from lack of social and emotional support in bringing up the children; he/she would have feelings of inadequacy, and be angry with the missing partner. In the opinion of this social worker, many parents experienced a difficult childhood, and several were institutionalised when they themselves were children. To them it would all seem like history repeating itself. Such parents "don't trust schools: schooling hasn't done much for them; schools make them feel inadequate as parents" because their children are constantly in trouble with school authorities. According to another social worker (SW1), the Family Law Act and the Single Parent's Pension have led more women to opt out of unpleasant family situations. This has, in turn, increased the number of children living in one-parent families. According to the third social worker (SW3), when there was a de facto parent or step-parent in the family, the probability was that the boy cannot or will not get along well with the adult, thus creating additional stresses in the family.

One of the residential care workers (RC3) remarked that in the families of such large numbers of the students, the absence of a role model for the teenager was a serious problem. It was only made worse when there was de facto spouse who usually happened to be a defective role model as he would probably have a history of wife-bashing, child abuse, etc. According to this residential care worker, another problem when there was a de facto spouse in the family was that both the teenager and the adult would need to adjust to one
another and this created difficulties. As one who dealt regularly with the families of these teenagers, RC2 had noticed that the mothers he had come into contact were lonely and frustrated, and unable to control their teenage sons who refused to obey them. This residential care worker went on to add that the problems of these parents were rendered even more complex with the arrival of a boyfriend/de facto husband on the scene: "The younger teenagers just do not have the coping skills to be able to get along well with the new adult male in the family, and this causes endless conflicts in the family".

Some of the boys (G89), while feeling that it was not unusual anymore to be living in a one-parent family in present-day Australia, seemed to believe that if the absent parent was someone who was a "basher" or an alcoholic, or one who quarrelled constantly, it was a case of "good riddance" when he left the family, and no tears were shed for him. On the other hand, if the absent parent was someone who was well liked, it was traumatic not to have him at home, especially on such occasions as birthdays, Father's Day, Christmas, etc. Some others (G90) "don't miss the father because they have got used to living without him". Still others "don't care if he's there or not".

According to some of these boys (G89), a large number of teenagers feel guilty at the collapse of the family structure. As one of the teenagers put it, "The kid feels it's his fault that mum and dad are arguing, and that dad is bashing mum. I used to have nightmares about these arguments and bashing; I tried to commit suicide; I left home a number of times."

Many boys were keen to point out how these problems in the family affected their behaviour in school and their ability to learn. Some of the comments from the teenagers (G89) included: "I became a lot more aggressive.
When kids and some of the teachers knew what was happening at home (bashing, arguments, etc.), they hassled me more. Someone shot my dad and it was reported in the local papers, and I was hassled about it in school." Another teenager recalled, "Teachers gave me a hard time and forced me to see a shrink. It cost my mum a lot of money. The kids in my class found out that I was seeing the shrink, and I was called 'Psycho' from then on." Another teenager remarked, "I couldn't keep my mind on my books. You worry about the family. Your mind is in other places. When the teacher hassles you about it, you blow your stack... A number of times I went aggro and took out my bike chain and tried to hit the kids and teachers." According to another teenager, "It's hard especially when there has been a bad night of arguments and bashing, and you come to school and can't concentrate on any schoolwork", and another, "When you are in school, you are too scared to go home, because of the problems at home."

B. A Discussion of the above Data

If one synthesises this range of interpretations of the nature of the problems arising from the family structures of the teenagers and assumes that they represent an accurate picture of the ecosystems from which these teenagers come, it is possible to make the following inferences concerning their family structure. First of all it is reasonable to infer that the mothers of these teenagers found it very difficult to exercise proper control over their sons. In these families there was much financial and emotional stress which drained the energies of the mothers so much that they seemed to be unable to tackle the problems their sons were facing either at school or in the neighbourhood. Because these mothers themselves were experiencing many emotional problems such as depression, loneliness, feelings of powerlessness, etc., it became difficult for them to concentrate on solving the emotional problems which their adolescent sons were facing.
Again, these data suggest that life in the homes of these teenagers was difficult and full of conflicts. Hence it is understandable that many of them spend as little time as possible at home. This meant being "out with mates" at all hours of the night. Such teenagers use the home purely as "pit stops". This behaviour in its turn serve to deepen the alienation of the teenager and his parent/s from each other.

The data also suggest that these problems were complicated when the mother brought home a boy friend. It seems that the typical teenager in this group considered the new man in his mother's life as a threat to the status quo and his behaviour deteriorated as he sought more attention from his mother and challenged the authority of his would-be step father. As the data suggests, very few of the teenagers had the skill to cope with the new adult in the family, and of the 60% of the sample of teenagers living with their natural mothers, very few had step fathers.

Another aspect of the teenagers' problems which is identified by the data is that it was very difficult for many of the mothers to be effective parents as they themselves grew up with defective role models. Many of them suffered ill-treatment during their childhood and/or were institutionalised, and quite a number had been sexually abused when they themselves were teenagers.

Finally, the evidence confirm what the literature (e.g., Emery, 1982; Fleck, 1985; Rizzo & Zabel, 1988; Rowe & Rowe, 1992; Wallenstein, 1985) shows, namely, that the very structure of the family has a profound effect on the behaviour of these teenagers in school and at home, and on their ability to concentrate on acquiring a range of developmental skills. As Rizzo and Zabel
(1988: 43) remark: "Overall, dysfunctional families are inflexible and ineffective in meeting life problems. Power structures are poorly defined, and often there are inter-generational alliances in which one parent recruits support against the other from a child family member. Parents in these families have difficulty in maintaining firm, consistent values and often acquiesce to the wishes of their children, allowing the children to assume parental roles. Family members feel chronic anger toward each other and live with a sense of being manipulated, blackmailed or coerced by each other. The family atmosphere is typically one of pain, frustration or stagnation."

At school, the irritability and aggressive or violent behaviour of these teenagers, their defiance of the teacher, their inability to concentrate on their learning tasks and the rejection they experience from their better-behaved classmates seem to suggest that their reaction to the structural changes in their families and the attendant problems created by these changes may be producing negative effects on a wide range of roles that they have to play in their lives such as those of son, sibling, student, friend, etc.
2. THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION OF THE FAMILIES

A. Presentation of the Data

An analysis of the archival data regarding the socio-economic situation of the teenagers' families from the perspective of income-sources revealed the following:

| Families where at least one member was employed | 57% |
| Families depending on social welfare            | 43% |

Interviews with the teaching staff revealed the extent and depth of the economic deprivation suffered by the teenagers and their families. Based on his experience of working with these teenagers and their families, the principal (T1) described many of the families as "people on the borderline of poverty, living on pensions and trying to make ends meet." Others (T2, T4, T5) spoke of the lack of decent clothes and shoes for the teenagers, their lack of cleanliness, and the tendency of many of the teenagers to steal brand-name clothes because they are desperate to conceal their poverty. T6 commented on the fact that some of the teenagers had just one change of clothes and that some parents seemed to have the wrong priorities: "money goes to buy alcohol while food and clothes for the children are neglected". Some members of the teaching staff (T2, T5, T6) also mentioned the poor housing (caravans, Housing Commission houses and flats) and the lack of private transport.

The same staff members were also of the opinion that as a result of their poverty, a number of the teenagers showed a tendency to stealing, vandalism,
and an inability to care for their own property and those of others. As T2 put it, "They feel hard done by. They feel entitled to take what they can. It's because they have nothing that they steal; because of the same reason, they haven't learned to take care of things. For example, J. (one of the students in T2's class) damaged his new cassette player because his mother had given it to him and she 'would give only something cheap,' according to J."

However, other teaching staff (T1, T4) believed that the tendency of the boys to steal and vandalise "were related to the peer groups, and the lack of socially acceptable activities, rather than to their background of poverty".

Basing their opinions on their experiences of working with these types of clients, the social workers (SW1, SW2 and SW3) held views similar to those of the teaching staff about the extent of poverty among many of the families. SW2 felt that the indicators of the families' poverty included "the food, the furniture, the housing", and SW3 referred to "the poor cleanliness, the poor hygiene and the dependence on welfare". SW1 noted the high percentage of mothers on welfare, and "the low status suburb with depressed opportunity structure" which was typical of the localities where the families of the teenagers live.

One of the residential care workers (RC2) noted the fact that the mothers have to sign the Child Endowment over to the Agency while the teenager is enrolled there. (The Child Endowment is a fortnightly social security payment made to the mother of a child in a low income family.) RC2 remarked that the foregoing of this small amount of money (about $20 per fortnight) affected the budget of so many families seriously. He went on to remark that another handicap imposed on these families because of their poverty was the
lack of private transport, and that living in suburbs such as Mount Druitt, Blacktown, Campbelltown, etc., can mean that if the family does not own a car, the members may face considerable difficulties when they want to go anywhere outside the locality.

Some of the teenagers (G90) painted a vivid picture of the socio-economic plight of many of the families when they explained, "The mum is on social security and the kids spend the money she gets on drugs". This echoes the remark of one of the teaching staff (T6) earlier, who said that sometimes the family goes without the essentials such as nourishing food and decent clothes, because the money is spent on non-essentials such as alcohol and drugs.

B. A Discussion of the Above Data

The picture that emerges from the data is that of a very high per cent of these teenagers' families on social security. Some of these families are on budgets so tight that the removal of $20 a fortnight is sufficient to create serious hardship. Many of these families live in sub-standard housing in suburbs that are acknowledged in the community as being depressed and disadvantaged. The lack of cleanliness, the inability to appreciate and take care of simple possessions such as clothes and transistor radios, and the tendency to steal or vandalise add to the overall picture of the socio-economic disadvantages under which many of the teenagers and their families function. From the educational point of view what is of concern is the fact that while venting their frustrations, some of the teenagers resort to delinquent acts such as stealing and vandalism which can land them in greater trouble, thus rendering them even less able to concentrate on their learning tasks, as they have to take time out from school to attend court hearings, and be sometimes removed from school and be sent to reformatories and juvenile detention centres.
3. INTERPERSONAL DYNAMICS IN THE FAMILIES

A. Presentation of the Data

(i) The archival data

At the outset, it must be pointed out that the categories presented below tend to overlap. For example, families affected by chronic violence often tend to have parents who abuse alcohol, and families with a history of sexual abuse may also have a violent and/or alcoholic parent. Therefore, as has been explained in the Methods Chapter, the categories shown below represent each family's most predominant pathology as perceived by the writer basing his conclusions on the evidence contained in the archival material.

The data reveal the following statistics regarding aspects of interpersonal dynamics in the families of the one hundred teenagers:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Families affected by chronic violence</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol and/or drug abuse by parents</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with a history of sexual abuse</td>
<td>06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families coping with chronic and severe illnesses</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families which have experienced a recent bereavement</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families presenting none of the above</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FAMILY DYNAMICS**

- Violence: 29%
- Drug Abuse: 30%
- Sexual Abuse: 13%
- Illness: 6%
- Bereavement: 11%
- None of the above: 11%
A Comment of the Archival Data

The archival data present a grim picture of the interpersonal dynamics in the families of over 70% of the teenagers studied in this investigation. While violence and drug abuse in the family seem to have affected the lives of 41% of the sample, sexual abuse, chronic and debilitating illnesses and recent bereavements have contributed to the breakdown of relationships in a significant number of the families which are being studied here. The 29% whose records do not indicate any of the above aspects of family dynamics would require further investigation. One explanation for the lack of details on the dynamics of these families is that they had just made their first contact with the welfare system and, as a result, their background had not been sufficiently investigated and recorded in the official reports prepared by such professionals who work for the NSW Department of Family and Community Services as social workers, district officers, psychologists and psychiatrists. Another explanation is that other factors such as the family structure, the socio-economic situation of the families and the location of these families may act as contributing factors in the emotional and educational problems experienced by the teenagers from such families.

(ii) The Interview Data

During the interviews with the staff and the boys, comments were sought regarding the above data. These comments are presented below:

(a) Teenagers whose families are affected by chronic violence

Based on their experiences in dealing with these teenagers and their families, among the teaching staff the opinion was that the teenagers from such families "have a short fuse, and are generally violent" (T2); "They are not happy. They are very angry and aggressive if they have been physically abused" (T6);
"They act out more. It is more difficult for them to deal with their problems. They are more angry" (T1). According to T3, the classroom behaviour of teenagers with a history of chronic violence at home ranges from tearing up work which has not met with a teacher's approval, blaming staff, throwing books around, refusing to work, and showing no fear of consequences, to threatening staff and peers with violence and being actually violent.

One of the social workers (SW3) saw violence in the family as a symptom of the parents' and children's inability to communicate. In her words, "kids don't understand the parents, and the parents don't understand the kids; the parents themselves suffer from poor parenting models. There has also been the effect of damaged relationships which affect the whole system - family, school and society at large." SW1's experiences in a middle-class high school in Chadstone, Victoria, led him to conclude that "the Agency would have a larger proportion of kids with a history of physical and sexual abuse" compared to the average Australian high school. SW2 had the impression that the teenagers "copy the anger and violent behaviour of their tormentors because the latter are the role models".

From their experience at the Agency, the opinion of the residential care workers (RC2, RC3) was that a strong link exists between violence, alcohol, financial problems and marital problems in the family. As RC2 put it, "the teenagers copy the pattern of violent behaviour which they observe and experience at home: they see threats everywhere and react to these perceived threats with aggression and violence. Financial problems

→ alcohol abuse → violence → family discord → financial problems ...

the whole thing becomes a vicious circle in the family". According to RC3, though the teenagers talk about the violence at home, "it is just the tip of the
iceberg. In this staff member's opinion, the cases of violence to which the teenagers refer are usually of the father's brutal behaviour towards the mother and less frequently, the father's violent outbursts against the child/ren.

The boys referred to the anger and frustration experienced during and after an episode of bashing, and how hard it is to take one's mind away from the troubles at home to concentrate on learning tasks. As one of the teenagers (G89) remarked, "When you know all the shit at home, that's all you can think about", and another, "It's hard especially when there has been a bad night of arguments and bashing, and you come to school and can't keep your mind on any schoolwork."

(b) Teenagers in whose families there is a history of alcohol and/or drug abuse by parents

In the principal's (T1) experience with the families of these teenagers, there was a strong link between alcoholism and violence. He also finds that "the boys with alcoholic mothers are very protective of them. The mothers, on the other hand, will keep denying that they have any problem with alcohol." According to T3, the teenager "looks for sympathy and pity; excuses the mum's behaviour and later uses the mum's problem as an excuse for his own lack of motivation". Like T1 and T5, this teacher found the teenagers very protective of the alcoholic parent. Again, like T1, this teacher found the parents, in spite of their problems with alcohol, to be "loving and dedicated". A number of teaching staff, e.g., T2, T4, T5 and T6, remarked that the teenagers with alcoholic parents or parents who had a history of drug abuse showed symptoms of being "withdrawn and depressed".
Basing themselves on their own experiences of dealing daily with teenagers and their families, the social workers generally agree with the teaching staff about the protective attitude of this group of teenagers had towards the alcoholic parent. In the words of SW2, these teenagers were "very protective towards the alcoholic parent; they don't want the problem to be known; they deny the existence of the problem, or else they say it's getting better." SW1 agreed with the principal that there was "a strong link between alcohol, violence, physical and sexual abuse". This view was also shared by the residential care workers.

The boys (G90, G91) who talked about the problems created in the family when there is a parent with a history of alcohol/drug abuse described how such substance abuse leads to the adult losing all interest in life, how the money that is earmarked for food is wasted on liquor, how the house is neglected to the extent that it is starting to look squalid, and how arguments and fights become more and more frequent. They also speak of the difficulty which the children of such families face when they have to attend school and concentrate on learning tasks as though the problems at home just don't exist.

(c) Teenagers in whose families there is a history of sexual abuse

The Principal (T1) stated that his experience with the families of the Agency students had convinced him that "the kids with a history of sex abuse are generally violent and hard to get through to." Drawing on her years of work with emotionally disturbed teenagers, T3 noted that the behaviour of teenagers who had been subjected to sexual abuse ranged from "withdrawn to overt sexual acting out, from secretive, evasive conversation, to provocative suggestions". T5 and T6 had noticed that such teenagers were prone to act out sexually, and T6 added that they resorted to extremely foul language, that they showed a
strong aversion to adults of a particular gender (depending on who it was that had sexually abused them), and that they were generally untidy in their dress. T2, T4 and T5 remarked that such teenagers were sexually precocious. T2 went on to add that "some of them seem to be preoccupied with sex; others don't like to be touched; they are suspicious of any adult's effort to get close to them".

The social workers tended to see the problem from the point of view of the family. Thus, SW2 noted that based on his experience with the families of these teenagers, when the mother herself had been the victim of sexual abuse during her adolescent years, she finds it "extremely hard to relate emotionally to her teenage son". SW1 was of the opinion that a history of sexual abuse in the family was linked also with a history of alcohol abuse and physical abuse. SW3 remarked that among the teenagers on her list, there were some rare cases of sexual abuse but not as many as she had expected.

The residential care workers, looking at the problem from the point of view of the boys' interactions with their peers and with the residential staff, remarked how difficult it is for such teenagers to trust anyone. In the words of RC2, "it's very hard to earn their trust; it's hard for them to build up the courage to let go of their pre-conceived ideas [of their own worthlessness and guilt]; hard to make them think of the world as a good place; hard to make them think optimistically." RC3 remarked on some "horrific instances of sex abuse" that some of the boys had been subjected to, and how some of these teenagers talked about them during such occasions for reflection as the annual Spiritual Retreats.
(d) *Teenagers whose families were coping with severe and chronic illness or with a recent bereavement*

As the statistics on the archival data indicate, this is not as common as any of the other factors, but for the teenagers whose families are affected, it has a profound influence on their attitudes and behaviour. In the principal's opinion, "these kids go through all sorts of rages: they are unsettled in the dorm, unable to go to sleep; they have severe problems with settling down. They haven't buried their dead." According to other teachers, e.g., T4, T5 and T6, such teenagers become depressed. In the words of T6, They go "numb, angry and violent" about the loss. According to T3, they "resent the bereavement, they are still mourning; and the memories of the dead parent make the kid hate the living parent". Such teenagers, according to this teacher, and according to T2, blame the living parent and sometimes themselves, for the death of the other parent. Some of the consequences of the death of a parent, in the opinion of T4 and T5, are that often "the kids get split up and sent to live with relations"..."even coming to the Agency is a form of being split up." Moreover, "the loss of the breadwinner puts extra strain on the family finances."

SW2 stressed the problems faced by the teenagers trying to cope with the illness or loss of key adults in their lives: "They are quiet kids with a short fuse, and it's hard to get to them. They haven't been taught to come to terms with the loss." This social worker also referred to the additional emotional strain on the teenagers because they are often separated from their families and have to live with relatives or in institutions because of the financial problems created by the severe illness or death of one of the parents. One of the residential care workers (RC2) noted how such teenagers looked tired and exhausted as they tried to cope with the emotional strain of illness or loss.
B. A Discussion on the Data Presented Above Regarding the Interpersonal Dynamics in the Families of Teenagers

According to a number of researchers, (e.g., Apter and Conoley 1984; Moore & Arthur, 1983; Rowe & Rowe, 1992; and Rizzo & Zabel, 1988) a relatively consistent background situation in the lives of emotionally disturbed children is a dysfunctional family unit. In the words of Rowe and Rowe (1992:50), "The evidence for the mediating effects of home background influences appear to be particularly important." As the data from the interviews suggest, most staff in the Agency also believe that the interpersonal dynamics in the family hold the key to the emotional and educational problems of the student. Certain occurrences in the family which affect the significant adults in the student's life seem to have a dramatic, and at times prolonged, impact on the behaviour of the student and on his ability to concentrate on the learning tasks at hand.

The archival data presented at the beginning of this section showed that 30% of the families have been affected by chronic violence, 11% by alcohol and/or drug abuse on the part of natural or step parents, and 6% by the sexual abuse of a female sibling of the student by the father or the step father or of the teenager's mother when she was in her teens, or of the teenager himself when he was younger. The evidence also showed that 11% of the families had experienced the death of a family member in the recent past, and that 13% of the families had to cope with the chronic illness of one of the members. These illnesses ranged from severe brain damage (caused as a result of domestic violence), to multiple sclerosis, terminal cancer and AIDS.

To repeat what has been said at the beginning of this chapter, the interview data are presented with a view to understanding the beliefs of the key
players in the Agency's context regarding the teenagers and their families, because, it is assumed that these views may be instrumental in determining the policies and curriculum of the Agency, and may even be instrumental in creating the very ethos of the whole setting. These interview data, therefore served the following purposes:

(a) to confirm, support or reject what the archival data showed;
(b) to confirm, support or reject what the literature on emotional disturbance and reading disability shows;
(c) to describe the context of emotional disturbance at the setting of this special education agency in terms of the way the main stakeholders understand and perceive emotional disturbance.

As was evident from the interview data, according to the social workers, teachers and residential care workers at the school, teenagers with different types of adverse interpersonal dynamics in the family presented different behaviour patterns in the school situation.

In the perception of these key stakeholders, the teenager whose family has a history of physical abuse, shows intense hatred toward the adult (usually male) responsible for violence in the family; this teenager also tends to express a strong resentment of other adults in authority and his words and actions often reveal the frustration and rage he feels at his impotence to stop the violence at home. In the classroom such a teenager is extremely disruptive, defiant of the teacher's authority, is easily angered, and resorts to violence at the slightest provocation from his classmates.

According the interview data, those teenagers in the sample in whose family there was a history of alcohol and/or drug abuse exhibited moods of
intense depression, felt very protective toward the alcoholic or drug-dependent parent, and found it extremely difficult to concentrate on their learning tasks. When this went on for weeks, months and even years, the end results were students who were academically far behind their classmates. In their interpersonal relations in the school, such students were shy and diffident, but if pushed beyond certain limits by their classmates, they did not hesitate to use violence.

The interview data revealed that the teenagers from families with a history of sexual abuse tended to show signs of depression and a morbid preoccupation with sex. Some teenagers resorted to foul, sexually explicit language as a way of gaining attention; others frequented areas such as Sydney's King's Cross on weekends looking for adventure. The mothers who had been sexually abused during their adolescence, find that they could not express their feelings toward their teenage sons. The sons took this to mean that their mothers did not care about them, the end result being an increasing alienation between such mothers and their sons. In the classroom, these types of students tended to be inveterate attention-seekers, with a very short concentration span.

The interview data suggests that in those families which had experienced a recent bereavement, some of the teenagers were still going through a period of mourning and experiencing their loss intensely. The financial effect of the bereavement on some of the families meant that in some instances the family unit ceases to exist, with grandparents, uncles and aunts taking responsibility for the care of individual children. This in turn created problems of psychological and social adjustment with which some of the teenagers had been unable to cope. Social workers, teachers and residential care workers at the Agency also noticed that the teenagers with a recent
bereavement in their family tended to be moody and angry, and that they experienced problems with motivation and concentration. On the whole, however, it was not the bereavement itself that contributed to these teenagers' emotional problems, but the circumstances surrounding the death and the impact of the death on the family unit.

In the families that were coping with the serious chronic illness of one of the members, the teenagers tended to be extremely frustrated and angry and they found it practically impossible to concentrate on their learning tasks while they were in school.

The interview data from the teenagers show that they felt that the breakdown in interpersonal relations in their families had hurt them in many ways and continued to hurt them, and that the turmoil in their minds had made it virtually impossible for them to concentrate on schoolwork for several years. The constant feeling of deep-seated anger also implied that many had acquired a reputation as fighters and trouble-makers both in the school and in the neighbourhood. This in turn very often meant being ostracised from the company of 'normal' peers and being drawn into local and school groups with unsavoury reputations. Over the years, from being an average student in Grade Five a typical teenager in this group sank to the bottom of Grade Seven, spending more time in the School Counsellor's and Principal's offices than in the classroom, clocking up a number of suspensions from his local state high school, and by the end of Grade Seven or Grade Eight, was suspended indefinitely with a recommendation that he should be admitted to a Special School for conduct-disordered/emotionally disturbed youth, such as the Agency.
4. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF THE TEENAGERS' FAMILIES

A. Presentation of the Archival Data

An examination of the archival data revealed that based on the Sydney Metropolitan postcodes, the teenagers' families were located according to the pattern shown in the chart below:

![Location of Families Chart]

B. A Brief Comment on the above Data

The archival data showed that the families of the teenagers, while being scattered over a wide area of the Sydney Metropolitan Region and Wollongong, seemed to be heavily concentrated on the western and outer western suburbs of Sydney, and in Wollongong. The figures show that 14% live in Inner-city and eastern suburbs such as Leichardt, Erskineville, Randwick and Coogee; 13% in
the southern suburbs from Dulwich Hill to Caringbah and Menai; 15% in the Wollongong and Campbelltown areas; 31% in the western suburbs like Liverpool, Punchbowl, Fairfield, Parramatta and Wentworthville; and another 27% in the outer western suburbs like Bidwell, Emu Plains, Mt. Druitt, Penrith and Marsden Park. It is significant that not one of the families in the sample lived in the affluent suburbs of the North Shore.

When one considers that the depressed western suburbs with their high unemployment and crime rates, and their inadequate community amenities and recreational services are geographically adjacent to the outer western suburbs and the Campbelltown area, and that Wollongong has suffered a serious economic downturn in recent years because of the re-structuring of the city's principal employer, the BHP Steelworks at Port Kembla, it is possible to appreciate the socio-economic difficulties in the macro ecosystems of 73% of the students in the study.

C. Presentation of the Interview Data on the Geographical Location of Teenagers' Families

Without exception, the teaching staff commented on the disadvantaged nature of the suburbs where 73% of the families live. According to T2, these suburbs are "poor, lacking in facilities, and with a lot of socio-economically disadvantaged families that are crowded together in Housing Commission houses and flats". In T3's opinion, the apathy of the parents, the lack of finance, the absence of adequate public transport, etc. meant that on weekends, for example, a large number of the teenagers did not participate in any organised sporting activities. T6 too remarked on how difficult it was for the teenagers from these suburbs to travel to any of Sydney's beaches. According to T1, these were the only suburbs that the families could afford to live in because the rents
were cheaper than in other suburbs. T5 observed how because of the lack of recreational facilities in these suburbs, there were gangs of teenagers and unemployed young men roaming the streets. For some of these young people violence and petty crime become a means of whiling away the empty hours.

According to some of the teaching staff, the schools in these areas reflect the deprived nature of the neighbourhoods. As T2 remarked, these schools "don't provide anywhere near the quality of education that the kids need. This is evident from the lack of literacy and numeracy skills in the kids who come from these places". T5 spoke of friends who teach in western suburbs schools having "to put up with lots of indiscipline, which they believe arises from the background of the kids: single-parent families, poor socio-economic conditions, no discipline at home, etc. The result is that very little learning gets done". The principal (T1) remarked on how difficult it is to attract dedicated teachers to such schools because of a "variety of reasons: the reputation of the western suburbs, the indiscipline of the students, etc. So, it would not be possible for the students to get the type of education they need". This was also the opinion of T2, who remarked, "the schools in these places are so vandalised and so full of discipline problems that the Education Department has serious problems attracting teachers to these schools".

From their work with the families of these students and from the regular visits which they make to their houses in the course of their work, all three social workers were of the opinion that the suburbs in which the majority of the teenagers' families were located were "very deprived". According to SW2, these suburbs had numerous Housing Commission houses/estates with little space around the home for children to play. The people who lived in these suburbs had to cope with inadequate public transport and the lack of recreational
facilities for young people. This social worker remarked that "parents admit that locations play a part in creating the problems. Lots of parents would like to live along the coast", but they cannot, because of socio-economic reasons. SW3 noted the problems with teenage gangs in these suburbs. She listed the Westies, the Home Boys and the Colour Gangs. (These gangs are formed by male adolescents between the ages of 12 to 19 along strongly ethnic and regional lines. As their name suggests, the Westies hail from the western suburbs of Sydney and wage gang wars against the Home Boys who are mainly recruited from the Turkish and Lebanese youths, and against the Colour Gangs who are subdivided into the Blues and the Reds and draw their numbers from disgruntled inner-city teenagers.) SW3 remarked how the lack of money and the absence of recreational facilities made the inner city and western suburbs the natural breeding grounds for urban gangs. From his numerous home visits to the families of the teenagers in the study, SW1 had formed the opinion that the very structure of Housing Commission estates with their common yards which were shared by a number of families, created their own problems such as friction among the neighbours, the lack of privacy for the families, the ganging together and feuding among young people from different Housing Commission estates, etc. This social worker described "the extensive disfigurement of walls with graffiti", and the socio-economically depressed atmosphere of these suburbs.

The residential care workers were also aware of the problems associated with the suburbs where 73% of the families of these teenagers were located. RC2 spoke of the vicious circle created by bunching together a lot of disadvantaged people, and how the peer pressure from other teenagers in the area would ensure that the attitudes of the youngsters remained alienated from
the school and from the rest of society. RC3 spoke of the disadvantaged and depressed state of the suburbs and the schools in these areas.

The teenagers (G89, G90, G91) who discussed this aspect of their ecosystem were convinced that they were being discriminated against because of the suburbs from where they came. The students from the more affluent eastern and southern suburbs tended to look down on the "Westies", but these students believed that it was not a question of suburbs but of families. According to them, if the family was functioning well, the suburb did not matter; on the other hand, if the family was dysfunctional, then even the best suburb would be a source of trouble, and, of course, a teenager from a dysfunctional family located in a disadvantaged neighbourhood would have his problems doubled.

Many noted the presence of teenage gangs in these suburbs and the tension and violence associated with them. As a group of the students in 1990 put it, there are "too many violent people and druggies. It's tough to live in some suburbs if you don't get along with the heavies. Lots of drugs and alcohol are used in the gangs. The colour gangs are the Blacks, the Reds and the Blues. The Blacks and the Reds fight a lot. Hundreds of Blues beat up kids from other gangs."

There were also indications that the students from the disadvantaged suburbs tended to be bitter about the presence of minority groups in their neighbourhoods. Such minority groups included the Lebanese, the Vietnamese, the Chinese and the Aborigines. These groups provided the teenagers and their friends with a ready-made target for their aggression and hatred. A commonly-held view was expressed by one of the teenagers (G91) when he said, "I hate the
slopes and chins and wogs. The place is crawling with them. In Cabramatta it's hard to spot an Aussie in the shopping centre." Another teenager from the same year remarked, "Where I live, there are gangs that go around and beat up the slops. It started because the slops were going in gangs and beating up Aussie kids. The slops and wogs should go back to where they came from, and leave Australia to the Aussies."

D. A Discussion of the Above Data

The problems of living in neighbourhoods that are economically and socially deprived add to the other disadvantages from which the teenagers suffer. In their local schools as well as in their suburbs, these teenagers are in constant contact with others who exhibit the classical symptoms of alienation - powerlessness, normlessness and self-estrangement (Calabrese and Jones, 1990; Keniston, 1965; Wilson & Arnold, 1986). As several staff members in the Agency remarked, the schools in these suburbs fail to provide the quality of education that these teenagers need because it is beyond their ability to remedy the social and economic disadvantages which are at the root of the discipline problems and lack of motivation exhibited by a large number of the students. The staff and boys in the Agency noted the tendency of the teenagers to join the various gangs that exist in these suburbs. Peer pressure, the need to belong, the excitement of action, the urge they feel to give vent to their anger and frustration, are some of the reasons they give for their membership of these gangs.
5. EDUCATIONAL TURBULENCE

A. Presentation of the Archival Data

A fifth factor behind the emotional and educational problems of the teenagers, as revealed by the archival data, referred to the significant number of times these teenagers have had to change houses and schools during the years of their formal education:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students who have attended 5 or more schools</th>
<th>47%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students who have attended 4 schools or less</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who have moved houses 5 or more times</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who have moved houses 4 times or less</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. A Brief Comment on the above Data

While over a quarter of the sample of teenagers had changed schools more than 7 times, and almost a half had to adjust to new schools 5 times or more during their years of formal education, the average number of school changes for a comparable age group in a normal high school in Cronulla (a middle-class suburb in the south of Metropolitan Sydney) was 3. An extreme case in the sample of 100 teenagers was one student who had attended 11 schools in 4 different states in Australia, and had moved houses so many times that he could not remember the exact number, but was sure that it was more than 10 times.
C. Presentation of the Interview Data on Educational Turbulence

When the effect of this educational turbulence on the teenagers and their capacity to learn was discussed with the teaching staff, they made the following observations: The principal (T1) suggested that the frequent changes of houses and schools prevented the teenagers from building a network of long-term friendships. Because these students know that they are not going to stay long at any locality or school, they would slowly develop "an ability to walk out of relationships without any problem". The principal went on to remark that "lots of the kids have given up on the learning process because of these frequent moves. These moves are really a major factor in their learning problems".

According to T5, the biggest problem for boys affected by this type of educational turbulence was the difficulty of settling down to learn. To make matters worse, some of the boys "don't go to school for several months when they are between schools". For these boys, it is "hard to concentrate on learning when they are preoccupied with the problems of settling down and making friends. They would be lagging behind in their schoolwork and would be frustrated, so they will tend to be disruptive". T2 summarised the problems of these teenagers succinctly when she remarked, that these boys had "no close friends and no bonding with anyone", and they made "no effort at school because they know there's no chance of staying long". T6 pointed to the effects of educational turbulence on K., one of the teenagers in the sample, and how this was an important factor in his "low self-esteem, learning disability and the lack of social skills", especially in his dealings with his peers.
When discussing the problem of educational turbulence with the social workers, it was noticed that there is basic agreement between them and the teaching staff regarding the effect of frequent school changes on the learning behaviour of the teenagers. As SW1 remarked, the "variety of school placements and neighbourhoods displaces the learning patterns. In a new school the priority of our type of kids is to impress their peers and not their teachers". SW1 spoke of the frequent changes of schools to which a large number of the teenagers had been subjected as "unsettling on the kids in every way". SW3 linked the problems created by frequent changes of schools with the negative effects of frequent suspensions from school. These suspensions - for some boys 6 or 7 times a year - can mean that there are wide gaps in their learning, and very often nothing is done to narrow these gaps. On the contrary, many teenagers think suspensions are "cool - they are proud of their record of suspension".

The residential care staff echoed the opinions of the teachers and the social workers. As RC2 noted, such teenagers "have only surface roots". They have "no chance to make long-lasting friendships. Instability, violence, etc. have affected their learning, as has the educational turbulence. A break in a key relationship affects all other relationships and roles. Their problem centres on trust. They find it hard to trust others when they can't trust their parents or themselves". RC2 voiced a similar opinion to that of SW1 when he remarked that for the type of teenagers the Agency was dealing with, "the priority is to adjust to the peer group rather than to learn" and he pointed to the example of A.V., one of the teenagers in the sample, who had moved on from the Agency to a school in the Cronulla area and was in trouble with the school authorities for flouting regulations regarding classroom behaviour and smoking. During contacts between the Agency and the new school it became clear that A.V. had
sought and found acceptance from a group of the most recalcitrant students at the new school, and it was this group that he was trying to impress.

During my interviews with them, many of the teenagers (G89, G90) confirmed the impression of the staff. Their remarks served to show how difficult it is to get used to new people and new situations; how depressing it is to be for ever 'the newcomer' or 'the outsider'; and, how frustrating it is to try to fill the gaps in learning that are inevitably created by these repeated moves. Some of them expressed anger at the insensitivity of new teachers and new fellow-students, and others boasted about the way they had learned to resolve their problems with clowning in the classroom or with their fists in the playground. They recalled how each boy goes through the ordeal of being picked on by the class bully, and how this ordeal made the shy newcomer retreat further into his shell, while it turned the aggressive, defiant newcomer into a walking volcano, and how either way, the experience ended up turning each school into a place with bitter memories, a place which, for these students at least, stifled rather than rekindled any desire to learn.

D. A Discussion of the Data presented in this Section

Data and discussions regarding the following factors behind emotional disturbance were presented in this section:

1. the family structure
2. socio-economic situation of the families
3. interpersonal dynamics in the families, including
   - physical and/or sexual abuse
   - alcohol and/or drug abuse
   - chronic illness of a family member
   - recent bereavement in the family
4. the suburbs in which the families live
5. educational turbulence

As explained in the chapter dealing with the review of the literature, one significant theory suggests that emotional disturbance is caused by conflicts arising from the interaction of the child and his entire ecosystem and, as such, treatment should encompass both the child and the community. In the words of Kauffman (1985: 349), the assumptions of the ecological model are that "behaviour disorders are primarily a result of flaws in a complex social system in which various elements of the system (e.g., child, school, family, church, community) are highly interdependent, and that the most effective preventive actions and therapeutic interventions will involve changes in the entire social system". As Rhodes (1974: 310) - a pioneer in advocating an ecological approach to the education of emotionally disturbed children - writes, such ecological intervention "attempts to shift the locus of the disturbance from the child to an entire point between the child and the micro-community or communities which surround him. ... It searches for an intervention which will address itself to the shared process which is occurring between the child and the micro-communities he is encountering". From this point of view the five factors which have been discussed above may be called 'Ecological Factors' because they refer to certain crucial aspects of the environment in which the teenager has to function.

According to theorists advocating an ecological approach to the education of emotionally disturbed children, (e.g., Bertoli, 1990; Bullock, 1981; Hewett, 1981; Hobbs, 1975; Rhodes, 1974), for learning to take place unobstructed and for progress to be made, there has to be a modification of the ecological factors and/or a modification of the student's reaction to these factors.
A crucial aspect of all the factors behind emotional disturbance discussed in this section is that there is a serious break in a key relationship between the emotionally disturbed child and one or both of the parents. Researchers in the field (e.g., Apter and Conoley, 1984; Doke & Flippo, 1983; Rowe & Rowe, 1992; Wallenstein, 1985) confirm the role of the dysfunctional family as a significant factor in emotional disturbance. This means that the fundamental need of the child for emotional security has been thwarted and left unfulfilled or has been only partially fulfilled because of the disruptions that have taken place in his family, or because of various interpersonal dynamics in the family that have had a negative effect on the child. The end result in every case has been the fact that the child's need for emotional security has been left unfulfilled, while the key adults in his life have been busy with their own lives and their own problems.

Accompanying the unfulfilled need for emotional security is the low self-esteem which is characteristic of the emotionally disturbed child. The data from the archives and the interviews are interspersed with remarks and comments which show that the child is affected by a serious lack of self-esteem, and that his actions show that he has little respect for himself.

These two aspects of emotional disturbance, namely, the unfulfilled need for emotional security and the accompanying lack of self esteem are discussed further below:
III. KEY UNDERLYING FACTORS IN EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE: NEED-FULFILMENT AND SELF-CONCEPT

A. Presentation of the Data

The teaching staff continually recognised the very strong need these boys have for emotional security. Some examples of this recognition follow: "I believe that primary family relationships are key to the learning and to everything else" T1; T4 was of the opinion that fulfilment of the need for emotional security was "crucial. If they (the boys) feel wanted and secure, they would not have such deep emotional problems". T2 spoke of "the need for being wanted, the need for love and support, the need for emotional security, basically" as the fundamental need that had to be met for learning to take place and for the teenagers to experience emotional well-being. T6, who had been a student in the Agency during his teenage years, stressed the importance of "trusting and meaningful relationships, especially with key adults".

When elaborating on the link that might exist between the lack of emotional support for the teenagers and their low self-esteem, T2 remarked that a fundamental reason for the low self-esteem of the youngsters was "the lack of love, the absence of anyone who really cares about what they do". She then spoke of R, one of the teenagers in her class who told her precisely this when she asked him why it was that he put no effort into his schoolwork. R. replied, "Because no one really cares about what I do. No one really cares whether I live or die." T5 felt that an important reason for the low self-esteem of the teenagers was the feeling that "they know that key people in their lives don't love
them...They don't have the support of their parents as the 'normal' teenagers would have". T4, T5 and T6 felt that while such other factors as "poor performance in school and at sports" and a "lack of acceptance from their peer group" could be cited as reasons responsible for the low self-esteem, "rejection by parents" remained an important factor.

According to T2, T5 and T5, the result of the low self-esteem was the difficulty the teenagers experienced in interpersonal relationships, their rejection of basic social norms (T2), their "anger, aggressive behaviour, diffidence" (T5), and the "poor performance everywhere, especially in the school, in the playground, in the dorm, etc." (T4).

The social workers expressed a similar view. SW2, basing her remarks on her experiences working with this type of clients and their families, spoke of the need the boys have for "emotional support because it is at the basis of their well-being. When emotional support is removed because of family problems, kids become emotionally disturbed." According to the same social worker, the lack of emotional support and the accompanying low self-concept results in "failure at most things: at school, at getting on with peers, at sports and at home, because they feel neglected and unwanted. Their mothers keep telling them how much they are like their hated, inadequate fathers; their mothers keep telling them how they (the teenagers) have created all the problems for them."

SW3 spoke of the importance of need-fulfilment in the lives of the teenagers. According to this social worker, family dysfunction often leads to negative behaviour patterning and the neglect of the children's needs. In her words: "Family dysfunction seems to lead to emotional disturbance. What is involved is the socialisation and relationship formation in the child. The
children model themselves on the behaviour patterns of the parents. The behaviour patterns of the parents are influenced by their own emotional problems and tend to be negative. Further, the parents have little time for the kids' problems. The parents, therefore, neglect the kids' need for emotional security, for limit-setting, for discipline, and even for such basics as an adequate diet."

In the opinion of the same social worker (SW3), similar types of dynamics that deny the need of the teenager for emotional security also deprive him of his self-esteem. In her words, "to have self-esteem the kids need to have the key adults in their lives providing them with good communication, rewards, etc. which make them feel good about themselves. Also, for the development of self-esteem the kids need to relate to people in open systems. In dysfunctional families, the relationships of the kids are limited, e.g., they do not take part in local sports, community activities, etc. They don't have a chance of self-esteem through achievement in sports, etc. Further, the adults are too busy with their own problems and so they don't give recognition to the kids' achievements. The adults are too angry and too upset about life to think of the needs of the kids."

My discussion of this aspect of their problems with a group of the teenagers (G91) elicited the following remarks from them: "When the family is not OK., the child keeps wondering what's going to happen next, who will look after him if the parents split up; why they are doing it, and so on. This is why he reacts violently in school, or refuses to go to school, or walks out of class. When the teacher insists on him doing the schoolwork, he tells the teacher where to go."
A damaged self-concept is also connected with the effects of the lack of emotional support experienced by these teenagers: as some of them (G91) said, "The kid feels lousy about himself. He feels no one loves him, and he's angry with everyone". "He blames himself for what's happening at home", and "he feels everyone is better than him, and that he is good at nothing - sports, school, home, everything is hopeless".

B. A Discussion of the above Data

When we look for a common theme pervading the whole of this section what we find are two fundamental, interconnected aspects of these teenager's lives: how some of the basic human needs remain unsatisfied in their lives, and how severely their self-concepts have been affected by their negative experiences.

(a) Unfulfilled Lower-order Needs

If we can accept the validity of the perceptions of those who have had sustained engagement on the site, then we can make the following inferences which corroborate the insights gained from the review of the literature and at the same time add detail and colour to the archival data: These teenagers feel that their basic needs for love and belonging and for emotional security are not being met, and have not been met for several years. This may have happened due to a variety of circumstances, but indications are that at the core of each case is the failure of a key personal relationship. This failure could be due to the divorce or separation of the parents and the socio-economic hardship imposed on the family, it could be due to the physical or mental illness of one of the parents, it could be because of one of the parents' history of alcohol or drug abuse, or the sexual abuse of a member of the family, but during the unfolding of these
circumstances, the teenagers in our sample have become the victims of "emotional abuse". They have been made to feel that they are not wanted, that they are in the way. When these messages have been given repeatedly over a period of years, children who started life as cheerful, affectionate, balanced individuals turn into angry, hate-filled, unbalanced teenagers. Adults are puzzled at their behaviour disorders, teachers wonder why they will not concentrate on completing their learning tasks, why they are so suspicious and defiant, why they are ready to explode at the slightest provocation. The fact is that they have been deprived of some of their fundamental needs - the need for love, the need for esteem, the need for emotional security. As Maslow (1974, 1987) makes clear with his theory of the hierarchy of needs, human beings who are frustrated in their effort to satisfy such fundamental craving as the need for emotional security are incapable of even wanting to satisfy the higher-order need for knowledge and understanding.

(b) Victims of a Low Self-concept

Again, confirming the insights provided by the review of the literature and in complete accord with the evidence from the archival data, according to the experiences and tacit theory of the key players, another common factor at work is the very poor self-concept that these teenagers have acquired over a period of years, based on their experiences of the way they have been treated by the key adults in their lives. Most of these teenagers do not believe there is anything loveable about them, or that they are worthy of any affection, trust or respect. During most of their lives they have been treated by the significant adults in their lives as though they are no good. They have been branded as "no-hopers", and they have been told regularly that they have inherited the very worst features in the character of an imprisoned father or a drug-addicted mother. It is no wonder that after this sort of life experience, so many of these
teenagers refer to themselves in such derogatory terms as "crims", "dumbos", "bludgers", "derros", etc. These teenagers have a very low opinion of their abilities and future job prospects, and some of them contemplate a future as inmates in one or other of the country's jails as nothing unusual.

It is obvious that any realistic attempt at remedying the learning problems of these teenagers has to start with strategies aimed at redressing the above factors - their unfulfilled needs and their low self-concepts.

In Section B of this chapter, data on the reading disability of the one hundred teenagers is presented and discussed.
SECTION B: READING DISABILITY IN ONE HUNDRED EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED TEENAGERS

This part examines the data on the reading disability in the group of one hundred emotionally disturbed teenagers in the study. These data have been collected during a four-year period, and were originally derived from assessments carried out on students who had applied for admission to the special education agency. As explained in the methods chapter, these boys were administered the Gap Reading Comprehension Test. The answers they gave in these reading tests were analysed with a view to gaining an insight into their use of grapho-phonic, syntactic and semantic cues. The Burke Reading interview was then used in order to find out the strategies they used for comprehension, and to get a feel for the history of their reading problems.

1. The Results Obtained from Standardised Reading Tests

(a) Presentation of the Data

An analysis of the results from the Gap Reading Comprehension Test produced the following data:

- gap of 5+ years in reading level: 27%
- gap of 4+ years in reading level: 47%
- gap of 3+ years in reading level: 71%
- gap of 2+ years in reading level: 87%
- gap of less than 2 years in reading: 12%
- no gap in reading level: 1%
(b) A Comment on the Data

First of all, the caution urged by the experts (e.g. Harper & Killar, 1978; Cambourne, 1992; Goodman, 1982, 1989) regarding the validity and reliability of standardised tests should be taken into account when viewing the above data. However, even if only a relative and not an absolute value is attached to the results of standardised reading tests, they are still indicative of the reading problems which beset the teenagers in the study. In the late 1970s when systematic testing of the students was first carried out at the Agency, it was found that the students had an average gap of three years in their reading level compared to their counterparts in the 'normal' junior high school. Throughout the 1980's this gap has been found to be widening. The reason generally suggested by staff for this is that the measures taken by the Education
Department of New South Wales have ensured that students with moderate behaviour disorders and learning problems are catered for in the regular classroom, and therefore, the students currently being referred to the Agency are the ones with more serious behaviour and learning problems.

Whatever may be the reason, as the above data indicate, over 70% of these students have to function with a gap of three or more years in their reading level, and this can be a cause of serious frustration for them and for their teachers as they try to fulfil the requirements of the New South Wales Board of Secondary Studies.

2. Problems Identified from an Analysis of the Students' Answers to the Gap Reading Comprehension Tests

As described in Chapter Three, data for this section were derived from the following:

1. The Gap Reading Comprehension Tests,
2. The analysis made of the answers of each student to see how he had used syntactic and semantic cueing systems for tapping meaning from the texts;

3. The reading aloud of Paragraph Five of the test by each student to assess his use of the grapho-phonic cues;

4. The interviews with the student regarding the choice of his answers in the Gap test;

5. The Burke Reading Interview; and

6. Three supplementary questions which probed the student's perception of the impact of domestic problems on his learning, and his self-concept as a learner in a classroom.

These supplementary questions were added as a result of the emergent nature of the research. By this stage in the data gathering process it began to dawn on the researcher that behind both the emotional disturbance and the reading disability of the teenagers lay the same set of factors: (a) a lack of satisfaction of the fundamental human need for emotional security, and (b) a significantly low self-esteem which resulted from the deprivation of emotional security. The supplementary questions were added to see if the students if the data from the students would confirm or reject the emerging hypothesis of the researcher.

The six processes listed above yielded the following data:

- the reading level attained by the students;
- an understanding of the way they used syntactic cues for comprehension;
- an understanding of the way they made use of semantic cues;
- an understanding of the way they used graphophonic cues;
- an understanding of their concept of the purpose of reading;
• an understanding of their perceptions regarding the impact of their domestic problems on their learning; and
• an understanding of their self-concepts as learners.

The following sections describe the data in detail:

(a) Conceptual Problems regarding the Nature and Purpose of Reading

(i) The Data

As the data from the post-test interviews with the students showed, approximately one third of the sample had problems regarding the nature and purpose of reading. Some of the students thought that reading is "looking at the pictures and telling the story". Others thought that reading is just pronouncing the words without much regard for understanding what they were reading aloud. The great majority of the sample, however, had some idea that the purpose of reading was to understand the text.

(ii) A Comment on the above data

Some of the misconceptions which the students held about the nature and purpose of reading seem to have arisen from the fact that especially during their years in the elementary school, there had been so much insistence on pronouncing the printed matter and so much stress on phonics that several of the students were virtually stuck on phonic exercises and believed that reading consists in just getting over the hurdle of "blending" syllables into words. Other boys who had been subject to years of phonic drills were so discouraged that they were unwilling to make any further effort aimed at learning to read.

Advocates of psycholinguistics such as Smith (1982, 1985) and Goodman (1986, 1989) condemn the over-insistence on phonic drills as illogical
and inefficient. Students have the right to know the nature of what they are learning, and should be taught the strategies which help them to master the subject in the most effective way.

(b) The Use of the Cue Systems

(i) The Interview Data

Approximately one out of five students in the sample experienced some difficulty with the use of graphophonic cues. Several remarked on the frustration they experienced while trying to decipher the words. For many, the problem was compounded by the fact that the effort required to figure out the words meant that their hold on the meaning of the text was lost long before they had completely read through some of the sentences. For a few of these students reading was such an onerous and tedious task that for years they had given up the hope of making any progress in this area.

An analysis of the students' answers to the Gap Reading Comprehension Test had revealed that a large number of the teenagers experienced difficulties with the use of the syntactic cues. When questioned about the need for ensuring that the words they used for completing the cloze exercises of the test were grammatically correct, many students did not think that this was necessary. Others seemed to be unfamiliar with certain sentence patterns. An example is the sentence in Passage Two of Form R3 (see Appendix B) about sugar and how it disappears in a cup of tea once the lump is dissolved. The sentence reads: "After you have stirred it for a time, it seems to .......... disappeared." Many of the boys in this group had difficulty figuring out that the word missing is "have" because they seem to be unfamiliar with such constructions containing the perfect tense. In fact, tenses seemed to create difficult hurdles for this group
of students. Thus, in Passage Seven there is a sentence which goes: "Horsemen ............ for years thought of the highway as ............. own special property." Several of the teenagers had difficulty in selecting "had" as the first word missing, although only a few had problems with supplying "their" for the second gap. Many of these boys seemed to be unaware of a vital piece of information that competent readers take for granted, namely, that phrases, clauses and sentences have to follow well-established grammatical patterns, and that these patterns give us essential clues to the way in which authors use language to convey meaning.

The data from the standardised reading tests revealed that many of the teenagers in the sample had difficulty in using semantic cues to a level commensurate with their age. An analysis of their performance in the tests, for example, showed that they scored significantly higher points for passages which dealt with topics they were familiar with. On the other hand, they scored poorly on passages which dealt with topics that were unfamiliar to them. Thus, the scores on Passage Four which dealt with rain or Passage Five which dealt with the use of tools were significantly higher than the scores for Passage Six which dealt with machine technology, or Passage Eight which dealt with juvenile delinquency in London.

(ii) Comments on the Above Data

When the nature of the reading difficulties experienced by the teenagers is taken into account, it is easy to understand how these students would have been sliding further and further behind in their acquisition of a number of increasingly complex schemata that would enable them to use the semantic cues with any degree of proficiency. Being reluctant readers, they would have been deprived of the advantage of acquiring a great many of the schemata that would be in the repertoire of their more able classmates. Further disadvantaging these
students is the fact they come from a background of social and cultural deprivation that severely curtails their life experiences, thereby narrowing the range of schemata that they will require and use in the form of semantic cues in their reading.

(c) Comprehension Strategies

(i) The Interview Data

An analysis of the students' answers to the Gap Reading Comprehension Test and the Burke Reading Interview suggested that a large percentage of the students had problems with the use of simple comprehension strategies. When these students came to something they did not know in their reading, their main strategy was "ask the teacher" for help, and if the teacher was not around to help the only other strategy they could think of was to try to "form the word by blending it", i.e., pronounce the word by taking it apart syllable by syllable. Some also suggested that they would "check the dictionary". When asked what good readers would do when they came across something they did not know in their reading, these teenagers seemed to believe that the good readers would use a similar set of strategies, i.e., ask someone else, "blend the word", or check the dictionary.

(ii) A Comment on the Interview Data

An analysis of their answers indicates that the main concern of these students was to be able to pronounce the words right rather than to understand the text. They seemed to show very little awareness of the use that could be made of contextual clues. Their answers suggest that many of these boys did not seem to know that proficient readers use such comprehension strategies as predicting and confirming, and modifying or rejecting the prediction on the
evidence gathered from the text as important means for tapping meaning from their reading, nor did they seem to be aware of the uses of backward and/or forward referencing as a comprehension strategy.

(d) The Effect of Domestic Problems on Learning

As has been mentioned earlier, Sections d, e, f and g were the result of the emergent design of the research. While interviewing the students on their emotional and reading problems it became increasingly clear to the researcher that while a complex web of correlated factors contributed to the maintenance of both these phenomena, at the centre of this web, affecting the multiplicity of the correlated factors, was a serious deprivation of emotional security. This deprivation of emotional security was generally attributable to a number of family problems which brought about painful ruptures in the students' relationships with significant adults in their lives, and a consequent loss of self-esteem so blighting as to make life a misery and academic learning irrelevant when compared to the more serious human needs of these emotionally deprived, emotionally abused youngsters.

(i) The Data

Every one of the student in the sample had been affected by domestic problems of one kind or another. These problems have been described in detail in Part One of this chapter. The interview data reveal that for these students the turmoil of their domestic life had produced a devastating effect on their ability to learn. The following are examples of the comments from some of the teenagers: "I just can't keep my mind on schoolwork because of what's going on at home." "You keep thinking of the drunkenness, the bashing and the
"I worry about mum all the time and I wish she wouldn't stay so late in the pub. Sometimes I fear she'll be bashed when she's walking home in the dark." "I keep thinking I hate my dad. He never keeps his word. He promises to come and see me but never comes." "I think about my mum a lot. I haven't seen her for years. Once I rang her and she slammed the phone down. She's a slut."

(ii) Comments on the Data

The remarks of the teenagers reflect Maslow's (1987) views on the hierarchy of human needs. As has been explained in Chapter Two, Maslow's theory holds that unless fundamental lower order needs have been satisfied, a human being is unable to work on the satisfaction of higher order needs. Applying this theory to the teenagers, it means that unless their lower order need for emotional security is fulfilled it is extremely difficult for them to concentrate on satisfying the higher order need for the acquisition of knowledge and understanding.

(e) The Effect of Behaviour Problems on Learning

(i) The Data

The behaviour problems which accompany the domestic problems seemed to be a symptom of the confusion and turmoil that these teenagers were experiencing in their personal lives, and an outlet for expressing their anger and frustration with what was going on in their lives. Their files bore testimony to the variety and seriousness of their behaviour problems. Part One of this chapter has already given details of these teenagers' behaviour problems which range from impulsiveness and disruptiveness to delinquency and violence.
In general, the teenagers agreed they had a reputation for being extremely disruptive in classroom situations and when pressed for reasons for this behaviour there was much agreement that part of the problem was repeated failure in learning activities over a number of years. At first, the teenagers tended to attribute the blame for this on the school and their fellow pupils. The school authorities were too rigid in the application of the rules; the teachers were too harsh and vindictive (a common remark was "S/he hated my guts"); and their fellow pupils were either too "smart" or too aggressive or too "snobbish". When pressed to look for reasons in their own selves, many identified their domestic problems as an important trigger for their disruptive behaviour. From the remarks of the teenagers what became increasingly clear was that misbehaviour and aggression in school were safety valves for the frustrations and anxieties they were experiencing at home.

Others spoke of the hopelessness of trying to learn when they were so far behind in many key subjects. Some were even more specific, saying that because they experienced so much difficulty with reading, they felt angry and inadequate; that it was a lot easier to disguise their feeling of frustration by becoming more aggressive and even violent towards their better-behaved peers, and that it was better to be considered 'bad' rather than to be labelled 'dumb'. Some of the boys recounted instances when a fight was just a ploy to distract the teacher and the class from discovering or focusing on the fact that they could not handle the reading aloud that was being performed in turn by each student in the class. Others, who had a history of truanting, mentioned the boredom and frustration of being unable to engage in most of the learning that was going on in the classroom because they were so far behind the other students, and how time seemed to stand still when they were in school.
(ii) A Comment on the Data

As has been described in Part One of this chapter, behaviour problems are seen by teachers, social workers and residential care workers on the site as constituting a serious obstacle to learning in the lives of these teenagers. However, rather than lament about the misbehaviour, it would be more productive, if the educational focus was on remedying the underlying factors which seem to trigger instances of misbehaviour. As identified by the teenagers themselves, such factors are:

1. The tensions created by the dynamics of their family relationships;
2. The anger and frustration they feel at their inability to interact effectively with the school community; and
3. The hopelessness they experience trying to cope with lessons and subject levels which they have no hope of mastering, and which practically guarantee failure.

(f) Learning Problems

(i) The Interview Data

According to many of the boys in the study, these learning problems were the result of repeated failure which drained them of the motivation to learn. In the view of these teenagers there was not much difference between them and other students when they started school as little five-year olds. For a majority of the teenagers learning problems became noticeable in the fourth, fifth or sixth year of elementary school, and corresponded with the emergence and continuance of such aspects of family dynamics as chronic conflict between the parents, heavy drinking by one or both of the parents, fights and bashing, parental separation, drawn out and acrimonious divorce proceedings, during which the emotional needs of the child were seriously neglected.
From the information given by the teenagers their learning problems took the following forms:

- inability to complete set tasks;
- frustration at not being able to perform basic learning tasks in key subjects;
- inability to listen attentively in class or to concentrate on learning tasks;
- lack of impulse control;
- inability and/or unwillingness to conform to classroom norms
- frequent - and as years passed, repeated - failure at tests and examinations

Once the pattern of failure was established, school performance dropped even further and it became more and more difficult to find the motivation to learn. At the same time, according to the teenagers, their disruptive behaviour increased and they became increasingly caught up in the tangle of such school-based sanctions as detention after classes, spending time in the 'time-out room', being referred to the school counsellor, having the parent/s being interviewed by the principal regarding the child's behaviour and performance in school, and finally, being suspended from school for frequent and serious infringements of school regulations.

(ii) A Comment on the Above Data

The interview data makes it evident that the self-image of the typical teenager in this group took a battering from the repeated failure, the misbehaviour and the resulting sanctions. The treatment he received from his peers and his teachers served to confirm his idea of himself as "a good for nothing trouble maker", "a dumbo", "a reject" or "a psycho". It is generally at this stage, when repeated suspensions have not produced the desired result of
making the teenager conform to school expectations, that he is referred to special education facilities such as the site of this study.

(g) Problems with self-concept

(i) The Interview Data

When the teenagers were interviewed about their image of themselves as students, the following picture emerged: while a few thought of themselves to be "OK. as learners", a significant number of students in the sample perceived themselves to be "poor learners". A majority of the students felt that they did not have sufficient motivation to engage in any form of consistent learning. Many thought of themselves as students who regularly disrupted the learning activities in the class with a variety of misbehaviour that ranged from defiance of the teacher to arguments and fights with their classmates. Focusing more specifically on their interpersonal skills in the classroom situation, several teenagers felt that they were disliked by their classmates and teachers, and that they had a reputation with their classmates as "fighters".

(ii) A Comment on the Above Data

Their self-concept which emphasises their inability to learn as competently as their fellow-students, and their incapacity to concentrate on their learning tasks, render these students extremely vulnerable to developing self-images that emphasise their feelings of worthlessness and futility, and these in their turn remove further the vestiges of any desire to learn, or to conform to the norms operating in the classroom.

Once he has established a reputation for incorrigibility and belligerence, the young student is marked out for special treatment even before the school day
starts. To the other students, he is the "class pest", who disrupts their learning efforts, who uses foul language at the slightest provocation, a walking volcano who can explode violently at any time, and who, therefore, is held in fear and disdain by them. To the teacher, the youngster is a trouble-maker with little motivation to learn, who uses his energies for wrecking her teaching strategies, for heaping abuse and hatred on her efforts to discipline him, and picking on and fighting with other students in her class. For the teenager himself, his self-image is that of an unloved and unlovable youngster who can see no use for what his classmates are learning. He is aware of an apathy to learning and an uncontrollable anger that he just cannot explain. He has been told time and time again that if he just tried harder, that if he just did what he was told, everything would be all right. But for reasons that he is not always able to articulate, he just does not want to try any harder, and he does not want to do what he is told. He believes that he can see the whole situation clearly: he is no good, he cannot learn, he cannot behave, he cannot stop fighting. No one cares, anyway. As he has been told so often, no one cares whether he lives or dies.

With this type of self image, and with the type of interpersonal relationships prevailing in the classroom, it is no wonder that the teenager in question has major problems with learning.

III. UNDERLYING FACTORS IN THE READING DISABILITY OF THE STUDENTS

(i) Unfulfilled Lower-Order Needs

The data discussed above and the comments of the teenagers in my interviews with them make it plain that the many problems which they face in fulfilling their needs for safety, love and belongingness are at the heart of their
learning problems. The teenagers who feel that they are held in dislike and contempt by their teachers and peers, and are considered 'pests' who constantly disrupt the learning activities in their classes, have little incentive to engage in learning when such efforts do nothing to satisfy their own needs. The problems of these teenagers in the classroom situation are magnified because of the difficulties they face at home in the satisfaction of the same lower-order needs. As has been noted in Part One of this chapter, their needs for safety, love and belongingness are thwarted because of the breakdown in key relationships in their families.

(ii) Low Self-Concepts

These teenagers, with strikingly few exceptions, saw themselves negatively. They regarded themselves as poor learners lacking in motivation and inclined to disrupt the class, and a very large percent saw themselves as fighters who were in violent conflict with their classmates, and consequently, disliked by them. As has been noted in Chapter Two, a number of scholars, (e.g., Castan, 1992; Crealock, 1986; Lecky, 1945; Raviv and Stone, 1991) emphasise the need for a positive self-concept for coping effectively with learning situations. The students in our sample, because of the interaction of a variety of factors, has been unable to develop positive self-concepts. Being unable to see themselves as effective learners, these students live up to their images of themselves, and continue to be ineffective learners.
1. INTRODUCTION

As has been described in Chapter Three, the data for this section came from three main sources:

1. The in-house publications of the Agency which are circulated among staff and in the local educational community;
2. The observations recorded by the candidate in his role as a teacher and researcher at the site; and
3. The interviews with the key stake-holders at the site;

The responses of the Agency described in this section are characterised by a holistic approach to the adolescents. Instead of treating them purely as learning-disabled students or as emotionally disturbed teenagers, these strategies treat them as individuals who function in particular ecosystems. Hence, the strategies are addressed to the ecosystem as a whole as well as to the teenager in that ecosystem.

The two fundamental aims of these responses are:

(a) To enable the teenager to meet his need for emotional security by improving his relationship with the members of his family, especially his parent/s, and

(b) to provide the teenager with opportunities for developing a more positive self-concept so that he would be able to see himself as likeable and skilful in a variety of areas including learning.
In the opinion of the researcher, at the basis of these aims is the assumption that the factors underlying emotional disturbance and reading disability are the same and that it would be impossible to remedy the reading disability without at the same time trying to reduce the emotional disturbance, and that the key to achieving both lay in tackling the underlying factors. In the following pages the strategies used by the Agency for establishing and strengthening key relationships and for improving the self esteem of the teenagers are described in detail.

2. STRATEGIES AIMED AT IMPROVING RELATIONSHIPS

(i) The Role of Social Workers

(a) Presentation of the Data

According to *The Staff Resource Handbook* (The Agency, 1993: 5), the following are some the duties of the social worker at the setting of this investigation:

1. work with the families using a family interactional approach;
2. accept responsibility for the assessment of boys/families for entry to the program;
3. provide a casework service to a designated number of families;
4. contribute towards the development of a teamwork approach through appropriate liaison within the family services, educational and residential sector;
5. participate in the decision making process regarding the course of a boy’s placement;
6. act as a facilitator and advocate for the family within the agency; and
7. participate in the development of an after-care service where appropriate.
The key stake-holders at the site saw the role of the social worker at the Agency in the following light: according to the principal (T1), the social workers are the "key to the school's link with the families". In the words of SW1, "the social workers try to give kids a chance to engage with their parents; some kids decide not to engage with the absent/missing parent; social workers help kids to work with relatives who are significant. They try to improve family dynamics so that the family moves forward with the changes in the kid". According to the same staff member, social workers also "help some kids to work through significant issues such as sexual abuse, physical abuse, alcoholism in the family, etc."

According to a residential care worker who is also a Living Unit Coordinator, the role of the social workers "is to bring together family members to maintain a dialogue; free them to face key issues such as going out together, being aware of each other's needs, getting on with the step-father, etc. The social workers try to reinforce the authority of the mother. The mother is also made aware of the needs of the kids, e.g., for free time, for attention, etc."

A group of the teenagers (G90) noted the importance of the role of social workers in liaising with the families. They said that family visits and family meetings were helpful, and that a lot of good work was done to help families. Their one proviso was that social workers should respect the confidentiality of the families.

(b) A Comment on the Data

There is much evidence both in the literature and in the experiences of the teenagers to suggest to the researcher the importance of repairing key relationships in the lives of the students. The response of the school to the
emotional problems of the teenager was to ensure that while his educational needs were being catered for in the setting of a residential school, his need for emotional rapport with his parents/guardians and siblings was being satisfied. This was done by employing social workers who kept in contact with the families, helped family members to understand and appreciate the youngster better, and put the family in touch with community agencies that would be able to give it assistance in a variety of socio-economic matters. These social workers then kept in regular contact with the boy and counselled him regarding ways of improving his relationships with his parents and siblings. Over a period of time, these efforts meant a reduction in the frequency and gravity of the conflicts between the teenager and his family, so that both parties became more accepting of the other. In the case of the majority of the boys, this improvement in relations paved the way for their eventual return to their families.

(ii) Weekends at Home

In an effort to encourage the healing process in these relationships, the boys were not just persuaded but compelled to spend weekends with their families. While initially this meant greater problems for all concerned, with unhappy, defiant youngsters on the one hand, and angry, frustrated, despairing family members on the other, over a number of weekends, because of the counselling and the support provided to both the youngster and the family members, the relationships improve sufficiently for the family to be able to cope with their weekends, and still later, to be glad to have the youngster spending the weekend with them. The role of the social workers in this strategy was to help the parents by making use of such local community organisations as church groups and sports clubs so that the energies and interests of the teenager could be channelled into positive and socially useful activities that enable him to acquire a variety of social and recreational skills.
(iii) Re-establishing Key Relationships

Some of the teenagers have had little or no contact with one or other of their parents for several years. This is a source of much resentment for the boy as he blames both his parents for the severed relationship. He blames the absent parent for not caring about him and he blames the parent he is living with, for driving out the other parent. Basically, the broken relationship is a source of significant emotional and behavioural problems. As one of the teenagers in the sample said, "I wouldn't mind if my old man was dead. I can handle that. But to know that he lives in Perth, and has a girlfriend and a nice life-style, and doesn't care a shit about me and mum, that really hurts. I'm so angry with him that I could kill him if I met him". This youngster brooded about his absent father so much, that it was difficult for him to concentrate on his schoolwork. He projected so much of his angry feelings for his father onto some of the male staff, that he was in constant conflict with them.

With the aim of re-establishing such broken relationships, the social workers at the Agency have the task of tracking down the missing parent, and of persuading him/her that it would be of great benefit to the teenage son if some kind of contact was re-established. In some cases, there is implacable opposition from the absent parent to any sort of contact with the son, and the social worker may stop pursuing the matter at that stage. In other cases, there are encouraging signs from the parent, and after a period of negotiations, a meeting is arranged between the parent and the teenager. Thus, the social workers of the agency have accompanied one youngster in the sample to Perth, another to Adelaide, four to different towns in Victoria and Queensland, and several to various parts of the state of New South Wales and of Metropolitan Sydney. A few of these meetings have ended with both the parties unwilling to meet again, or the
teenager refusing to seek further contacts. However, many of these meetings have resulted in the re-establishment of viable relationships.

(iv) Regular Communication between the Staff and the Families of the Students

Once a week, when the boys return from their weekends, the parents have the opportunity to discuss the behaviour of their teenager with the social workers and living unit co-ordinators. This enables the staff to be kept informed about the problems or situations which the student has faced during the weekend, and the types and ranges of behaviour these problems/situations have elicited from the boy and his parents. This is useful in enabling the staff to adopt appropriate ways of helping the youngster cope with the emotional and behavioural repercussions of turbulent weekends. It also helps the parent to know that the agency cares about what is happening on the weekends, and that it will lend a hand to solve some of the inter-personal problems affecting the teenager and his family.

The living unit co-ordinator, the principal and the teachers communicate regularly with the families by means of telephone calls and news letters which let the families know the progress the teenager is making in the school and residential spheres. Unlike the type of communication which these parents have received from regular schools where usually the emphasis has been on the negative aspects of the boys' behaviour, the communication from the Agency emphasises the positive aspects. Over a period of time, such communication seems to enable the family to change its view of the teenager from that of a social and scholastic misfit to one of a developing young man capable of undertaking a variety of social, scholastic and sporting activities with increasing competence.
The families are invited to the school for a range of functions, which include concerts, bush dances, family nights, swimming and athletic carnivals, inter-school team sports, etc., during which they are able to see the teenagers perform on stage, play musical instruments, read some of the stories they have written, and show the skills they have acquired in such sports as basketball, football, tennis, baseball and cricket. Some of these functions also give the teenager the opportunity to develop the caring and compassionate aspect of their character by playing hosts to visitors from local senior citizens' homes, the Sylvanvale Autistic Children's School and the very young children from the local primary school. Interacting with their teenage sons during these activities, the parents learn that there are many positive aspects to their youngster, and with this gradual realisation there seems to come an improvement over a period of time, in their own attitude towards their son. A sign of this improving attitude is a greater willingness on their part to think about his needs, to see his point of view, and to provide him with increasing emotional support while he is with them during weekends and school holidays.

(v) Regular Review Meetings

These meetings are attended by the living unit co-ordinator, the residential care worker, the social worker, the class teacher and other teaching staff who have most dealings with the teenager. The youngster concerned and his parent/s have the option of attending the meeting, but only two teenagers and the parents of another student in the sample have availed themselves of this opportunity in the last three years. The Review Group, usually consisting of five or six staff members, hold twenty meetings during the school year. Each teenager in a living unit is reviewed four times during the year, for approximately thirty minutes each time.
As The Staff Resource Handbook (The Agency, 1993: 48) notes, the "issues under review can be quite specific to a boy's situation but generally, such matters as the following are dealt with:

1. Impact on the family of the boy's placement
2. The boy's relationship with his peers
3. The boy's relationship with staff
4. Presenting behaviour problems
5. The boy's involvement in tasks and activities
6. How the boy deals with rules and expectations
7. How the boy deals with matters of personal hygiene
8. How the boy functions within the living unit and in the agency
9. Progress in educational services sector (e.g., school, work experience)
10. Progress on his action plan (Contract for behaviour modification)."

The Review meeting is usually chaired by the Living Unit Co-ordinator. During the meeting, the social worker assigned to the particular teenager reports on the family situation, the changes/problems in interpersonal relationships in the family, the quality of the interactions between the teenager and his family during the weekends and holidays at home, etc. The class teacher and the subject teachers report on the learning behaviour and classroom interactions of the student, and his relationships with other students in and outside the classroom. The residential care workers and the living unit co-ordinator inform the review group about the teenager's behaviour and interactions during the after-school hours. The main aim of these meetings is to monitor how key relationships in the teenager's life are re-built and maintained, and what practical strategies the Review Group can suggest for the enhancement of these relationships.
The teenager and his family are informed about the outcome of the review meetings, and steps are taken to implement the recommendations made during the meeting. A recommendation might be that the teenager spend more time on the weekends with his father who lives away from the family and with whom he is keen to establish a better relationship. The social worker notifies the father about this recommendation and explores with him the practicalities of implementing it. Sometimes, the father might be going through some crisis in his own personal life and he might not be able to have his son spending time with him. In this case, the social worker would first try to help the father sort out his own problem, or at least wait for the problem to be sorted out before pursuing the recommendation of the Review Panel any further. Sometimes some of the parents resent the attempts of the agency to help them modify the dynamics in the family relationships as unwelcome intrusions into their lives, and show an obvious reluctance to follow the recommendations of the Review Panel whose primary concern is the well-being of the teenager. Parents who are unwilling to change their attitudes or to co-operate with the school in helping the teenager, usually end up by withdrawing him from the agency. Rizzo and Zabel (1988: 59) point out that "Family members may resist or sabotage efforts at changing a child's behaviour because of an implicit recognition that other elements of the family may thereby be changed." This, however, is a relatively rare occurrence. Most of the families make very good use of the support provided by the school for improving their relationship with the teenager, and the Review Meetings play a crucial role in monitoring and helping to modify the dynamics involved in these relationships.

3. STRATEGIES AIMED AT IMPROVING SELF-CONCEPT

Simultaneously with mending key relationships, the Agency makes use of a number of strategies which are designed to help the youngster to acquire a better self-concept.
(i) Skill-Based Physical Activities

Many of the teenagers who come to the Agency have been labelled 'hyperactive, restless, violent', etc. They have an abundance of energy which need to be channelled in positive ways. The curricular changes in program of the Agency have introduced a variety of activities which absorb the interests and energies of these youngsters, and enable them to develop greater self-esteem in the process. These activities include a range of competitive sports such as basketball, football, tennis, baseball, etc. Boys who have for the most part had little experience or skill in playing these games, discover that they are able to build up the necessary skills, and can compete successfully with their peers. Apart from the motor skills involved in playing the game, the youngsters also benefit from the opportunities for interacting socially with a range of peers and adults in the local community during the course of matches and tournaments.

The program also encourages the teenager to participate in horse-riding, canoeing, swimming, surfing, snorkelling, sailing, etc. The acquisition of skills in these activities enables the teenager to develop more self-confidence and an improved self-image. Several boys have told this researcher how over a period of time these activities have turned them from clumsy and diffident boys into physically fit and athletic young men, with a greater willingness to "have a go" at most challenges. Some of the teenagers develop their interests and skills in an area so much that they are able to take up the activity as a means of earning a living. An example is the teenager in the sample who so excelled in sailing that he has been able to secure a job with one of Sydney's sailing clubs soon after he left school. Another case is the teenager whose interest in music was supported and encouraged while he was in the Agency. This student went on to graduate as a fully qualified music teacher and returned to teach music at the Agency.
Other teenagers who show an interest or inclination towards the manual arts are encouraged to learn ceramics, metalwork or woodwork. The products of their work are exhibited to parents during special School Assemblies, and to the local community, and the proceeds from the sale of these artefacts are handed back to the boys in the presence of the whole school during special occasions.

The cumulative effect of these facets of the program is a greater appreciation for the boy and his genuine achievements by the staff and other students, by his parents, and, most notably, by the student himself. Over a period of months, and in some cases years, the teenager's self-image improves in ways that affect also his performance in learning situations in the classroom.

(ii) Success-oriented Scholastic Activities

The emphasis in all activities, including the scholastic ones, is to enable the teenager to experience success. This is a tall order, especially in the classroom which has been an arena for failure for all of these students. The task of enabling the students to experience success is also complicated by the fact they are performing several years behind their grade level in all the key subjects, especially in reading and arithmetic. While not neglecting these key subjects - in fact, very special care is taken to improve the students' skill in these subjects as will be described in a later part of this chapter - the students are encouraged to participate in such learning activities as music and drama which enable them to build up valuable skills in manual dexterity, self-expression, communication, etc. which provide them with opportunities for exhibiting their skills through public performances. The students attend regular music classes in which they receive tuition in playing the guitar, the drums or a keyboard instrument. Many teenagers who have never had the opportunity of learning to play any musical
instrument find that they are able to pick up skills necessary for playing the
guitar or drums with relative ease. They use their spare time in the living unit
and before school starts in the morning to practise the skills they have learned
during the day. Some of the teenagers in the sample use their time to help the
junior boys with tips on how to play the guitar. This is quite a change when
one recalls that a few months back in their regular schools the same teenager
would have been involved in fights or in plotting with his cronies about how to
disrupt a class or how to steal a car. The special School Assemblies which are
held at least once every term, as well as the end-of-term concerts and the weekly
Eucharistic Celebration give the students ample opportunities for exhibiting
their skills, and at the same time, for providing the school community with an
essential service - music during important functions. Indeed, music is used as a
vital means for enhancing the teenager's self-esteem.

Like music, drama too plays a key role in developing a range of skills in
the teenager, and at the same time, in building up his self-esteem. The students
have drama lessons for two hours a week, and during this time they are taught
the essentials of movement, voice production, aspects of self-expression on the
stage, and the skills involved in the production of a play or musical. Every year
the drama classes produce a play which is written by the boys themselves. In
1989 this was about the problems of delinquent teenagers in Sydney, and in
1990 it was about the life and work of Fr. Thomas Dunlea, the founder of the
Agency. These plays reached a wide audience as they were staged in Sydney
and Melbourne for the general public. The literacy skills involved in the writing
and acting, the organisational skills involved in the actual staging of the play,
the discipline involved in the effort needed to get the most out of the regular
rehearsals, the acclaim of an appreciative audience at the end of the
performance, are all valuable results from this aspect of the curriculum. The
teenagers involved in the staging of these plays, as well as their parents and
teachers, believe that they have derived much benefit from them.

4. THE AGENCY'S RESPONSES AIMED AT IMPROVING LITERACY
SKILLS

(i) The Organisation of Classes in the School

Because of the need for students to establish a positive relationship with
their teachers, the 40 students in the school were divided into five classes of 8
students each, with a class-teacher for each class. This class teacher was given
the responsibility for teaching such key subjects as English, Mathematics, Social
Science and Personal Development. The class teacher has a minimum of 17
hours a week to teach these key subjects to her class. How the teacher will
time-table the subjects during these hours is up to her. However, the class
teachers are aware of the essential nature of literacy and numeracy skills in the
academic and social life of their students, and devote a minimum of one hour
per day on each of these two subjects. One benefit of having the class teacher
for several hours each day, instead of having various subject teachers going in
and out of the classroom during the day, is that it is in the best interest of both
the class teacher and the individual student to establish and maintain a positive
relationship, as they have to spend several hours in each other's company.
Another benefit is that both the student and the teacher get to know each other
well. For the student this has the advantage of making the teacher's behaviour
and expectations predictable and therefore less threatening. For the teacher the
advantage is that she gets to know the student's strengths and weaknesses well,
and she is able to use this knowledge to design the type of individual learning
program that is best suited to help him.
As has been emphasised in the early parts of this chapter, a significant number of the teenagers have experienced difficulties in establishing any kind of viable interactions with their classmates in their regular school. The small class of eight makes it easier for the teenager to interact well with at least one or two of the other students initially, and to gradually build up a pattern of positive interactions with the rest of their classmates.

(ii) Discipline Strategies Which Foster a Sense of Responsibility

With the aim of encouraging the students to build up good relationships with their teachers and fellow-students, and to develop a more positive self-concept, in 1990 the staff adopted Lee Canter's (1989) 'Assertive Discipline' as the basis for the school's discipline policy. Canter emphasises the importance of making the students assume responsibility for their behaviour. To this end, the rules of the school are made clear to them, and they are encouraged to understand the consequences of violating them. The rules in a particular classroom, for instance are:

- Respect yourself
- Respect others
- Respect other people's property

For the observance of these rules each day the student is awarded one tuck shop voucher (worth 50 cents), and at the end of the week when he has collected a number of these vouchers, he is able to buy from the school tuck shop such items as audio cassettes, stereo headphones, basketballs, T-shirts, cans of soft drinks, etc. The students are also graded on a weekly basis for their behaviour and application to schoolwork. The boys who have received an A Grade for six weeks, are taken out on a special school outing - e.g., to an educational movie in the city, to the museum or the zoo, to a sporting event or to
a community recreation complex, while the rest of the students go on with their regular classes.

Other rewards involve "Gold Passes" and "Raffle Tickets". Every week, a Gold Pass is issued to those teenagers who have obtained an A for cooperative and sensible behaviour both in the school and the living unit. The holders of the Gold Pass are entitled to special privileges such as first places in the lunch line and at the tuck shop queue, first choice of after-school activities, front seats in vehicles during excursions, etc.

Once a week a raffle is drawn from tickets issued to those boys who have behaved in such positive ways as following staff directions, helping younger students, participating in sporting activities during recreation time, etc. (The Agency, 1993: 47).

If, on the other hand, a student has violated the classroom or school rules, he is deprived of the tuck shop vouchers, he is detained in class to complete his lessons while his classmates are enjoying their recreation, and, if his violation of the rules has been serious or persistent, he is interviewed by the principal who might detain him in his classroom to complete his learning assignments on Wednesday afternoons while the rest of the students are at various sporting activities, or he might suspend the student, and ask him to return with his parent/s to discuss his behaviour and what he plans to do about it. With the vast majority of the students, these measures have a positive effect.

While resort has at times to be made to the types of punishments described above, the emphasis is always on reinforcing sensible and responsible behaviour.
The net result of this type of approach to discipline is that it encourages the students to behave sensibly without any physical or emotional coercion being applied by the school, initially on the strength of the rewards and punishments, and after a period of time, on the strength of their own increasing self-control, and their belief that they are capable of behaving with greater maturity.

(iii) Specific Strategies for Instruction

(a) Individual Reading Teachers

During the first thirty minutes of each school day, individual help is given to those students who are disabled by a gap of more than four years in their reading level. The staff who help these students are provided special in-service instruction aimed at equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary for helping disabled readers.

These teachers get to know the students' interests and strengths and make use of this knowledge to get the school librarian to provide reading material suitable for their individual students. They use a variety of teaching methods depending on the needs of their particular student. Since many boys are very slow readers who are easily frustrated if they have more than a few lines to read, the Neurological Impress Method is used to help them to improve in their reading speed. For those students who have difficulty concentrating on the text, or in following the story-line, the reading helpers use structured comprehension. This method helps the student to keep his mind on the story, and to understand each part of the story, by regularly questioning the student about the explicit and implicit meanings of what he has read.
(b) A Psycholinguistic Approach to the Teaching of Reading

The class teacher who is primarily the one responsible for teaching the various language skills to the students in her class, approaches the task from a whole-language perspective. The students are immersed in the language by means of posters and wall hangings which stimulate and encourage her students to read, to write, to listen and to speak. Half an hour each day is set aside for sustained silent reading during which the students are encouraged to read books and magazines which are of interest to them, and which they can read without much difficulty. Then they get the opportunity to share the ideas from their stories with the rest of the class. They are encouraged to base their writing on what they have read, or experienced, and edit their stories after sharing the first draft with the teacher or a classmate. They get ample opportunities for listening and speaking when a variety of topics from social science to religion are discussed in the classroom. They are also able to exhibit the skills they are gradually acquiring during the weekly Eucharist when they read from the Bible and enact real-life situations that illuminate the lesson contained in the Bible story. The Special School Assembly held once every term gives further scope to the students for displaying their literacy skills in the form of plays, stories, poems, etc. that are performed or read to the whole school community, and to many parents who are able to attend these functions.

(c) The Use of the Microcomputer

The class teacher has one Apple Ile computer in her classroom, and a set of programs that are specifically aimed at enlarging the vocabulary and improving the comprehension skills of her students. The students take turns to use the computer and practise the skills. They also use a word processing program that helps them to write, edit and print their stories, plays and poems. The fun they derive from using these interactive computer programs gives the
students an added incentive for learning. The class teacher has also access to the use of a bank of eight computers so that the whole class can be taught skills in the use of a variety of educational programs which aim at enlarging the fund of knowledge which the student has about the world in which he lives. From the point of view of literacy, the benefit is that these programs enlarge the number and complexity of the schemata at the student's command, so that he experiences greater ease in the use of semantic skills during his reading.

(d) The Use of the Listening Post and the Video Cassette Player

To encourage the boys to read, the class teacher employs the listening post. This enables one or more students to read a novel while listening to a recording of it through individual ear-phones. The students are able to read several books during a ten-week term as the recording helps them to step up their reading speed. With the help of the listening post some students have been able to read completely certain classics like *Oliver Twist, Treasure Island, The Old Man and the Sea*, etc., which would otherwise have seemed forbiddingly too long to them. Some students have remarked how completing a book boosts their self-confidence and motivates them to explore other books with similar themes, or to read other works by the same author. According to other students, the method has also the added advantage of enabling them to keep their minds on their books, and reducing distractions to a minimum.

Over the last two years the school has acquired videos of several novels that are popular with our students. The opportunity to watch a video of the novel one has just read is an added incentive in the reading program. The student who has completed reading a novel, first does an oral re-telling for the class and/or the teacher who then arranges for the student to use the video. The student is able to watch the video and listen to the sound-track with headphones
so that he will not distract other students from their work. When the whole class has read a novel, they get to watch the video together. Thus, one class has watched such videos of novels as *Animal Farm, The Outsiders, Tex, For the Term of His Natural Life* (after reading an abridged version of the book), and *Walkabout*.

The cumulative effect of these strategies is seen in the significant gains that most of the students make in their reading. Chapter Five deals with the outcomes of the curricular strategies in the lives of ten teenagers from the study.
CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA:
PART TWO

CASE STUDIES OF TEN ADOLESCENTS IN TERMS OF THE EFFECTS OF THE CURRICULAR STRATEGIES USED AT THE AGENCY

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is devoted to the case studies of ten teenagers from the sample of one hundred emotionally disturbed and reading-disabled students enrolled at the Agency during a six-year period. The aim is to create from the data an accurate picture of how these teenagers and the various factors which influenced their lives interacted with the curricular experiences offered at the setting, and how these interactions led to particular outcomes for individual adolescents. It is hoped that this funnelling process (i.e., going from the original 100 emotionally disturbed and reading disabled teenagers to an in-depth case-study account of 10 students) will result in a richer, deeper layer of information that will help to illuminate the processes which operate when emotionally disturbed and reading disabled teenagers from different backgrounds come together in the context of the Agency.

It must be made clear right at the outset that the evidence which the data provide for improvement or lack of improvement in literacy skills as well as for a reduction or increase in emotionally disturbed behaviour, is sketchy and
fraught with ambiguity. However, because every care has been taken to ensure
the credibility of the data through the processes of triangulation, peer debriefing
and a sustained engagement on the site by researcher, it is felt that the data do
reflect the reality of the boys and the context of the Agency and enable the
researcher to speculate about how all the various factors interact. It is hoped that
this approach may provide a basis for some working hypotheses for others to
test.

The data for this section were derived from the archival material on the
teenagers, from interviews which were conducted with them and with the key
staff who work with them at the Agency, including their teachers, social workers
and residential care workers. The information obtained from the above sources
were sifted in the light of observed behaviour and standardised reading tests.

The following pages contain the descriptions of the case study data on ten
of the students from the sample. To safeguard the privacy of the teenagers and
their families, each subject in the case study is identified by a five-digit number
which is a combination of a sequential number from one to ten joined to the
number which identifies them in the whole study. Thus, 02035 means that the
teenager in question is the second student in the case study and is number 35 in
the general data. To protect the privacy of everyone concerned, names have
been changed, and the area in which the teenager's family lives is identified only
by its Australian Postcode.

Finally, it will be helpful to remember that the age given in brackets
after the student identification number, refers to the teenager's chronological age
on the day that he was first given the reading comprehension test around the
time of his admission to the Agency
STUDENT 01001 (15 YEARS)

(a) Family Background

When he was first admitted to the Agency, this teenager lived with his mother in one of the eastern suburbs of Sydney (postcode 2024). His parents originally came from a Western European country. They owned a boat and sailed in it extensively throughout the Pacific Islands when the boy was four.

The mother has told welfare officers that the boy was an unwanted child as both she and her partner felt from the beginning that the child was an intrusion on their care-free lifestyle. The reports from social workers, hospitals, and the N.S.W. Department of Family and Community Services make it clear that the child was physically and emotionally abused from a very young age.

The mother has claimed that it was the stress associated with bringing up her son that led to her husband walking out of her life when the boy was six. The boy has had no further contact with his father. Bringing up the child on her own has been very difficult for the mother especially since (as she has remarked), she felt little emotional bonding to her son, and has had to work at two and sometimes three, different jobs to meet her financial commitments. Consequently, from the time that he was in his early primary school years, the boy has had very little supervision at home.

The boy developed a pattern of presenting himself to the casualty department of the local public hospital after being assaulted by his mother, and demanding that he be placed away from home. During one such episode, he claimed that he had been hit with a skateboard by his mother. With the consequent involvement of the state welfare agencies, two temporary foster care
type of placements were tried but these did not work out because the boy ran away and returned home as soon as any problem arose with the foster parents. Throughout this period, the mother refused to attend counselling because, as the social worker dealing with the family at this time writes, she "saw all the problems as her son's responsibility".

(b) School Background

Reports of his primary school years indicate that Student 01001 was acting out by being disruptive and refusing to learn. At one stage, he told one of his social workers that he liked being detained after school, because it was "better than going home", and that if he was in school, at least he "could be with someone".

His Year 7 teacher, a member of the religious order of Christian Brothers, reported on 4 April 1986 that the student was "extremely lazy. He shows little motivation when it comes to class work, and has over the past two years been for ever on detention after school for home work that he has failed to complete at home". The same teacher goes on to report that "when closely supervised, he will do his work. He dislikes reprimands from some female teachers and, as a result, will consciously provoke an argument in the process. Somehow he knows that he is in the wrong in this provocation, yet his actions fail to improve. Not only does this occur in school, but it is also at the heart of the relationship with his mother."
(c) In the Agency's Program

At this stage, the mother and the welfare agencies which were working with the family, sought admission for Student 01001 to the Agency. His early days in the school were quite pleasant for the boy as he made friends quickly and showed a natural ease when dealing with the adults. For a Gap Reading Comprehension test which he did on 21 April 1987 when he was 15 years old, this student registered a reading level of 10 years and 6 months. He experienced difficulties with the use of the syntactic, semantic and graphophonic cue systems, and showed little awareness of comprehension strategies.

In the months that followed, Student 01001 made progress in a number of areas: he established a working relationship with his living unit co-ordinator, he started showing a keen interest in basketball and a variety of water sports including swimming and fishing, and he started building up a good network of friends among the students.

The reports from his living unit co-ordinator and his social worker indicate that as time passed, his weekends at home became a little more tolerable for him and his mother, and he started showing some appreciation for the care and loyalty which she had shown him when his father had disappeared from his life. However, it was the father whom he idolised because of the latter's lifestyle and spirit of adventure. Through his social worker, the Agency tried to track down the father in order to arrange a meeting for him with the teenager. However, inquiries revealed that the father was sailing somewhere in Eastern Canada, and that his friends had no idea if he ever intended to return to Australia.
At the beginning of 1988, his mother took Student 01001 to her Western European homeland so that he could visit his parents' relations. This was a positive experience for the teenager, and when he returned to the Agency, he seemed happier and more settled. It was his School Certificate year and his school reports at this time suggest that he was "working consistently to prepare himself for the examinations, especially in English and Mathematics".

His work experience placements opened up another opportunity for developing a sense of responsibility. He worked in a bakery where the nature of the work involved getting up at 3.30 on Monday mornings to help the pastry cooks in preparing the day's baking.

However, not everything was going fine with Student 01001. His class teacher and other staff started noticing that he was often depressed, and they were concerned that he was resorting to self-injurious behaviour. He would, for example, use pocket knives, razor blades or the sharp points of dividers and other mathematical instruments to carve his initials or a heart on his left arm or on his thigh, and would not flinch even when blood was trickling down from his handiwork. When his teachers tried to stop him, he would tell them that it was none of their business what he did with his body. When this was reported to his mother, her response was that such reports would damage her son's chances of finding employment when he left the Agency. Staff expressed surprise that the mother showed little concern at her son inflicting injuries on himself.

When the teenager was not in a depressed frame of mind, he made a consistent effort to improve his reading skills. In a standardised comprehension test administered to him on 13 April 1988, he registered 13 years and 1 month, which was a significant improvement on the 10 years and 6 months that he had
registered just a year earlier. His class teacher noted that although he still had problems with some semantic cues, he was able to use syntactic and graphophonic cues with greater skill, and that he had shown a developing interest in reading because of the way he made use of the daily half hour of silent reading time in class.

This student left the school at the end of 1988, and went to live in Western Australia with his mother. He kept in touch with some members of the staff to whom he confided that he was employed as an unskilled labourer by a builder for some of the time, and that he was still staying with his mother. He also reported that in spite of their occasional clashes, he was getting along quite well with his mother.

At the beginning of 1992, this teenager turned up at the Agency for a visit. He told staff that he had returned to Sydney without his mother as work was hard to find in Perth, and that he was staying with friends in one of the eastern suburbs of Sydney. He was registered for unemployment benefits and was looking for work. He had heard no news about his father, except that he was somewhere in South America, but he still fantasized about living with him. At last report, this young man was working as an apprentice chef in a small restaurant.

(d) Comments

Students 01001 is typical of many emotionally disturbed and reading disabled students in as much as there has been a serious disruption in his emotional security because of the breakdown of his family unit. The mother in this case experienced serious hardship trying to bring up the child on her own,
as she had little support from any sort of extended family, and this again is typical of many migrant family units in Australia.

This case study highlights three curriculum implications:

- the need for early identification and treatment for students who are exhibiting signs of serious emotional and behaviour problems;
- the need for special education staff to be aware of the importance of building on the strengths of the individual student; and
- the importance of an inter-disciplinary approach which addresses the needs of the student and his ecosystem.

Children such as Student 01001 who start acting out very early in their schooling, would benefit from the implementation of reliable screening programs because then the system would be able to provide them with the type of educational program most suited to their needs. In the absence of such screening, however, these students may be placed in the care of teachers who are not fully aware of the problems of emotional disturbance. Such teachers may tend to lay the blame on the emotionally disturbed child by labelling him "lazy, quarrelsome", etc., and by punishing him. Such an approach would only lead to the child exhibiting even more serious learning and behaviour problems.

The beneficial effects of special education staff identifying the strengths of the child and building on such strengths is shown in this case study. Soon after Student 01001 was enrolled at the Agency, the key workers such as his living unit co-ordinator, his social worker and his class teacher encouraged him to develop the positive aspects of his behaviour, e.g., his natural ability to make friends, his curiosity about the world around him and his delight in a variety of physical activities such as swimming, fishing and basketball. The progress he
made in a range of areas could be traced back to the self-confidence and self-esteem which he developed as a result of the encouragement he received from the staff to build on the positive aspects of his temperament and talents.

The benefits of an inter-disciplinary approach to the child and his ecosystem is also highlighted in this case study. While the social worker liaised with the mother and tried to help her to cope with the teenager's weekends at home, the class teacher provided him with an environment that is conducive to mastering basic literacy and numeracy skills and the living unit co-ordinator showed him how his after-school life could be orderly and enjoyable. When problems arose, as in the case of his self-injurious behaviour, staff, like his class teacher and his review panel, showed concern and dealt with the matter in such a way that it benefited the student.

His behaviour after leaving the Agency shows that he had acquired a certain degree of maturity in his relations with his mother, and that he was able to take the first tentative steps towards independent living. The mellowing of his attitude to his mother may be explained by two important facts: (a) that he had become older and had started appreciating the loyalty of his mother and the care she had taken of him in trying circumstances; and (b) the effort that his social worker had put into making the mother and son see each other's points of view a little better, was now paying dividends in the form of a more harmonious relationship between the two.
STUDENT 02013 (14 YEARS AND 3 MONTHS)

(a) Home Background

This student is the youngest child in a family in which his parents are divorced and there are two older sisters (age 18 and 16) and one older half sister (age 21). He lives with his mother and his sister (16) in one of the western suburbs of Sydney (post code 2161). In interviews with psychologists from the New South Wales Department of Family and Community services and with one of the social workers from the Agency, this student's mother described the traumatic circumstance in which she and her husband separated when Student 02013 was seven years of age. This followed the discovery that the eldest girl in the family, Student 02013's half sister, had fallen pregnant to the father. In her fury the mother attacked her husband with a knife, doused him with petrol and threatened to set him alight.

In the years that followed this incident, the father had moved out of the family home but continued to have contact with his son. The mother states that since the revelation of the sexual abuse, there is still considerable "anger and hate in the house". During his growing years, Student 02013 witnessed much of his father's alcohol abuse and violence, and even at the age of four was being described as "unhappy, destructive and impulsive". Since the age of 8, reports on this student have noted his "frequent headaches", his "difficulty in getting to sleep", his "assaultive behaviour", his stealing and smoking. His mother also reported the occurrence of the following behaviours since age 4: "Violent and filthy language, no self-control over his actions, the habit of urinating anywhere, violence towards his sisters" and occasionally, against the mother herself.
(b) School History

His mother reported that ever since Student 02013 started attending the state primary school in his local area, he had experienced great difficulty with his schoolwork. He was disruptive in class and aggressive both to students and teachers. According to the report from the clinical psychologist who interview him in August 1986 at the Rivendell Adolescent Unit of the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Camperdown, New South Wales, this student "has presented classroom management difficulties throughout his school-life, has been involved in programs for aggressive boys, and has seen school counsellors for the behaviourally disturbed during his primary school years." On the WISC-R, Student 02013's Verbal IQ fell in the Low-Average range, while his Performance and Full Scale IQ's were in the Average range. Testing of Academic abilities (WRAT) indicated a generalised learning disorder with significant deficits in reading (Grade 4.5, 6th percentile), spelling (Grade 2.2, 1st percentile) and arithmetic (Grade 3.0, 1st percentile).

The clinical psychologist who assessed Student 02013 noted the following problems as significant:

- Aggressive behaviour with peers and family members (sisters and mother) which included verbal abuse and, occasionally, assaultive behaviour.
- Poor impulse control as evidenced by throwing chairs at fellow-students in the classroom.
- Disruptive classroom behaviour.
- Generalised learning disabilities.
- Prolonged feelings of unhappiness and anger
- Highly ambivalent feelings towards both his parents.
His relationship with his mother at this time was characterised by periods of hostile behaviour towards her. He was apparently angered by his father's behaviour, but for the most part, seemed to idealise him.

(c) In the Agency's Program

This student was admitted to the special education agency in 1987 and initially, he experienced a rocky settling in period that was characterised by serious and regular confrontations with his class teacher and with his living unit co-ordinator. The after-school hours were punctuated by fights with peers and defiant behaviour directed at the residential care worker and living unit co-ordinator.

After a few weeks had passed, it was noticed that this student was settling in better and that his outbursts were becoming less frequent. His review panel noted that he had very good motor co-ordination and that he acquired sporting skills in basketball and baseball with relative ease. The student volunteered the information that when he was in primary school, he had played in regular baseball competitions for a number of years. By the end of his first year at the Agency, this student was elected captain of the baseball team by his team-mates. In the swimming carnival held at the beginning of the school year, Student 02013 performed very well and was acknowledged as a valuable member of his team.

His class teacher noted that though he was still inclined to be violent and disruptive, he was taking more care with his schoolwork and that he was making some progress with his reading. For these efforts, he was rewarded by his teacher according to the reinforcement system operating in the school and which has been described in the preceding chapter. In the Gap Reading
Comprehension test which this student completed on 4 November 1987 at the age of 14 years and 3 months, he registered a reading level of 9 years and 1 month.

His social worker reported some progress in his behaviour during his weekends at home. It was noticed that he was not as violent as he had previously been towards his sisters, but it was also pointed out by his mother that he was spending a large amount of time with delinquent peers from the local area. The mother was concerned at the fact that the police had brought him home in the early hours of a Sunday morning for brawling in the local shopping centre with members of a rival gang. The staff as well as his mother were alerted to the suspicion that he might be experimenting with drugs, and that he might perhaps be dealing in them. This was because of the fact that at this time he started flaunting expensive clothes and shoes, and seemed to have money which he could not account for. However, when he was confronted by the principal with these suspicions, he denied any involvement with drugs.

Just before the end of Term Three, 1988, Student 02013 was suspended for a serious fight with a classmate. He was deeply upset at the suspension and worried that his mother would be very angry with him, and that his father might give him "a good thrashing". On the day that he was suspended, he left school but did not go home. For a while his mother and the key staff members who worked with him were anxious because he seemed to have just disappeared. However, a week later, his mother telephoned the school to say that he was staying with his grandmother in a country town in southern New South Wales.

As Term Four started, Student 02013 refused to return to school and threatened to abscond if his mother tried to force him to go back to the Agency.
Although by continuing to attend school till the end of the year this student could have received the School Certificate, he chose to stay home with his grandmother. At last report, Student 02013 had returned to his mother's house but was said to be unemployed, depressed and on drugs. The social worker dealing with this student reported that his mother was under enormous stress because of the deterioration in his attitude and behaviour. In a Gap Reading Test which this student had taken just before he left school in September 1988, he had registered 10 years and 3 months. He had made some gains in his reading comprehension level, but his behaviour indicated that he was still experiencing serious emotional problems.

(d) Comments

As in the cases of several other students in this study, the behaviour problems of this teenager started with the trauma associated with his father's alcoholism and violence. Once the father moved away from the family home, this student became the sole male in his family and proceeded to behave according to the role model that his father had provided. Although his behaviour and learning problems were identified from an early stage, he was not given the benefit of a residential treatment program. After he was admitted to the Agency, he was able to receive a degree of support and affirmation, as well as professional help to improve his relations with his family and to narrow some of the gaps in his learning. Though he was able to make some gains in these areas, his entrenched attitudes regarding schooling and authority finally led to the voluntary termination of his placement at the Agency.
STUDENT 03024 (15 YEARS 11 MONTHS)

(a) Family and Educational background

Student 03024 lives with his mother and stepfather in one of the western suburbs of Sydney (postcode 2770). He has a sister who has recently moved out of the house and lives in a near-by suburb.

When he was still in primary school and his natural father lived with the family, he experienced the trauma of witnessing the sexual assault of his sister by his father. The boy himself was the victim of much physical abuse by his father. He first came to the attention of school authorities in Grade Three, as disruptive and violent, and the pattern of his behaviour problems was well established by the time he left primary school. The report from the school counsellor indicates that his behaviour problems deteriorated in high school. He became more defiant and aggressive, disrupted lessons regularly, showed poor social skills in his dealings with his peers and teachers, and was suspended several times for threatening and verbally abusing his teachers.

(b) In the Agency's Program

By the time he was admitted to the special education Agency, Student 03024 was an extremely depressed and angry youngster. He had been in 11 schools and had moved addresses six times since he started primary school. He was not coping very well with life in general and with school-life in particular. The first review meeting mentions complaints from his teachers and his living unit co-ordinator about his lack of co-operation, his quick temper, his tendency to "stir" other boys and provoke them to fights. The staff at this meeting felt that the student's height - which was very much below average - was a factor in his truculent behaviour, and the consultant physician from the Adolescent Medical
Unit of the Prince of Wales Hospital recommended hormone treatment. However, the student was vehemently opposed to this, and consequently, the treatment could not be provided.

At his initial educational assessment, Student 03024 registered 11 years and 1 month on the Gap Reading Comprehension Test. While he was able to cope with the graphophonic cues, this student found it difficult to use syntactic and semantic cues adequately. He admitted to poor motivation, remarking that he "couldn't care less about schoolwork", and that "school sux". He said that he hated his mother and his teachers, and that he wished could die and be done with all his troubles. During the months that followed, this student mentioned several times his wish to end his life, especially when he was depressed and in trouble for his behaviour.

During the first few months after his admission to the Agency, this student's weekends at home were traumatic for him as well as for his mother. He would spend most of Friday and Saturday nights with his mates, and his mother worried that he could be in serious trouble for breaking the law or that he could be tempted to experiment with drugs. When the student returned to the Agency after these weekends, he was angry with his mother and boasted about his use of alcohol and marijuana. He found it difficult to concentrate on his schoolwork for more than a couple of minutes at a time, and his teachers found him extremely disruptive.

They also noticed that he had a talent for acting, and with the help of the drama teacher he gained enough confidence to participate regularly in the Special School Assemblies which provided him with a positive outlet for his performance as an actor. Over a period of time, drama classes became
increasingly trouble-free for this student. In 1989, he was one of the stars in the Agency’s drama production which was staged at the Shop-front Theatre at Carlton, New South Wales.

Soon after this student came to the Agency, his music teacher found that he had an above average sense of rhythm, and began helping him to learn to play the drums. After a few months he was able to play the drums at the weekly Eucharistic Celebrations in the school chapel, and in musical items performed at the Special School Assemblies. His abilities in drama and music were being increasingly appreciated by his peers, and this student had less need now to 'stir' them or provoke them to fights in order to be noticed by them.

When student 03024 first came to the Agency, several of the staff had noticed his tendency to be hyperactive. His first teacher had even recommended that his liking for high sugared foods like flavoured milk, chocolates and candies should be moderated in order to reduce his hyperactivity. His living unit co-ordinator and residential care worker found that he could be persuaded to participate in a variety of outdoor activities such as horse-riding, basketball, tennis, swimming and snorkelling. He showed an aptitude for basketball that was a surprise to staff, considering his short stature and the fact that he had never played the sport before. Over a period of time, this student began to spend more of his recreation time shooting baskets with a ball that he had bought with his tuck shop vouchers. This had a double effect on his behaviour: he did not have the time to tease and provoke other boys, and he started making friends with other keen basketballers.

All this did not mean that the student had reformed completely. On the contrary, he was still reported as "disruptive" in a variety of classes especially
because of his inability to concentrate on any learning task for more than a few minutes at a time. He still defied some of his teachers; he still had problems with other students both during and after school hours. His weekends were still unpredictable, with is mother complaining that he was rebellious and unhelpful. However, there was general agreement that he was making some progress.

One serious difficulty that arose at this time seemed to be his inability to hold down his work experience job. The school has a policy that Year 10 students should spend Mondays of the school year gaining work experience in the job of their choice. Student 03024 had expressed a desire to be a motor mechanic and the school's work experience co-ordinator had obtained four different placements for him. But in each of these work places, the student was reported to be "unable to follow directions", "showing little willingness to work", and "unsuitable for this type of work". Believing that the student was not making a sufficient effort to retain his work experience placement, the Principal suspended him from school and asked him to return with his mother for an interview.

At this interview the mother pleaded with the principal to allow the student to return to the school and the teenager promised to try harder at a new work experience placement. This time the co-ordinator arranged for him to work at a restaurant because the teenager had expressed a desire to become a cook. However, his placement in two different restaurants failed because of his inability to follow directions and his rudeness to the staff at his work places. By this time his mother, the work experience co-ordinator, the principal and some of the teachers at the Agency were becoming concerned about the prospects of his holding down a job when he left school in less than three months.
When the student returned after another work experience-related suspension, he was placed with a supermarket to work as a storeman and packer. He seemed to have made a great effort not to repeat his past mistakes at this job. By the end of the second month he was getting very favourable reports from his employer. When he was at school he remarked to the staff how much he liked the new job. He was encouraged to persevere with this placement as he had only a few weeks left for leaving school.

Student 03024 was administered the Gap Reading Comprehension Test a week before his placement at the Agency ended. In it he registered a reading level of 13 years and 8 months - a significant improvement on the 11 years and 1 month that he had registered six months earlier. He used graphophonic and syntactic cues with greater assurance, and showed that his general knowledge had widened in the six months between the two tests. He had knowledge of such comprehension strategies as predicting and scanning the textual context for semantic cues. His teachers reported a greater self-confidence in his approach to reading in public during the weekly Eucharistic Celebrations and in assemblies, a greater interest in using the daily sustained silent reading periods to read short novels, and a greater desire to write stories and read them to his classmates. His social worker felt that he would be able to tackle most of the reading and writing involved in being a working citizen in Australia.

This student left school on 3 December 1989. Soon after Christmas, he obtained a job in a supermarket in his suburb as a storeman and packer on the strength of his most recent work experience. When he was contacted in June 1990, Student 03024 was still working at that job. He told the writer how sometimes he felt like telling his boss "where to go", but had learned to check himself - something he would not even have tried to do a year earlier.
However, by the beginning of 1991, he was retrenched from his job. His boss blamed the serious downturn in business caused by the economic recession for the retrenchment. At the time of writing this report, Student 03024 was living in a youth refuge. Having left home soon after he had lost his job, he had stayed with some other unemployed youth in his area. But because of a series of conflicts with them, he had moved into an inner city squat, i.e., an unoccupied, derelict dwelling from which no landlord collected rent. Some of the staff members from the Agency had noticed him during this period, looking unkempt and depressed. Finally, he had been admitted to the youth refuge where he was slowly regaining his self-esteem and was actively searching for employment.

(c) Comments

This student is typical of the teenagers in the study whose emotional problems seem to have started with some traumatic incident in their childhood. This case study also reveals the need for effective early intervention. This student was identified as having serious emotional and behaviour problems by the time he was in Grade Three, but specialised help for the resolution of his problems was provided only when he reached Grade Eight. Naturally, by then many of his behaviour patterns had become entrenched, as had the dynamics in his family. This makes the task of the special school - the social work aspect, the residential aspect and the educational aspect - all the more difficult. Thus, in the case of Student 03024, as his family situation had not changed in any significant way during his placement in the Agency, his return at the end of his School Certificate Year to his mother's household had not worked out successfully. The current economic recession which has thrown almost a million Australians out of work has also dealt this teenager's job prospects a
crushing blow. However, the fact that he had sought admission in a youth refuge and was actively searching for a job seems to be a hopeful sign.

STUDENT 04032 (15 YEARS 9 MONTHS)

(a) Family and Educational Background

When he was eight weeks old, this student was abandoned by his mother - a teenage single-parent - and he was brought up by his grandparents. They live in one of the Western suburbs of Sydney (postcode 2170), and get by on the age pension. Student 04032's behaviour problems came to the attention of school authorities soon after he started primary school. By the time he was in high school, he was truanting regularly, stealing from his classmates, absconding from home and, generally, showing very poor social skills. He was not violent, but attracted the attention of violent peers by his passive and submissive nature, and he showed all the signs of being withdrawn and depressed.

(b) In the Agency's Program

When he was assessed on the Gap Reading Comprehension Test in May 1989, Student 04032 registered 11 years 6 months. He had serious difficulties in the use of syntactic and semantic cues, and the only comprehension strategy he could think of was to consult the dictionary or ask the teacher for the meaning of difficult words. But because of his shy, withdrawn nature, asking the teacher for help with his comprehension problems was not a strategy that he would be inclined to use often. Besides casting blame on his previous teachers, this student blamed his home and behaviour problems for the gap of 4 years and 3 months in his reading, compared to his age peers. He considered himself a
poor learner who could not concentrate on any learning task for more than a few minutes, and said that he felt puzzled about his lack of motivation to learn.

When he was reviewed for the first time, the key staff felt that he should be helped to overcome his problem with bed-wetting because it was embarrassing for him and made him the object of ridicule among his peers. They also felt that since he showed good physical co-ordination, he should be encouraged to participate in a variety of sports and games. It was felt that this would help to draw him out of his shell, give him more self-confidence, and develop his physique because he was unusually thin and small for his age.

One important factor that Student 04032 had in his favour was the unswerving dedication of his grandparents. They made it a point to turn up for every school function, and were vocal in their support for the teenager during swimming and athletic competitions. However, both of them were getting on in years, and were on medication for cardiovascular problems. In fact, a few months after the teenager was admitted to the Agency, his grandmother passed away. This was a cruel blow for the boy as she had been a mother to him all his life. It plunged him into a period of depression, and it took his grandfather and the staff at the school a considerable and prolonged effort to enable him to realise that his life has to go on.

In the months that followed, he established a working relationship with his living unit co-ordinator - a religious brother in his mid-thirties, who was prepared to give him the attention and sympathy he craved for, and react calmly and with patience to the constant test to which the teenager subjected the relationship.
He also started participating in a variety of sports and recreational activities such as soccer, swimming and horse-riding. He showed a natural flair for soccer and at one of the Review Meetings it was suggested that his social worker should help to get him registered in a soccer club close to the suburb where his grandfather lived, so that he would be able to play in weekend soccer competitions. This was duly done and, in the weeks that followed, the teenager used to look forward to his weekend soccer matches.

Student 04032's work experience was concentrated entirely in the catering field. His ambition was to be a chef, and he worked hard at making sure that there was minimum disruption to his placement with various restaurants in the area covering postcode 2107. The Work Experience co-ordinator in the school remarked that he received encouraging reports from his bosses, saying that he was punctual, reliable and ready to follow directions; their only criticism being that he was very shy and quiet, and that he did not show much initiative in what he was prepared to do. It was hoped that these problems would be solved as he grew older and gained in self-assurance.

Midway through 1989, Student 04032's review team noted that he was having problems with his grandfather. The latter is a stern disciplinarian and the teenager was standing up to him, insisting on his right to come and go as he pleased. There was even an incident when the teenager in his fury pushed his grandfather against a wall, and a hole was punched into it. It took the social worker and the living unit co-ordinator considerable effort to make the boy realise that it was because the grandfather cared about him that he insisted on knowing when and where he went out with his friends.
It was also at this time that this teenager's mother moved into an adjoining suburb and contact was established between the two. Initially, this was much against the wishes of the grandfather, who feared that no good would come out of such a contact. The teenager, however, was insistent that he wished to see his mother regularly. Many of his illusions about the mother were to be shattered: he found that his mother was an alcoholic, that she loved to go out to the pub at night, and that for her he was just a convenient baby-sitter for her two little daughters. Over the months that followed, he started visiting her less frequently, and by the end of the year, was seeing her only every fourth weekend. His social worker informed the researcher that this teenager still keeps in touch with his mother, that he seems to have accepted her for what she is, and says that he is glad to have got to know her.

In the Gap Reading Comprehension Test administered to Student 04032 just before he left the program, he registered 13 years and 8 months in his reading level. This result bore ample testimony to the effort which this teenager had put into improving his comprehension skills. His English teacher had also observed that Student 04032 had developed a growing interest in reading, especially science fiction.

Since leaving school, the employment history of Student 04032 has had more than its share of ups and downs. He started by working in a pizza parlour close to his grandfather's house, but the business closed down a few months later. Since then he has worked on a casual basis in a restaurant in a near-by suburb. At last report, in spite of an economic recession which has been described as the worst in Australia since the Great Depression, Student 04032 was actively searching for a permanent position in restaurants anywhere in the western suburbs of Sydney.
(c) Comments

Student 04032 was relatively fortunate because of the fact that although he had suffered the trauma of rejection from his mother, he had caring grandparents to nurture him during the crucial early years of his life. As in the case of practically every student in this study, this teenager would have benefited from early intervention. It is regrettable that the New South Wales Government does not provide the funding necessary for setting up the mechanisms whereby children at risk of emotional damage and those who are acting out can be identified and helped during the early primary years.

As has been stated in the comments following the first case study, the staff at the Agency take special care to identify the positive qualities in a student so that these can be strengthened and can act as an impetus for the student to strive towards the attainment of other positive qualities. In the case of Student 04032, his physical co-ordination and his interest in sports were targeted with a view to encouraging him to acquire even greater skills in these areas. The improved self-confidence which follows from this approach, then enables teenagers like Student 04032 to try harder in other areas of their lives such as the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills.
STUDENT 05044 (AGE 14 YEARS 11 MONTHS)

(a) Family and Educational Background

At the time that Student 05044 came to the Agency, he was almost six feet tall with a frame to match, and though he was barely 15, it was easy to mistake him for a seventeen-year old. He lives with his mother in one of the western suburbs of Sydney (postcode 2148). His mother is a nurse and his natural father is a prison warden. The parents separated when the boy was in Grade Five because the mother could not tolerate any more the father's tendency to subject her and the boy to extreme physical violence. The student in turn was showing symptoms of disturbance early in his schooling by becoming viciously violent towards his classmates. By Fourth Grade, he had physically attacked not only some of his peers but also one of the male teachers. After this incident he was seen regularly by a psychiatrist.

When this teenager reached high school, his behaviour deteriorated further. He was in constant trouble for defying his teachers, and for being aggressive and violent with his peers. His school counsellor described him as being "depressed" and having "very poor social skills". At home, he did what he liked because his mother could not control him, and he made friends with the local delinquents with whom he spent most of his time after school and on weekends. By the time he was starting Year Nine, this student had incurred a series of suspensions from school for his behaviour, and it was at this juncture that he was admitted to the Agency.

(b) In the Agency's Program

The first Review Meeting described Student 05044 as "extremely volatile and defiant". He was reported to be suspicious of adults, tense, and
unable to mix with his peers. "Can't get a smile out of him", was a common comment from his class teacher. His living unit co-ordinator found that he could not "keep order in his room if his life depended on it", that he would wash and shower only after much persuasion, and that, as a consequence, he was shunned by his peers.

The Gap Reading Comprehension Test administered to him prior to his admission to the Agency showed that at age 14 years 11 months he was reading at the level of 10 years and 11 months. He seemed to experience severe problems with the use of syntactic and semantic cues; his comprehension strategies needed to be developed, and he admitted that his motivation for learning was extremely low. He considered himself to be a poor learner and the only thing he could find to admire in himself was his ability to fight.

After several months in the program, certain changes began to be noticed in this student's behaviour. He began to develop a positive relationship with his teacher (female, aged 34, with an extremely patient and friendly nature). He began to be a little more motivated to complete his weekly learning contracts; he started seeing himself as bright enough to do the Intermediate Year Nine Mathematics Course; and he began to put his energies to good use by joining in a variety of activities such as tennis, basketball and swimming.

Also around this time, according to the Review Meetings and his social worker, his relationship with his mother began to improve: there were fewer incidents of defiance, fewer quarrels and temper tantrums, a greater willingness to see the mother's point of view.
Another significant development was the re-establishment of contact with his father. Remembering only too well the incidents of physical abuse earlier in his life, the student was extremely apprehensive about meeting his father again. However, over a number of weekends, father and son were able to establish what the boy's social worker termed "a reasonably cordial form of relationship". The boy remarked to this researcher how his 'old man' would not touch him now that he was as tall and as strong as the father. Nevertheless, he went on to admit that he was still scared of his father.

This re-establishment of his contact with his father created new problems between the boy and his mother. His father, perhaps feeling guilty about the way he had ill-treated his son in the past, was now giving him generous sums of pocket money and allowing him to do as he pleased. On the other hand, during his weekends with his mother the boy found her strict about his behaviour and not as generous as his father with his pocket money. He started comparing his mother unfavourably with the father, and threatening to leave her to stay permanently with the father.

This problem was only resolved when it was brought to light during a Review Meeting, and the social worker was able to persuade the father that it was in his son's best interests not to undermine his relationship with the mother. Over a period of months, therefore, a more even-handed approach to the boy was adopted by both the parents, and this reduced significantly the boy's problems with his mother on weekends.

When he came to Year Ten, Student 05033's choice of work experience showed that he was keenly interested in machines, and was practical and deft with his hands. His work for three different firms produced reports which
acknowledged these qualities, and indicated that motor mechanics would be an area which he could pursue with good prospects of success. Generally, therefore, this student was judged to be benefiting from the work experience program.

These positive developments were marred by the student's tendency to react violently to the slightest provocation from his peers. He was warned on numerous occasions not to fight with other boys and was suspended once. On that occasion he was on a school excursion to Sydney's Taronga Park Zoo, and stepped in to help a classmate to assault a teenager from a different school. This incident was considered very serious because of a number of factors: a knife had been produced during the fight, and the student from the other school who had not in any way provoked the incident, had his life threatened. After Student 05044 returned from his suspension, because of the grave nature of this incident, the staff decided that he should be detained in school during all outings for two terms, at the end of which there would be a further review to see if he had gained adequate self control to resist involvement in fights. He was also asked to undergo a set of counselling sessions with his social worker about the need for developing alternative strategies for sorting out disagreements with others.

According to Student 05044, this incident was a turning point in his life. He decided that fighting is not a smart option, that he should not get involved in other people's fights, and that he should adopt a more patient and conciliatory approach to the conflicts which involved him personally.

It is an indication of his increasing self-control, that this student kept out of major fights for the rest of the school year in spite of numerous provocations
from boys who knew how quickly he used to lose his temper and lash out with his fists. He told this researcher that none of those boys were worth risking his future and his School Certificate for. Instead, he reacted with crude and obscene verbal abuse of his tormentors, but refused to be physically violent.

When Student 05044 took the Gap Reading Comprehension Test a week before he left the program, he registered 12 years and 6 months - which was an improvement from the 10 years and 11 months he had registered just a year earlier. He had lost his reluctance to read, and in fact had acquired a taste for the "Hardy Boys" series of adventure stories. He also liked to read instruction manuals for repairing and maintaining petrol engines. He took a prominent role in the drama production that was staged at the Shop-front Theatre in Carlton, New South Wales in 1989. He had learned that the purpose of reading is comprehension, and that for understanding a text one uses such strategies as predicting, skimming, and backward and forward referencing. He had learned to use the newspaper for information regarding jobs in his field, and had gained sufficient confidence over writing to be able to express himself in stories which he was proud to read to the whole school community during the Special Assemblies. Although his use of semantic cues showed that there were serious gaps in his general knowledge, he was aware of the use that could be made of the cue systems, and how he could learn to use them more efficiently. In short, he was aware of his ability to become an increasingly competent reader because he had proved to himself that he was an adequate learner.

According to the information provided by his social worker at the time of writing this report, Student 05044 lives with his mother, but sees his father on a regular basis; he was beginning the third year of a four-year apprenticeship in
motor mechanics, and he had told the social worker that his work was hard but very interesting.

(c) Comments

Student 05044 is one of the cases where the curricular interventions seem to have produced the desired effects. A very important factor in this was the attitude of his parents who became increasingly more co-operative with the Agency as they started seeing the positive changes in their son's behaviour. The contact with the father which was re-established through the efforts of one of the social workers from the Agency, played a crucial role in healing the emotional scars left from past episodes of physical abuse. The initial difficulties experienced by the student and his parent after his first few contacts with his father were worth enduring because of the lasting benefits they produced in terms of the youngster's emotional well-being.

When Student 05044 left the Agency at the beginning of December 1989, the discharge summary about him from his social worker noted that the months that he had spent in the Agency had "enabled him
- to develop a more stable relationship with his mother;
- to re-establish contact with his natural father and work at developing this key relationship; and
- to muster the academic and attitudinal skills necessary to find and hold on to an apprenticeship in motor mechanics".

This is no mean achievement on the teenager's part when we recall the depressed, angry, defiant, violence-prone, semi-literate youngster who had been admitted to the Agency just over a year earlier.
(a) Family Background

At the time of his admission to the Agency, Student 06052 lived with his mother, her young adult male friend and four siblings in a cottage provided by the NSW Department of Housing in one of the south-western suburbs of Sydney (postcode 2564). Before 1987, the family unit (with a succession of adult males) had lived at seven other addresses in the western suburbs of Sydney.

(b) School History

Student 06052 has been enrolled at 9 different schools since he commenced his education in 1980. According to the school counsellor, "recorded comments by his primary school teachers indicated that, overall, his application and behaviour were satisfactory, though his absenteeism caused concern at times. Academically, he achieved fluctuating results, with reading difficulties evident."

Student 06052 was further disadvantaged by his artificial left eye and a hearing deficit in his left ear.

His absenteeism resulted in the intervention of the Home School Liaison Officer (HSLO) from the time his family arrived at their current address. For example, he attended 7 days out of a possible 46 at his primary school from October to December 1987. Since enrolling in high school, he had attended only 5 days in the first six months of 1988.
His school behaviour deteriorated on the rare occasions when he did attend school. At the last primary school that he attended in the suburb where the family currently resides, Student 06052 was, in the words of his school counsellor, "obstructive, abusive and on one occasion, refused to enter the classroom, abused and swore at the teachers and the principal, and threatened violence against the teachers."

At a Conciliation Conference held in June 1988, in which the District School Counsellor, the HSLO, the Year Seven Supervisor and the parent were present, it was decided that a placement for this student should be sought at the Agency.

(c) In the Agency's Program

Once admitted, Student 06052 adjusted relatively quickly to the staff and to the other students. He seemed to relish the fact that he had for the first time in years a well ordered life with regular times for meals, study and recreation, and that the staff appeared to be keen to give him the attention for which he craved. He scored consistently high on the weekly reports from his class teacher and his living unit co-ordinator.

Student 06052's reading skills were assessed by means of the Gap Reading Comprehension Test on 1 February 1990. At that time he was 14 years and 6 months, and he registered 9 years and 5 months on the standardised test. An analysis of his responses to the test revealed that he experienced severe difficulties in using the graphophonic, syntactic and semantic cue systems, and that he had hardly any knowledge of simple comprehension strategies such as predicting, and confirming or denying the prediction by means of backward and/or forward referencing.
When Student 06052 was in Year 10, he was eager to do his weekly work experience at a hairdressing salon. Accordingly, a placement was arranged for him with a hairdresser in Sylvania, a large suburb some 15 kilometres north of Engadine. The teenager had to take public transport from the Agency to Sylvania. However, according to the work experience co-ordinator in the Agency, this placement fell through as the student was not adequately motivated to take the trouble of catching the public transport, but would wait for a lift in the work experience co-ordinator's car. This would mean that he had to wait for the co-ordinator to come to the Agency at 9 a.m. and then give him a lift to the salon, the result being that he was regularly late for work. When he was at the salon, this student was so rude to the girls who worked there that they requested the Agency to terminate his work experience placement with them.

A second placement - this time with a firm of panel beaters - was arranged for Student 06052. He was to report to work from home every morning for a week. He attended for two days, and during those two days, his employer noticed that he had brought no lunch with him nor did he have any money to buy his lunch. His employer then made arrangements for the teenager to be provided with a lunch. However, he refused to turn up to work from the third day. No amount of persuasion from the staff of the Agency was able to make the teenager change his mind. Again, his social worker, his class teacher and his living unit co-ordinator tried to persuade him to continue with his School Certificate studies. However, the youngster was adamant that he did not want to return to school. In fact, he came to the Agency on a weekend in April 1991, when the rest of the students were at home, and packed his bags and left.
In a Gap Reading Comprehension Test which the student took on 21 March 1998 when he was 15 years and 7 months old, he registered a reading level of 10 years and 7 months. As far as the scores from the tests were concerned, Student 06052 had made little headway in improving his reading comprehension. The gap of 5 years and 1 month that had become apparent as a result of the first test was barely narrowed to just 5 years in the thirteen months that had elapsed between the first and second test. As his teachers complained, Student 06052's motivation fluctuated erratically, and his home situation continued to deteriorate during the time that he was in the Agency. By the time he left the school, his mother had another baby by a new de facto husband, the family had moved to an outer western suburb of Sydney, his younger brother was in serious trouble with the police, and his mother was beginning to repeat a pattern of behaviour which included leaving the children in the house completely on their own while she spent several days visiting her sister in one of the northern suburbs of Sydney.

According to the Transition Co-ordinator who has the responsibility for following up ex-students and helping them with school and job placements, Student 06052 is neither studying nor working. He stays at home, is very depressed, and his mother is concerned that he shows little motivation to do anything for himself, that he is in constant conflict with her and with his siblings, and that he may be spending his social security cheques on drugs.

(d) Comments

Student 06052 represents those cases where the intervention from the Agency seems to have resulted in little change in the behaviour or learning patterns of the teenager. As has been pointed out, if in spite of the best efforts of the school the dynamics of the family do not change for the better, or if these
dynamics deteriorate as happened in the case of Student 06052, then the probability is that the placement itself will fail. This is because the program at the Agency is based on the assumption that to bring positive changes in the life of the teenager and on his pattern of learning, there has to be a modification in the ecosystem in which he operates, and the most important factor in this ecosystem is his family. In the case of Student 06052, his behaviour and his motivation to complete Year 10 deteriorated simultaneously with the increasing deterioration in the dynamics of his family. When the anxiety and anger raised by what is going on at home is all-engrossing, it becomes impossible for the teenager to listen to well-meaning adults who urge him to follow reason and common-sense, and to do what might be best for his own future.

STUDENT 07057 (13 YEARS 11 MONTHS)

(a) Family Background

At the time that this student first came to the attention of the Agency, he was living with his grandmother in one of the southern suburbs of Sydney (postcode 2036). His parents had divorced and his father had re-married. The father was a fairly successful businessman and he lived with his new wife in a nearby suburb. The mother was in continual poor health and it was because of her inability to look after the boy due to her failing health that he lived with his grandmother. Soon after the teenager was admitted to the Agency, the mother was diagnosed with an advanced stage of cancer. Her specialists predicted that, at best, she had a couple of years to live.
(b) School Background

The student first came to the attention of school authorities when he started high school. The school councillor's report, dated 21 February 1990, speaks of this student experiencing severe problems in his relations with his peers and in his dealings with female teachers. He was seen by the clinical psychologists from the local Community Health Centre. She noted that the student was depressed because of the problems at home, and that his disruptiveness and resentment of authority could be the result of the frustrations that he was experiencing on the home front.

His teachers reported that he was boisterous and off task, and that he experienced difficulties with reading and writing. They also noted his trouble in concentrating on his learning tasks. However, they also reported that he was making friends with other students in the class, and that he was showing an interest in some aspects of the curriculum such as drama.

(c) In the Agency's Program

Soon after being admitted to the Agency, Student 07057 was given the Gap Reading Comprehension Test on 16 November 1990 when he was 13 years and 11 months old. He registered 10 years and 7 months on that test. He had difficulties especially with the use of syntactic and semantic cues and with the simple comprehension strategies. He found it difficult to sit through the fifteen-minute test, and remarked that he hated reading.

Student 07057 was originally placed in a class with other severely disabled readers. His class teacher found that he suffered from wildly fluctuating moods - happy and boisterous one minute and sullen and moody the
next. In her words, "He seemed to go from enthusiasm to apathy to total defiance and back to enthusiasm all in the duration of a thirty-minute period".

Initially, he experienced great difficulty adjusting to the routine of the Agency and resented the role of the social worker as an intrusion on his and his family's life. He also found the first few weekends at home painful because of his mother's deteriorating health and the conflicts he had with his grandmother.

His drama teacher, noticing his interest and ability, selected him to join a group of Year 10 students who were preparing to tour Adelaide with a juggling act. As this group rehearsed everyday, and had to help each other during the rehearsals, they had an excellent opportunity to get to know each other. Student 07057 became quite close to a couple of other performers and to the drama teacher. The Adelaide tour which took place during the Easter weekend of 1991, was a big confidence booster for the teenager. He participated enthusiastically and with skill in the acts, and he got along well with the senior students and with the host family with whom he stayed while the group was in Adelaide.

As the months passed in 1991, the health of this teenager's mother took a turn for the worse and he was deeply affected by it. His moods fluctuated sharply and he complained of difficulties with concentration when he was in class. His weekends with his grandmother became increasingly more painful for both, and he started spending more time with his aunt and her family.

In the meantime, because of moves initiated by the social worker assigned to this student, his father - who had not contacted him for over a year - started taking an interest in his activities. He showed up three times to watch his
son play basketball. In one of his talks with his son, the father told him that he was willing to take full responsibility for the teenager's upbringing provided the youngster was prepared to cut off all relations with the mother and her family "because they are losers and are no use" to the son. The teenager told his social worker that he viewed this offer as completely unfair because his father was asking him to abandon his mother just when she needed him most, and to cut off relations with his grandmother who had stood by him when the father himself had not cared about him. He rejected the father's offer curtly, and as a result, the father stopped contacting the teenager.

Student 07057 started the 1992 school year with determination to do his School Certificate well and worked very hard during the first three weeks. Then his mother was admitted to hospital and her health deteriorated alarmingly. The teenager went to visit her in the hospital and was shocked at how much weight she had lost and how frail she had become. His social worker and class teacher who were very sympathetic to his plight, tried to support him. However, his behaviour deteriorated seriously: he was disruptive, verbally abusive, defiant of the directions of his teachers and quarrelsome with his classmates. He was angry with life and took out his anger on everyone around him. The trauma of his mother's life ebbing away had a profound effect on his moods and behaviour. During those weeks, his social worker used to take him to the large playing fields at the back of the Agency where the teenager felt free to vent his anger by screaming and yelling at the top of his voice. The social worker felt that this method of "letting off steam" helped to calm the student and prepared him to face another day. His living unit co-ordinator found that this student was suffering from nightmares that made him wake up screaming. One night the school nurse had to be summoned because, as the student woke up screaming
from his nightmare, it was found that he was delirious and was running a very high temperature.

During those weeks he continued to attend school, but found it extremely difficult to concentrate on any learning task. A Gap Reading Comprehension Test which he completed on 17 March 1992, when he was 15 years and 2 months old, indicated that his reading level was 11 years and 1 month. He had barely been able to keep his mind on the 15-minute test, and the results showed that he had made little headway since his previous attempt at the time of his placement in the Agency’s program. His teachers in subjects as diverse as science, woodwork, history and music confirmed that this student was experiencing great difficulty concentrating on his learning tasks as well as in maintaining an acceptable standard of behaviour. His relations with the peer group also had suffered as he became increasingly more irritable. According to his social worker, there was little anyone could do but support him and make allowances for his behaviour as he tried to cope with his mother’s approaching end.

Student 07057 left the program at the end of 1992. He had cut off all relations with his grandmother and father. However, he had made friends with a family in Adelaide with whom he was billeted when his class group spent a week in the city in late October. This family made him welcome and found him a green keeper's job. From all accounts, the teenager was enjoying his job and settling down well in Adelaide. However, one weekend he made up his mind to return to Sydney to celebrate his birthday with his mother. He had a stormy meeting with his very sick mother and went off to party with some of his classmates. The party became rowdy and offensive and ended up with six of the teenagers, including Student 07057, being charged with malicious damage to
property. After this eventful weekend the student returned to Adelaide, but was soon back in Sydney to attend court. He has patched up his differences with his grandmother and is currently staying with her and looking for a job in the southern suburbs of Sydney.

His mother passed away in June 1994.

(c) Comments

In the second half of 1992, Student 07057 was going through a critical time in his life and his review panel had decided that the best the school could do for him was to offer him the emotional support that he needed. As is the case with any child whose family is placed under stress because of the terminal illness of one of the parents, this student experienced serious problems coming to terms with the impending loss of his mother, and found it virtually impossible to concentrate on his school work. However, instead of unrealistically insisting that no matter what was happening at home the student should get on with his learning tasks, the staff at the Agency adopted the Maslowian approach of ensuring that the physical and emotional support which the teenager needed was provided without question. There was insistence that the student should put as much effort as possible into his learning tasks and keep to an acceptable standard of behaviour. However, his failures in these areas were treated with understanding. This approach was accompanied by the belief that once this difficult period in his life was over, his qualities of loyalty and diligence would enable the student to catch up with the gaps in his learning.
STUDENT 08067 (14 YEARS 8 MONTHS)

(a) Family Background

At the time of his admission to the Agency, this student lived with his mother in a Housing Commission flat in one of the south western suburbs of Sydney (postcode 2569). (Housing Commission flats are owned by the NSW Government Housing Department and are specifically earmarked for providing low-cost accommodation to families on very low income.) The mother has been a client of the state Department of Family and Community Services for several years as a result of her problems with alcohol abuse and because of the deteriorating relationship between her and her son. She had suffered from severe physical and verbal abuse from some of her male friends, and is described as "an extremely nervous person".

At the time of the student's admission to the Agency, the mother was concerned about the following aspects of his behaviour:

- That her son had become increasingly more violent towards her, necessitating police intervention from the time he was about 12 years of age;
- That her son had refused to attend school and had become verbally abusive when she tried to persuade him to resume his attendance; and,
- That her son had been called to appear before the Children's Court for allegedly victimising a smaller boy, the son of a neighbour.

(b) School Background

Student 08067, like several teenagers in this study, had a record of behaviour and learning problems stretching back to the beginning of primary school. He had been in three primary schools, the changes having been necessitated because of his rude and aggressive behaviour towards his teachers,
and because of his tendency to pick fights with his fellow-pupils. He started high school in 1987 and his school reports indicated that he experienced difficulty in settling down to the routine of the local high school. Several teachers complained about his lack of application to school work and about his arriving ill-equipped for lessons.

His teacher noted that in the class room Student 08067 often sat by himself and was very unhappy with his peers. They victimised and teased him about the lies which he told in order to gain their attention and sympathy. His teacher described him as "immature, highly strung and clingy". One of his teachers reported an incident in her classroom when the student "fell backwards off his chair and hit his head against the wall. The knock was not severe yet he cried almost uncontrollably and lay on the floor for about five or six minutes".

(c) In the Agency's Program

The class teacher with whom he was placed on his admission to the Agency described his first days as rebellious, frightened and full of complaints about being victimised by the other students in the class. As for his attitude to learning, the teacher noted that getting school work out of Student 08067 "was like getting blood out of stone". Like his teachers from previous schools, this teacher also remarked that the teenager seemed to thrive on positive feedback and was easy to talk to on a one-to-one basis.

Student 08067 was given the Gap Reading Comprehension Test in September 1989 when he was 14 years and 8 months old. He registered a reading level of 9 years and 11 months. He used the graphophonic cues adequately. However, he was one of the students who believed that reading means pronouncing each word correctly, and had little appreciation of the need
to understand what he was reading. His skills in the use of syntactic and semantic cues were inadequate, and he hardly used such comprehension strategies as predicting, and confirming or rejecting the prediction on the basis of what he learned from the text.

His class teacher's efforts to get him interested in improving his reading skills were met with some resistance as the teenager was hyperactive, could not sit still in class even for a few minutes, and said that he was worried about his mother's problems with alcohol. He was particularly concerned about the fact that his mother had a habit of walking home from the local hotel late at night, usually drunk, and could be the target of an attack by local hoodlums. In fact, on one night a few months earlier, his mother had been bashed and left bleeding on the street.

His social worker made a number of home visits with a view to helping the mother. However, the mother refused to acknowledge that she had any problem with alcohol, and said that she considered herself a social drinker and that there was no way she would stop going to the local hotel. She was also adamant that she would have nothing to do with Alcoholics Anonymous. However, the social worker was able to contact Student 08067’s older brother who lived in a near by suburb with his young family, and persuade him to make regular visits to his mother so that in case of an emergency, he could come to her aid very quickly.

This arrangement helped to reduce the student's anxiety about his mother. By this time, he was also becoming interested in a variety of after-school activities which could channel his energies into the acquisition of a range of sporting skills. He showed a keenness for horse riding and was encouraged
to spend his spare time at the paddock riding the horses and caring for them. Bicycling was another interest he developed during this time. During the hour-long afternoon activities after classes each day, Student 08067 went on supervised bicycle rides around the local area and in the Royal National Park in the company of other interested students and a residential care worker. This student, realising that he possessed excellent eye-hand co-ordination, also started showing an interest in tennis, basketball, volleyball and the trampoline. He picked up basic skills in each of these areas, so that he could use his leisure time more positively. These activities also presented him with opportunities for making friends among his fellow-students and for interacting well with some of the teenagers from the local community.

As he reached Year 10 and was preparing for the School Certificate, his class teacher remarked on Student 08067’s interest in trying to work on completing his weekly learning contracts. His work-experience co-ordinator also noted that he was keen to become a chef and organised work experience for him at a local fast food outlet. After he had completed this placement with good reports from his employer, a second work experience was organised for him at a local restaurant. But at this time, as described below, his home situation started deteriorating. Student 08067 was caught spraying graffiti on the restaurant walls and was dismissed by his employer. Another placement in a furniture factory came to an abrupt end when the student hurt his hand on one of the machines.

These were the months when his home situation started to change for the worse. His mother’s alcohol abuse became more pronounced and his weekends became increasingly more difficult. During one of these weekends Student 08067 was charged with assaulting his mother and with sexually interfering with a neighbour's child. The latter charge was later dropped by the
parents who did not want their six-year old son to be "dragged through the courts".

During these weeks, there was a dramatic regression in the student's behaviour. He lost interest in all the activities in which he had participated with such enthusiasm. He started spending recreation time sitting in some corner all by himself, or picking fights with other students. His behaviour in class deteriorated significantly. He became defiant when directed to go on with his schoolwork, and, on several occasions, swore and stormed out of his classroom when he could not get his own way, or when the teacher insisted that he should follow directions like other students. He became increasingly angry with the people around him, and began to be caught vandalising school property and disfiguring walls, desks and exercise books with graffiti. He spent several weeks suspended from school for some of these activities, but returned after these suspensions without any noticeable change in his behaviour.

Student 08067 was given the Gap Reading Comprehension Test on 28 November 1990, less than a week before he was due to finish school. He was 15 years and 10 months old at that time and he registered a reading level of 10 years and 7 months. He was one student in whose case the gap between his chronological age and his reading level had widened from the 4 years and 9 months that had been noted at the end of his first test in September 1989, to 5 years and 3 months by the time he was tested just before he left the Agency. The interest which he was beginning to show in reading articles and books about basketball, had suddenly vanished as the problems at home worsened. This student, who had been an eager volunteer for reading in the chapel during the daily prayers and during the weekly Eucharistic Celebrations, had become too upset and too depressed to volunteer for public reading.
Student 08067 left the Agency at the end of the 1990 School Year. His social worker has informed the researcher that his current whereabouts are unknown, that his mother had moved from her old address and that the neighbours had no idea where she lived. Attempts to trace this student have so far drawn a blank.

(d) Comments

Student 08067 bears out the belief that unless the family dynamics change for the better, it is difficult for the teenager to improve in such key areas of his own life as his learning patterns or his behaviour. This is especially true if the single parent on whose care the teenager depends is affected by alcohol or drug abuse, and is unwilling to change her behaviour or even to acknowledge that a problem exists. Student 08067 was responding positively to various aspects of the Agency program, and was making progress both in his behaviour and in his attitude to learning, but as soon as his mother's alcoholism became more serious, his motivation for self-improvement nose-dived. As in the case of Student 06052, all the efforts of concerned adults in the Agency fell on deaf ears, because the teenager was angry and upset about what was happening with his mother. The curriculum implication from this case study is that the school would be more effective in teaching an emotionally disturbed child, if it has structured into its organization effective ways of liaising with the family. Apart from enabling the school to be kept informed of the dynamics of the family, such a structure would make it possible for the school to help the family by putting it in touch with community health and welfare organizations which may be able to provide assistance.
STUDENT 09074 (15 YEARS 7 MONTHS)

(a) Family Background

At the time of his admission to the Agency, this teenager lived with his natural father and stepmother in one of the southern suburbs of Sydney (postcode 2020). His natural mother left the family when he was a toddler and he has been raised by his stepmother. He has a close relationship with the stepmother but, according to the report of a social worker from the Department of Family and Community Services, he "has expressed deep hurt at being abandoned by his natural mother". A Specialist School Counsellor's report dated November 1988 notes that Student 09074 had "not seen his natural mother for the past two years" and goes on to remark, "it is significant that his behaviour has deteriorated in that time."

In the opinion of his stepmother as reported by his school counsellor, this teenager's behaviour at home was "demanding and attention-seeking". He resented any attempt on her part to deal with his behaviour. According to an assessment completed prior to this student's admission to the Agency, when he was younger, he used "to respond amicably to direction and limits set by his father. This amicable response had steadily deteriorated to the stage where the youngster would not obey anybody." Since he felt unable to control or direct his son, the father withdrew from the role of disciplinarian. The stepmother then acted as the disciplinarian, but this only led to more resentment and even open rebellion. By the time this student was admitted to the Agency, his father and stepmother were desperate because of the teenager's deteriorating behaviour both at home and at school.
(b) **Educational Background**

According to the Specialist School Counsellor's report written in November 1988, this student first came to the attention of the special education teacher for emotionally disturbed children "following his second suspension from South Sydney Boys' High School. He was involved in attention-seeking disruptive behaviour which was not responding to intervention". He was referred for a psychiatric assessment at the Prince of Wales Hospital's Adolescent Unit and was seen by a psychologist at the local Child Health Centre. A psychometric assessment carried out at the Centre in 1989 indicated that this student had no organic dysfunction or learning difficulty. However, it did indicate "a low level of tolerance for frustration and this suggests a limited achievement drive and a disinterest in learning or related challenges."

Just prior to his enrolment in the Agency this teenager had truanted six weeks out of a ten-week school term. He was unable to tell his social worker why he had truanted. It was known that he did not have any friends in his school, and that no one from his peer group ever came over to his house. His stepmother reported that he had no hobbies or interests, but spent his spare time in his room, drawing or listening to music.

(c) **In the Agency Program**

Student 09074 was given the Gap Reading Comprehension Test in February 1991 when he was 15 years and 7 moths old. He registered a reading level of 9 years and 7 months. He had serious difficulty using the cue systems. He seems to have scant regard for the syntactic appropriateness of the words he selected, and an analysis of his answers revealed that the prior knowledge that he brought to his reading was of a very narrow range. Like many other students
in this study, this teenager volunteered the information that it was "boring to read" and that he "hated reading".

Student 09074's first few months in the program were marked by much conflict with his living unit co-ordinator and with his class teacher. He resented their attempts to direct his behaviour, and rebelled against such restrictions as not being allowed to wander off to the shopping centre whenever he wanted, or not being allowed to smoke when he felt like having a cigarette. On the other hand, being something of an expert on motorbikes and cars, he looked forward to the period between 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. everyday when he could ride motorbikes on the Agency's property as part of the after-school activities. However, there was one problem: because every student in the program wanted to ride the motorbikes, they were used as part of the positive reinforcement system of the school. Hence, preference was given to those students who had good reports from their class teachers and living unit co-ordinators. Soon Student 09074 learned that if he wanted to use the bikes, he would have to try harder to improve his behaviour in the living unit and in the classroom.

As the months passed, this teenager was having more frequent opportunities for using the motorbikes. This was an indication that he was indeed making the effort to reduce his temper tantrums and his foul language, to co-operate more with his teachers and his living unit supervisors, and to get along better with the other students.

At one of the review meetings held to monitor his placement, his social worker reported that his conflicts with his stepmother were becoming less frequent. However, she also reported that he was still very hurt by the fact that his natural mother had not made any effort to contact him since 1986, and that
she had spurned his tentative efforts to reach out to her. This made the youngster very depressed. He would refuse to participate in class discussions on family relationships, or would fly into a rage and scream that his mother was "a slut" and that he "hated her guts". His relationship with his natural mother was indeed an area that needed to be sorted out. However, the approaches which the teenager's social worker made in order to get the natural mother interested in seeing her son met with little success. The mother told the social worker that she had a new family, that she was determined to leave behind whatever had happened in the past, and that she wanted to have nothing to do with the teenager.

Learning of this, his stepmother became even more protective of the youngster. The review panel noted that this teenager was fortunate because he had the full support and loyalty of his natural father and stepmother. During their frequent meetings with the teachers, they reported that the teenager was becoming more pleasant to have around on weekends, and that he spent much of his spare time tinkering around with an old car they had in the backyard.

For his weekly work experience as a Year 10 student, he chose to work in a mechanic's garage. According to the work experience co-ordinator at the school, "At first he did not know how to behave at work and needed constant supervision. During the first half of the year he hoped he would get a job as a mechanic in the garage where he worked. When the boss refused, the teenager wanted to change his work experience placement." Student 09074 then worked for a smash repairer. He found the boss more helpful and the work more suited to his ability. However, even at this place, there were some Mondays when the teenager did not show up for work. The work experience co-ordinator echoes
the opinion of many of his teachers when she remarked that this teenager has "always been lazy" and that he "needs short-term rewards".

Student 09074's reading comprehension was tested on 28 November 1991, a week before he was due to leave the Agency after finishing his Year 10 studies. He was 16 years and 3 months old by then, and he registered a comprehension level of 10 years and 9 months. He had made some improvement since his last test at the beginning of the 1991 school year, and from a total dislike of books, he had developed an interest in reading war stories and motoring magazines; he had shown more willingness to read in public, especially during the weekly Eucharistic Celebrations; and, he had become a much less reluctant writer. His stepmother remarked that whereas he would seldom read anything when he was at home, he had started taking his father's *Street Machine* magazines to his room.

When this teenager left the Agency at the end of 1991, he was given a job at a smash repairer's workshop. When last contacted, he was still holding down that job. He was staying with his father and stepmother, and his social worker reported that although there was occasional friction between the teenager and his stepmother, they were getting along "better than before".

**(d) Comments**

This student was fortunate in that he could rely on the care and commitment of his natural father and stepmother. Their unwavering support for him was in some ways able to make up for the hurt he had suffered because of the rejection which he experienced from his natural mother. The improvement which took place in his behaviour and his attitude to learning, as well as the motivation he showed for obtaining an apprenticeship and holding on to it, are
all indications of the possibilities which open up to teenagers who are able to re-establish viable relationships with key adults in their lives during their stay at the Agency.

STUDENT 10085 (14 YEARS 11 MONTHS)

(a) Family Background

At the time of his admission to the Agency, this teenager lived with his younger brother, his mother and her de facto husband in one of the southwestern suburbs of Sydney (postcode 2564). He claimed that his behaviour and school problems dated from the time his parents divorced in 1983. Two years later, his father committed suicide. Student 10085 was deeply affected by this family tragedy, especially because the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) had denied his father access to the boy just days before the suicide. Student 10085 has told this writer as well as other staff members at the school how he felt guilty about his father's suicide because he had not been able to see the father just when the latter had needed him most. Subsequently, there has been further involvement by FACS with this family because of the mother's attempted suicide and because of the problems she was facing in controlling the teenager and his younger brother.

The family has moved several times since coming to settle in their present suburb, and they currently occupy a state government Housing Commission apartment. The family finances are dependent on the Supporting Mother's Pension provided by the Commonwealth Government's Department of Social Security. There has been much tension because of the mother's alcoholism and the violence of her de facto husband. Student 10085 has stressed
that he is unhappy with the way the de facto husband treats his mother. On one occasion, the student, with the help of some of his friends from the local area, gave a severe beating to the older man for having assaulted his mother. Following this incident, a court order was taken out against the student and it stipulated that he had to get his mother's permission to go out of the house. According to the mother, this court order has been "broken many times" by the student.

Prior to admission to the Agency, this teenager had moved out of his family home to live at the house of one of his friends because he "could not cope on his own, and because the situation at home had become worse". He complained to the school counsellor that his mother was drinking heavily and that his home life was a series of fights among the four members of the family.

(b) School Background

While at primary school, Student 10085 was reported to the authorities for truanting, and was cautioned about a number of fights with his peers. Once he started high school, his truanting behaviour became worse and he was referred to a Home School Liaison Officer (HSLO) who monitored his attendance. At the same time, in the first year of high school, many of his peers complained of being victimised by him. Some parents complained to the principal that their sons were refusing to come to school because they were terrified of the bullying behaviour of the student.

In the report for June 1989 from his local school, his teachers noted his "frequent absences", "his lack of home study", his "lack of concentration on his work" and his inability to work with other students. His local high school followed the practice of ranking students in every subject and Student 10085's school reports show his performance in a very poor light: in a class of 23
students, he was 21st in English, 22nd in Mathematics, and 23rd in Science, History and Geography. His best subjects were Art where he was 8th out of 18, and Physical Education where he was 11th out of 23. His conduct was marked as "unsatisfactory" and in the 10-week term which had preceded the report, he had been absent from school for 23 days.

(c) In the Agency's Program

This teenager was admitted to the Agency in the second half of 1990 and, when tested on the Gap Reading Comprehension Test in November 1990 at the age of 14 years and 11 months, he registered a reading age of 10 years and 11 months. He had difficulties with the use of syntactic and semantic cues, and had only very vague ideas on the use of comprehension strategies.

In his suburb, this teenager had been a victim of the local bullies. However, at the Agency he soon gained a reputation as the aggressor in a number of incidents. The staff noted with some concern his tendency to form little cliques whose main object appeared to be to prey on the younger and less powerful members of the school community. They were also found to be undermining the school spirit by violating school regulations and ridiculing executive members of staff. Student 10085 was given the full benefit of the behaviour modification techniques available to the school but when these measures failed to produce the desired effect, he was suspended from school and asked to return with his mother for an interview with the principal.

At this interview the teenager and his mother promised that there would be a genuine change in his behaviour and attitude if he was allowed to return to the Agency. However, once he had rejoined his group, Student 10085 was back at his old "strong-arm tactics". A number of appointments which his mother
made with the principal were not honoured. Between May and September 1991, the mother had broken 14 appointments. The social worker dealing with the family was concerned that the mother's alcohol abuse was behind the broken appointments, and that she was having serious problems with her de facto husband as well as with her younger son.

At the end of Term three 1991, Student 10085 told the principal that he had decided to leave school. Without waiting for permission from his mother, he came and packed his bags and left the school. During the whole of Term Four he stayed at home and tried to find work, but was unable to do so. His social worker met him and his mother several times during this period, and discovered that he had an aunt - his father's sister - who lived in one of the southern suburbs of Sydney and was prepared to have the teenager living with her family if he wanted to attend the school as a day student. This offer was eagerly accepted by the teenager, and so by the end of 1991, it was decided that he would be re-admitted to the Agency as a day student, and that he would live with his aunt.

This arrangement worked well for a while. However, as the days passed, the student started showing signs that he resented the family rules regarding going out with friends. He quarrelled with his cousins and his aunt, and disappeared for whole weekends without telling his aunt where he was going or with whom he was staying. Because of the turmoil at home, this student's behaviour in the class room was becoming increasingly violent and unacceptable. He was suspended a couple of times for various incidents of assaultive behaviour. After each suspension, he returned to school with his aunt, promising that he would make a serious effort to improve his behaviour. At these meetings, several staff members pointed out to him that his chaotic
weekends were affecting his behaviour during the school week, and that if he made an effort to relate more harmoniously with his aunt and her family, he would find life less bitter and more peaceful.

After the second of these interviews, Student 10085 made a consistent effort to co-operate with his aunt at home and with his teachers in the school. This is borne out by the remarks of his teachers for Term 3 of 1992. In a Gapadol Reading Comprehension Test which the student took when he was 16 years and 2 months old, he registered a reading level of 15 years and 1 month. This meant that in the space of approximately 14 months, Student 10085 had made significant gains in his reading skills. The effort that this student had put into improving his reading skills was now starting to pay dividends, and according to his teachers, his improved literacy skills were helping him to raise his marks in subjects as diverse as mathematics, science, history and woodwork.

At the time of writing this report, Student 10085 was studying for the Higher School Certificate at a local state school. He had left his aunt's family and was living independently with the help of the Commonwealth Government's Austudy allowance. He was reported to be in contact with his mother on weekends.

(d) Comments

As in the case of other teenagers like him, the big change in this student's behaviour and learning came when he made a move from a ecosystem that was detrimental to him, to one that was supportive. His aunt, who has raised four of her own children, was prepared to offer this student the warmth and the structure of her family and this proved the turning point for this student. Obviously, the student experienced difficulties when he was trying to adjust to
his new surroundings. The teenager had been used to living his life as he liked, being out with friends on many late nights and sometimes for whole weekends. With the support and encouragement of his social worker, the aunt and her family made allowances for the teenager, while at the same time showing him that there are alternatives to a chaotic existence, and that life can be orderly and fun at the same time. The staff at the Agency were impressed by the fact that this teenager who had a history of truanting, made it a point to turn up for school regularly and to apply himself to his studies while at school. He is one of the few students in the sample who have decided to widen his career options by studying for the Higher School Certificate.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the case histories of ten students from the original group of one hundred. In the chapter which follows, conclusions are drawn on the data presented in these pages.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

I. A SUMMARY OF THE THESIS

The thesis set out to investigate the possibility of a link between emotional disturbance and reading disability. The starting point for the investigation had been an apparent linkage between emotional disturbance and reading disability which had been noticed by the candidate when he began working some fifteen years ago as a special education teacher in a residential school which is referred to in this study as the Agency.

This investigation was carried out by analysing the socio-economic and educational backgrounds of one hundred emotionally disturbed and reading disabled students who passed through the Agency during a six-year period.

The analysis of the data seemed to point to emotional abuse and the consequent development of a low self-esteem as key factors among a multiplicity of interrelated factors contributing to the maintenance of emotional disturbance and reading disability. The data on emotional disturbance showed how the family structure, the socio-economic situation of the family, the interpersonal dynamics which affected family members, the geographical location of the family and the educational turbulence experienced by the teenagers were some of the contributing factors serving to maintain their emotional disturbance. Likewise, the data on reading disability showed how inadequate literacy instruction in the early years of schooling, the lack of support for literacy in the home, the absence of adequate reading material at home, the
lack of exposure to a variety of practical experiences such as holiday travel, hobbies, live theatre, etc. were inter-related factors in the maintenance of reading disability, as manifested by the problems which the teenagers experienced in the use of the cue systems and in the use of basic comprehension strategies. But the archival data and the interview data showed that in the perception of the teenagers and of the main stakeholders at the Agency, the deprivation of emotional security and the consequent lack of self esteem seemed to be significant and all-pervasive among the inter-related factors mentioned above, in the maintenance of both the emotional disturbance and the reading disability.

It was concluded that the twin problems of emotional disturbance and reading disability could be tackled by means of curricular strategies which

- Improved the teenagers' relationships with the key adults in their lives, thereby strengthening the level of their emotional security; and
- Promoted a healthy self-concept by enabling them to acquire a range of academic, sporting and social competencies.

The final part of the thesis dealt with the outcomes of the curricular strategies on ten of the teenagers. The case studies of these ten students seem to indicate that when the level of their emotional security is strengthened and they are helped to acquire a healthier self-concept, it is reasonable to expect that their behaviour will exhibit fewer symptoms of emotional disturbance and that they will show a greater motivation to engage in learning. However, when positive changes fail to occur in the troubled relationships with the key adults in their lives, or when these relationships deteriorate, these teenagers seem to suffer from some form of emotional distress which was generally accompanied by a debilitating motivational and cognitive blockage. This blockage seem to
prevent any significant level of improvement in their emotionally disturbed behaviour or in their ability to concentrate on learning, including the learning of literacy skills.

At this stage, it is possible to describe the key implications which follow from the thesis:

II. IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND PRACTICE

1. The data collected from the Agency suggest that the distinction between emotional disturbance and reading disability, as it currently appears in the literature, is a false one. The data show that essentially, emotional disturbance and reading disability in the case of students who are diagnosed as "emotionally disturbed", are two manifestations of the same problem, namely, the deprivation of the basic human need for emotional security. It seems to me, therefore, that attempts to separate them as distinct behavioural syndromes could be misleading, and in the long term, unproductive. The review of the literature suggested that researchers had expended much time and energy in seeking for a causal link between emotional disturbance and reading disability, and trying to answer the question "which comes first - emotional disturbance or reading disability?" The data from this investigation, on the other hand, suggest the presence of a whole web of interacting factors which mutually shape and impact on the lives of some children, and contribute towards the maintenance of the emotional and literacy problems under which they function. An important implication from this insight is that emotional problems and learning problems should not be treated in isolation: that an emotionally disturbed student will, in all probability, need special help with his reading, and a seriously reading disabled student will, in all probability, need treatment for emotional and
behaviour problems. The work of psychologists and special education teachers need to go hand in hand with measures aimed at repairing/improving the relationship of the affected child with the key members of his family. Instead of treating the child as "emotionally disturbed" or "learning-disabled", the emphasis should be to assess his whole ecosystem and help to modify the various aspects of the system so that the child can experience the emotional security which, after all, is his human right.

2. The review of the literature as well as the data from the Agency suggest that emotional normality and learning normality are learned, just as emotional abnormality and learning abnormality are learned. When children are brought up in a caring family environment where their fundamental needs for emotional security and for a positive self-concept are satisfied, they seem to be more likely to exhibit emotional normality and learning normality. On the other hand, when the family is dysfunctional, and as a result, the children's need for emotional security and a positive self-concept is persistently thwarted, there seems to be a strong probability that such children will grow up exhibiting patterns of behaviour that are characterised by emotional abnormality and learning abnormality. It follows that it is in the community's best interests if parents are supported and encouraged to provide a nurturing environment in which the relationships between husband and wife and parents and children are allowed to develop unhampered. This again has implications for education because adults can only live according to the ideals which they have accepted and the models from whom they themselves have learned. If we are to change the vicious cycle of violent, alcoholic, unemployable, frustrated adults bringing up violent, substance-abusing, semi-literate, alienated children who in turn will grow up to be like their parents, the community has to provide greater support to the parents who want to work on their relationships and nurture their children in an
emotionally secure family environment. From this perspective, today's high rate of family breakdown augurs ill for a significant number of the next generation of Australians.

3. As suggested by the literature as well as by the data from the site, for normal development to occur, certain fundamental needs should be first satisfied. The satisfaction of these needs is the result of certain social settings, e.g., an environment that ensures physical as well as emotional security. If, for any of a variety of reasons these social settings go wrong, the child from such a family can be damaged emotionally as well as cognitively, i.e., such children may exhibit not only behaviour problems but also learning problems. From an educational point of view, it is crucial that teachers are aware of the social settings from which the children come, and the importance of these settings to the educational success of the children. Without an appreciation of the effect of the social setting on the behaviour and learning patterns exhibited by the child, it may be very difficult for the teacher to provide the necessary understanding and support to the child.

Furthermore, teachers need to be skilled in establishing and maintaining a working relationship with their students which maximises the chances of learning taking place. Just as the right emotional climate in a family is conducive to the emotional and cognitive development of the child, a nurturing and supportive emotional climate in the classroom is conducive to successful learning. A corollary to this is that procedures and programs dealing with the selection and training of teachers should give due consideration to the need for teachers to have an empathy with children, and to be supportive of all children especially those who have been subjected to emotional abuse and who exhibit behaviour problems and learning difficulties.
4. There is a need for a greater awareness of the link between emotional disturbance and reading disability both by schools in general, and by individual teachers in particular. Class teachers, especially those in primary schools, should be aware that by the most conservative estimate of the prevalence of emotional disturbance, there is the possibility that one or two children out of every 30 students in their classrooms may exhibit some form of disturbed and/or disturbing behaviour, and that these students may also have learning problems, especially difficulties with reading. It may not be possible to help these students effectively without an understanding of the emotional deprivations to which they have been subjected. Labelling them as 'lazy', 'aggressive', 'violent', 'moody' or 'defiant', without investigating why they behave the way they do, or perceiving them as culprits rather than as victims, may prompt some teachers to adopt repressive or punitive approaches in dealing with them. Such approaches usually tend to be counter-productive, serving to exacerbate the problem and making these students even less manageable in the classroom.

5. Schools need to be more aware of the importance of early intervention in the cases of those students who are assessed as emotionally disturbed. If they are to be effective, these interventions should focus not only on the child but also on the ecological system in which the child operates. The New South Wales Department of Education has for some years adopted the policy of appointing Home-School Liaison Officers (HSLOs). This is indeed a step in the right direction. The HSLO's role includes liaising with parents/guardians with the aim of rendering the home environment more conducive to the fulfilment of the student's basic needs, so that in the classroom the student may be able to concentrate better on his learning tasks. At the same time, because the HSLO is able to pass on information to the class teacher regarding the prevailing
dynamics in the family background of the disturbed child, it is possible for the teacher to be more sensitive to the feelings and needs of such a child. This service, which at the present time is restricted to the most severely disturbed students who have also a history of truanting, should be widened to include a larger number of students who are assessed by the school as exhibiting serious behaviour and cognitive problems.

6. In the case of the severely disturbed child, there is a need for interventions that are characterised by a multi-disciplinary approach. This is especially true of the students whose families have become dysfunctional. The thesis suggests that the possibility of the condition of such students improving is enhanced by their temporary withdrawal from the family and their placement in a residential setting which provides them and their families with respite from each other. While expert residential care is provided for the student concerned, the social worker handling the case has the opportunity to meet with family members and to help with such modifications in family dynamics as may be necessary to render the family functional, so that the basic physical, psychological and emotional needs of the family members can be fulfilled in the way the family operates. While this work is going on, the professionals in residential care and special education have the opportunity to focus on the social, psychological and intellectual needs of the student.

Students who are exhibiting disturbing/disturbed behaviour will find it difficult to function in a 'normal' classroom setting. Their problem behaviours in the 'normal' classroom may in fact set them up to be labelled as 'different', 'disruptive', 'dumb', etc. These students are also handicapped by the fact that they are likely to be learning-disabled in general and reading-disabled in particular. The frustrations of dealing with learning tasks involving reading will
exacerbate their behaviour problems. The conduct of such students will not permit the rest of the class to pursue their learning activities without disruption, nor will the teacher be able to facilitate the learning activities of her class without constant interruptions from and confrontations with the disturbed students. For this reason, it seems logical that such students should be provided with special classes taught by professionals who are trained to be sensitive to their needs and to adopt those methods that have a chance of maximising their learning. As has been illustrated in the thesis, an inter-disciplinary approach to the amelioration of the total ecosystem may provide the student with the best hope of reducing his emotional disturbance and reading disability.

7. Government funding needs to be maintained and increased so that adequate services can be provided for emotionally disturbed students and their families. It is obvious from the thesis that the socio-economic backgrounds of a very large percent of emotionally disturbed students make them some of the most disadvantaged groups in the Australian community. These are groups that have traditionally been neglected by the Establishment because they do not have the political clout necessary to persuade governments to provide them with better services. As described in the thesis, these students and their families perceive the government in very negative terms and they are alienated from the rest of the community because they think of that community as the cause of their problems. The governments of certain political persuasions, on the other hand, take the attitude that if certain families are poor and disadvantaged, it is largely their own fault, and government spokesmen have over the years encouraged community perceptions of these people as "dole bludgers", "welfare cheats", "no-hopers", etc. A re-thinking of welfare policies along principles of equity would be a first step in ensuring that these students are provided with the services that would
give them the same opportunities for productive and useful lives as their more fortunate peers.

8. Allied to the need for maintaining funding for adequate educational services for emotionally disturbed students, is also the need to empower disadvantaged groups in the suburbs. Community services in suburbs with a high concentration of NSW Department of Housing Commission houses and flats need to take into consideration the recreational needs of the thousands of adolescents who live in these houses and flats. The thesis refers to the fact that these youngsters, lacking even basic recreational facilities in their own suburbs, and not having adequate public transport that would take them to such facilities in near-by suburbs, gang together to invent their own types of recreational activities such as intimidating women, children and old people, disfiguring the walls of public buildings with graffiti, vandalising phone booths, schools and churches, and experimenting with alcohol, drugs and sex.

Some of the local councils in the outer-western suburbs of Sydney have recognised the need for recreational facilities in these areas, and have organised council-run after-school activities centres, and the police in these areas run Friday night dances called "Blue-Light Discos" for teenagers. The activities centres and the dances are very well patronised by youngsters from these areas. However, these services are constantly faced with the threat of closure, as there is no guarantee of funding for them from one year to the next.
In conclusion, the thesis points to a radical re-thinking of the nation's social and educational priorities in such a way that:

- The central role of the family in nurturing the child is recognised and supported;
- The children at risk of being emotionally and educationally deprived are identified and helped at an early stage, and that educational systems establish efficient ways of liaising between the families and the teachers of such students;
- Teachers and teacher-training institutions recognise the link between emotional disturbance and learning problems, and emphasise the need for teachers to understand the social settings from which the children come, and to establish and maintain an emotionally supportive classroom climate where children feel they are affirmed and valued; and,
- Adequate funding is provided for special education facilities which are able to offer curricula designed specifically for repairing the emotional and cognitive damage suffered by students from severely dysfunctional families.

The title of this thesis reads in part: "Being One of the Have-nots". What has been examined in this thesis is indeed poverty of the most damaging kind - the deprivation of love and care experienced by the young, and the consequences of such deprivation for their emotional and cognitive development. The remedy for this type of poverty has also emerged from this inquiry: that we, as adults and as educators, have a responsibility to ensure that our homes and our schools provide a loving, caring environment for our children so that their need for emotional security and self-esteem can be satisfied.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

PHYSICAL FACILITIES OF THE AGENCY

KEY:

O - Main Entrance
Oo - Offices
1A - Ground Floor Classrooms
   - 1st Floor Living Unit One
1B - Ground Floor Classrooms
   - 1st Floor Living Unit Two
1C - Ground Floor Drama Room
   - 1st Floor Indoor Recreation Area
2 - Ground Floor Dining Rooms & Kitchen
   - 1st Floor Management Residence
3 - Chapel
4 - Bus Port
5 - Art Room
6 - Technics Rooms
7 - Gym
8 - Boat/Bike/Canoe Shed
9 - Living Unit Three
10 - Tennis Courts
11 - Swimming Pool
12 - Ground Floor Library
   - 1st Floor Laundry
13 - Ground Floor Social Workers
   - 1st Floor Sick Bay & Meeting Room
14 - Staff Room
15 - First Aid Room
16 - Father Dunlea’s Grave
17 - Vehicle Entrance: deliveries
A big dog sat by his kennel. He had big bone in his mouth. A little sat by his kennel. He had a bone in his mouth.

NAME
SCHOOL
CLASS...........TODAY'S DATE.............

PASSAGE ONE

Tom went to the airport with his mother. There big jet planes at this airport. "Will be a jet pilot when you grow?" mother asked Tom. "No," said Tom. "When am a big man, I will be space man."
PASSAGE TWO

When you put a lump of sugar into your tea can feel it at the bottom of the with your spoon. After you have stirred for a time, it seems to disappeared. Of course it is still in the tea. can taste it. But you cannot find.

PASSAGE THREE

Long ago in the land of Sweden there was little girl who sang. She sang with as they chirped in the hedges. She with the wind as it sighed in. trees. She sang in time with own footsteps as she skipped along the country lanes.

PASSAGE FOUR

For centuries people have been trying to make rain. ancient times some thought that the frog the god of waters. So when was no rain, they beat frogs sticks to make them bring on the. Now and then it did rain little. That kept the poor frogs in trouble; for people thought the beating caused rain.
PASSAGE FIVE

Suppose you wanted to dig a hole. What is first thing you would do? You get a spade, wouldn't you? Think of all tools we use today! We have knives and saws and scissors for cutting. have axes for chopping and hammers pounding. Every day we tools some kind. Can you imagine trying make things without tools?

PASSAGE SIX

The machine technology is wasteful of human resources ways, but it is far more wasteful national resources. The same efficiency that enables our machines to turn out vast amounts goods enables them to tear fuels metal ores out of the earth, to slash the forests and to gouge and waste the soil a truly alarming rate.

PASSAGE SEVEN

The first bicycles to appear on the road caused much sensation as the first cars. Horsemen for years thought of the highway as own special property. When cyclists came along challenge them, they did not like it.
Juvenile delinquency in London is very largely a mode-week-end dissipation. So long as there...neither school nor work, mischief fills the empty hours. Many of the transgressions, it is true...trifling, such as playing games at prohibited...or in prohibited places.

LOOK OVER YOUR WORK TILL TIME IS UP
APPENDIX C

BOURKE READING INTERVIEW

NAME............................................. AGE ......................... DATE .........................
CLASS............................................. INTERVIEW SETTING .................................

1. When you are reading and you come to something you don't know, what do you do?
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2. Do you ever do anything else?
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3. Do you think your teacher is a good reader? Who is the best reader you know?
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4. What makes him/her a good reader?
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5. Do you think that he/she ever comes across something that he/she does not know, when he/she is reading?
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6. When he does find something he/she doesn't know, what do you think he/she does about it?
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7. If you knew someone was having difficulty reading, how would you help him?

8. What would your teacher do to help that person?

9. How did you learn to read?

10. What did they/you do to help you to learn to read?

11. What would you like to do better as a reader?

12. Do you think you are a good reader?
   Yes.................OK. Reader ............... No ...........

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

13. What do you think have been the effects of family problems on your learning?
14. What do you think have been the effects of your learning problems on your ability to learn to read?

15. When you think of yourself as a student in a classroom, what are some of the pictures that come to your mind?

(a) good learner ☐
(b) poor learner ☐
(c) well-behaved ☐
(d) disruptive ☐
(e) get on well with others ☐
(f) fight with other kids ☐
(g) have many good mates in class ☐
(h) they don't like me ☐
APPENDIX D

PART ONE

EXAMPLES OF THE QUESTIONS
Used at the Structured Interviews with the Staff of the Agency

1. Family Structure

1. What do you think are the problems faced by the single parents of our boys regarding the upbringing of their teenage sons?

2. What, in your opinion, are the emotional problems created by the family structure for the single parent as well as for the teenager?

3. Is there any connection between these boys' family structures and their tendency to spend a lot of time away with their mates?

4. How would the family dynamics be affected if a new adult entered the family of our average teenager?

5. Do you see any connection between the unhappy childhood of many of the parents with the role they play now as parents?

6. Do you think there is a connection between the problems created by the boys' family structure and their learning disabilities?

2. The socio-economic Situation of the Families

1. Do you see much evidence of poverty in the boy's families?

2. Do you think this socio-economic deprivation has anything to do with the fact that a large number of students have a tendency to steal and vandalise things?

3. Do you think the boys resent people who have such material possessions?

3. Interpersonal dynamics

1. Do you think there is a classroom behaviour that is typical of kids who have been physically abused?

2. Do you think there is any sort of classroom behaviour that is typical of kids whose parents have a history of alcohol or drug abuse?
3. In your experience with the boys, do you see any pattern of behaviour that is typical of kids with a history of sexual abuse in the family?

4. Can you notice any pattern in the relationships between the teenagers and their mothers who have been sexually abused as children?

5. Have you had to deal with kids whose families have experienced a recent bereavement? Can you generalise on any pattern of behaviour typical of such boys?

6. Would you like to comment on the financial problems caused to families with a recent bereavement?

7. Would you like to comment on the emotional problems peculiar to boys from families with a recent bereavement or serious illness?

4. The ecosystem of the suburbs

1. What would be your comment on the suburbs in which the teenagers’ families live?

2. How do these suburbs compare with other suburbs in terms of facilities for teenagers and families?

3. Do you think the teenagers from the Western Suburbs suffer from any particular disadvantage?

4. What is your opinion of the schools in these suburbs?

5. Educational turbulence

1. What do you think are the effects of frequent moves (both of houses and of schools) on the learning behaviour of the teenagers? Can you think of some examples?

2. What do you think would be the problems faced by a student because of short term placements in a number of schools?

6. Need Fulfilment and Self-concept

1. What do you think is the cause of emotional problems in the teenagers?

2. What do you think would be the cause of low self-concept in the students?

3. What are some of the effects of their low self-concept?
4. Could a low self-concept be linked with emotional problems?

5. Could a low self-concept be linked with reading problems? Would you care to elaborate?

PART TWO

EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS
Used in the Structured Interviews with groups of teenagers

1. Family Structure

1. Do you think it is unusual to be living in single-parent families?
2. Do you miss the absent parent?
3. Do you blame any of the parents for the divorce/separation?
4. Do you resent adults because of your experience of being brought up in single-parent families?
5. Do you think the hassles of living in a single-parent family has created problems for you with regard to school and with regard to learning?

2. The Socio-economic situation of the Families

1. Do you think that you were worse off than other kids in your old school?
2. Do you see anything wrong with stealing?
3. Do you think there is an aspect of thrill and glamour in criminal activities? Why?
4. Why do you think there are so many boys who like to vandalise public property, and enjoy being 'graffiti artists'?

3. Interpersonal dynamics in the families

(a) Physical/sexual abuse and alcohol abuse
1. What do you think are the effects of alcohol abuse in the family of a teenager?
2. What if there was sexual abuse in a family? How would that affect a teenager?
3. What would be the effects of living in a family in which a kid was under physical abuse?
4. Do you think these sorts of family problems would have affected the way a kid performed at school? How do you think it would affect the kid's ability and desire to learn?

4. Ecosystem of the suburbs

1. Do you think you are under any disadvantage because your families live in the Western suburbs? What are the disadvantages of living in the west?
2. What do you think of the presence of minorities and gangs in the suburbs?
5. Educational Turbulence

What do you think are the effects of frequent moves on the kids in terms of their ability to learn? Is it difficult for such kids to settle down in a new suburb or school? What are the sorts of problems they would face?

6. Need Fulfilment and Self-concept

1. Do you think kids in this agency have generally grown up in a happy atmosphere? Do you think they have missed on anything? Could you name some of the needs which have not been satisfied as they were growing up?
2. What do you think this does to the way a kid thinks about himself? - as an individual, as a member of a family, and as a student?