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Independent Study Project 1

**Final paper**

## ***Strategies used for young people to name and rename the world***

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## 1. Introduction

*Jade Michaels<sup>1</sup>, a young impressionable girl, who was tall and inviting, out-going and mysterious all at once. On the outside, Jade seemed happy, but if you really knew her heart, she was crying out for help. On this particular night, like other nights, she had her fair share of problems that were mainly caused by family. Life never seemed hopeful for Jade, but she was going to make it because of the strength of her character and her need to succeed. (Baker, 2002)*

Many young people can be found on the streets, trying to live out some sort of existence. They hang around pubs, warehouses, youth centres, food halls, dirty nooks and tunnels in the middle of a hustling and bustling city. The city does not want them, people walking past often label them, and the society itself rejects them. I know – I was amongst them. What hope is there for such a young person? Some live, some die. It is a fact of life in any city around the world.

How is a young person going to make it in the world today? There are many youth centres in the city that engage with homeless young people. Do these Centres use strategies to help them in their situation? Are these strategies for the immediate concern or do they take the young person on a journey? What strategies can youth workers<sup>2</sup> use to help young people name and rename the world?

This paper will determine the various strategies that can be used for young people in naming and renaming the world. Firstly, the paper will look at the background of homelessness in Australia and evaluate some existing youth centres. Secondly, the paper will explore the meaning of dialogue, naming and renaming. In developing an understanding of this, the paper will also introduce a workshop for students studying to be workers in this field, through dialoguing with them and use of objects. Thirdly, the paper will outline three important areas of the process (objectives, learning and participation, and methodology). Fourthly, the paper will outline six strategies that have been expressed through relevant literature and interviews conducted at Creative

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<sup>1</sup> I am currently writing a book, *A two way street*, about my life's journey. It is written in the third person, so that I can delve deeper into the cracks and chasms of my life. I am Jade Michaels.

<sup>2</sup> I will use youth workers as a broad term for those who work with homeless youth – whether they are teachers, counsellors, health workers, street workers, or ministers of religion.

Youth Initiatives. Fifthly, the paper will evaluate these strategies, and then finally, come to a conclusion about whether naming and renaming the world will help young people.

## **2. Background**

### **2.1. Homelessness in Australia**

The risk of homelessness in young people is increasing in Australia. This is due to family-related stress, separation, divorce, new family formations and socio-economic changes, domestic violence, sexual abuse, rejection, unemployment, existing accommodation is inadequate<sup>3</sup>, and/or racism. (Bessant, J., Sercombe, H., & Watts, R., 1998) Often for young people, these are linked to and contribute to, developmental difficulties, peer pressures and conflicts, substance abuse, learning and other school related difficulties, mental health disorders, and bullying by other young people or even adults. (Talbot, 1999)

Homelessness exposes them to danger, exploitation, abuse and insecurity, which a real home would protect them from (but not in all cases). Senator Vanstone (1999) stated 'homeless young people are frequently portrayed in the media as the perpetrators of crime'. However, homeless young people are more often victims than they are perpetrators. Bessant et al (1998) also affirms this statement, not only expressing that many young people are victims but also survivors of violence and crime. Why do young people commit crimes? The functionalist perspective states that the bond between 'individual' and 'society' has been weakened or broken. The conservative perspective states there has been an inadequate socialisation, peer group pressure, genetic make-up or patriarchal power, or for economic reasons. Many young people want to be seen as 'tough' and in some cases 'it was purely the excitement of doing it and getting away with it'.<sup>4</sup> Young people need a realistic portrait from which they can build realistic expectations.

In 'The Age' newspaper on 14 July 1990 and 24 June 1996 claimed that tens of thousands of angry and frustrated young people make up a new underclass based on drugs and alcohol, sustaining a 'feral existence'. (Cited in Bessant et al, 1998) Why is it, we treat 'the poor', 'young people at risk', 'the underclass', 'feral youth', 'the

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<sup>3</sup> Perhaps because of overcrowding, physical state, lack of security, or lack of emotional support.

<sup>4</sup> A 14-yr old girl said this after shoplifting. She did it for the power and popularity she would receive at school, not for the material possession of the stolen goods.

disadvantaged' as different from mainstream society? How is it possible to be excluded from society? The poor and the labelled 'underclass' are not separate species of people. In fact the youth themselves may or may not see themselves 'at risk' or 'poor'. It is possible that they can see themselves better off than those in say Ethiopia. Their perception of poor may be completely different to someone who has lived in affluent Sydney all their life.

*During the day, Jade would hit the bustling streets in search of money, drugs, alcohol and food. The business people did not care for her; an unwanted child. She was considered as scum, dirty, ruthless, junkie, alcoholic and a thief. Jade had labels of her own. They were stuck-up, rich, tramps (they trampled over her territory), uncaring, hard, boring, and selfish.*

*The workers, commuters, tourists, and shoppers could only see Sydney in all its glory. They ignored Jade as best as they could, but often she would hear some whispered label on the way past, including 'Pheh!'*  
(Baker, 2002)

Young people are in danger of being labelled as 'difficult', 'untrustworthy', or even 'dangerous' kids. When adults react to young people, this reinforces the process of distrust and 'difficult' behaviour. Young people can label adults as 'unconcerned' and 'unprepared' to listen, and adults can label young people as 'damaged' and 'out of control'. Labelling takes the problem and places it on the young person as to say 'it is their fault', rather than see it as the circumstances that surround them. (Talbot, 1999)

Bessant et al (1998) suggest we need to put poverty into a context of the patterns of power and inequality<sup>5</sup> in the distribution of resources. It is possible to say that it is a fact of life that the level of income shapes our standard of living.

Hirst (1989) documented the make up of a young 'homeless' person from a sample of 200 homeless young people. She found that out of this sample 88% were unemployed, 34% left home because of physical abuse, 25% left home because of sexual abuse.

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<sup>5</sup> Inequality here means that all societies have a stable pattern of unequal advantages and disadvantages. For example those who are advantaged have higher income, wealth, prestige; power over people; eat better food and have healthier living; live in spacious homes; have access to schooling and higher education; and have access to health and leisure activities.

50% were wards of the state at some time and over 60% had not completed year nine in their schooling. Within this sample group there was also clear evidence of the effects of poor nutrition, reliance on drugs and prostitution, emotional and physical health problems and constant risk of violence and further abuse.

## **2.2. Evaluation of existing youth centres**

Why would young people need strategies to name and rename the world? It is clear from the statistics and background information above that young people are at risk and vulnerable in a fallen society. Young people today respond differently to earlier generations. Many of the youth centres operate under the same principles, such as emergency accommodation, clothes and food, and telephone counselling. This may be helping the crisis or the current need, but it is not dealing with the root causes of why young people have become homeless.

Some programs seek to proactively intervene to prevent young people from becoming homeless. Other programs seek to assist young people out of homelessness. A wide variety of agencies provide different services, such as, education and vocational training, health services, short-term accommodation, food and clothing, advocating for benefits, development of informal friendships, support and advice, counselling, and other opportunities to improve their lifestyle. (Talbot, 1999)

There are many organisations in our cities that are providing young people with various services. Most of them seem to deal only with short-term solutions; this might be because of funds, time, energy, resources, or knowledge. Some centres write into their aims that they want to achieve or see long-term change, but in their strategies they only provide means for the short-term. For example, *The Streetwork Project* (July 1992) in Melbourne aims to work with young people in their own environment on their own terms to achieve long-term behavioural change. This may sound as though they are engaging with young people for the long-term. However, their strategies include emergency accommodation, family mediation, planning direction, and additional support or services. How is this providing the intervention a young person needs for a hopeful future?

There are other organisations that provide education for the long-term, such as *The Warehouse* at Penrith NSW, which provides counselling, clinical and peer education, and a mobile outreach to 12-25 year olds within their catchment area. However,

unless one sees statistics of their work and outcomes, one would not know if their education is helping the young people for their future. *Youth Information Service* (YIS), Melbourne aims to provide supported referral, advocacy, and practical assistance to facilitate positive change. Again they mention positive change for the future, but YIS specialise in emergency accommodation, material aid (food, clothing, furniture), medical assistance, income support, and training.

A slightly different program, *The School Focused Youth Service* (SFYS) in Victoria, started in 1998 as prevention for teenage suicide. It aims to develop an integrated response to the needs of 'at risk' 10-18 year olds, who require support and intervention by developing strategies for a collaborative approach to the welfare of young people. Australian students rated four main factors which promoted their well being: peer connectedness; fitting in at school; feeling loved by their family; and having an adult outside their family to take a positive interest in them. SFYS have made these four factors as their foundation in helping young people. They believe if supportive programs in schools, aimed at a broad group of students, have a preventive focus, then this will no doubt help them in their transition from primary to secondary school, but also for their future. (Seiffert, 1999)

There are programs, perhaps only a handful, that do provide not only the short-term benefits, but also extended help to young people for a better future. For example, *Adelaide Central Mission* provides key elements that offer a young person hope. Their principles are built on relationships, trust, recognition, involvement, developing community awareness, nurturing their strengths, and providing young people space. (Talbot, 1999) Also *Creative Youth Initiatives* (CYI) in Sydney provides support and assistance to 16-24 year old homeless or marginalised young people with creative opportunities in music or art to help build their self-esteem, improve communication, and provide positive learning experiences and educational qualifications. The young people learn at their own pace and what they are capable of and have an opportunity to explore their identity, feelings and personal issues in a safe environment with professional supervision. (Mission Australia, [http://www.mission.com.au/cms/mpower/youth\\_initiatives/](http://www.mission.com.au/cms/mpower/youth_initiatives/)) As well as these services, CYI can organise accommodation, support in mental and sexual health, assist with drug and alcohol problems, legal referrals, diet and nutrition, budgeting, future employment and

training, family support and mediation, interview skills, and a range of other services that I do not see in many other youth centres' lists of strategies.

These two centres are unique. I commend them both for looking at various ways and opportunities to work with young people, engaging and connecting them to a hopeful future.

I believe that providing young people with learning in all sorts of creative ways is a key tool in naming and renaming the world. Different strategies would be used for different circumstances and individuals, but it is important that youth centres at least start to look at ways where they can be helping young people to deal with the problems, rather than just fixing the immediate concern.

Before outlining the various strategies, it is imperative that one understands what naming and renaming is.

### **3. Dialogue, naming and renaming**

Paulo Freire once said just by living as humans on earth, we are naming the world, and therefore changing it. (Cited in Barndt, 2001) Freire's work in South America was based on a coding and recoding exercise to serve the oppressed people. He did this namely through dialogic learning. Vella (1997) states that effective adult learning is best achieved through dialogue. Dialogue comes from two Greek words (DIA meaning *between* and LOGOS meaning *word*). Therefore, dialogue means *the word between us*. Allman (1987) believes that dialogue involves an explanation of critical thinking through vocal expression and action. Dialogic learning can centre on themes, objects, and issues of significance.

The coding and recoding process in effect was not stated or implied in Freire's work, however, this is how the course of dialogue would begin. Participants during each dialogue session, reflected upon new entries of thinking, where they questioned and enquired about the oppressed person, then Freire assessed codes through drawing, objects and action, modifying them and struggling to learn and find meaning.

(Allman, 1987) Learning begins from the act of coding and enquiring, not in having discussions on topics that we already know.<sup>6</sup>

“Dialogue is the encounter between men [sic], mediated by the world, in order to name the world.” (Freire, 1972, p61) Life is comprised of many questions and challenges that bring dialogue. Freire (1972) stated five important aspects of dialogue. Firstly, dialogue cannot exist in the absence of profound love. Naming the world is an act of creation and re-creation. Love generates acts of freedom, it is not sentimental, but rather a commitment to the cause.<sup>7</sup> Secondly, dialogue cannot exist without humility. Those entering the dialogue should allow themselves to be open, honest, and not consider themselves as owners of truth and knowledge, rather see knowledge as a tool and everyone holds this tool. Thirdly, dialogue requires an intense faith in people. In order to name and rename, one needs faith in people and faith in the creation and transformation of the struggles that one will attempt to go through for freedom. Fourthly, dialogue is built on trust. Dialogue itself produces a climate of trust. If dialogue happens or continues without trust, then real dialogue does not exist. Fifthly, dialogue cannot exist without hope. In the search of hope, one may find themselves, but they cannot do this alone, only through communion with others (in dialogue). Therefore, love, humility, faith, trust and hope are the foundation of dialogue. Freire (1976) expresses this with an image of two poles. When these two poles are standing firm and dialogue begins, these five aspects above start to be linked, so that the poles can join together in the critical search for something. Can one pole have does this alone? No. Only dialogue in community truly communicates.

How can young people reconstruct themselves in dialogue in order to name and rename the world? If life is constructed on questions and challenges that bring about dialogue, then life is about finding those questions, so that one reconstructs themselves. If there was no dialogue, then there will be no communication. And if there was no communication, then there will be no true education. (Freire, 1972) Dialogue, is therefore the key, to helping young people name and rename the world.

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<sup>6</sup> Mike Newman stated in a UTS lecture in 2001, ‘when we gather together over a meal, we usually discuss memories that trigger other memories. In this discussion, are we really learning? No, we are repeating history. But if we stopped and enquired about the memory, then not only will the audience learn, but so will the speaker’.

<sup>7</sup> Freire’s cause was the oppressed people of Brazil (his birth place), then later Bolivia and Chile.



### 3.1. Naming and renaming example A

Last year, in a pastoral care class, I was invited to share with the class in dialogue my story as an abused person. In the workshop, in between my story, I dialogued with the class about the process of naming and renaming. I introduced this concept to the students, studying to be youth workers, counsellors, ministers of religion, and care workers, so that they have a tool to use in helping young people.

In groups, they dialogued through naming and renaming an object. I placed the object in the middle of the group, so that it will become their focus. It was interesting to watch, as they dialogued with each other, some would pick the object up and talk to it, about it, and from it. The groups named the object and then renamed it three times. Each group arrived at different answers, but interestingly headed in similar directions. (See Table 1) They repeated the exercise with a second object. This time one group was more positive about what they saw in the ‘object’, but at the same time they only stayed on the surface. The second group was more negative, they delved deeper into how an abused person may see himself or herself. Both objects were to help them understand abused persons and the type of wounds they may carry from physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

**Table 1: Naming and renaming exercise**

<b>OBJECT 1</b>	<b>GROUP A</b>	<b>GROUP B</b>
Name the object:	Padlock	Lock
Rename 1	Confined	Security device
Rename 2	Shut away	Threat
Rename 3	Defenceless	Vulnerable

<b>OBJECT 2</b>	<b>GROUP A</b>	<b>GROUP B</b>
Name the object:	Mirror	Mirror
Rename 1	Reflection	Inward
Rename 2	Expression	Hidden
Rename 3	Representation	Hard to see / understand

Group A concluded that through their dialogue they were wrong in their perceptions in how they interpreted the objects to that of a young abused person. Group B was more confident and felt that they had entered the world of a young abused person and they began to see how change could happen. They said a significant aspect of their journey into that world was from hearing my story earlier. Whilst both groups struggled in the process of naming and renaming, some were individually affirmed

and for others the process contributed to a deeper connection amongst the people in the group.

### 3.2. Naming and renaming example B

When we critically and actively engage ourselves with images, we begin to discover or uncover the deeper processes behind them. This can be achieved by building a sense of community in naming, making, and connecting parts of our lives that make us whole. Beyond the images we see and the stories we hear, we have our own story to tell. “Naming ourselves and our world is a basic power, essential to our capacity to be subjects of history and not objects or victims.” (Barndt, 2001, p38) Although groups A and B were undertaking an exercise to discover learning, I have a story to tell and would like to demonstrate this by naming and renaming these objects from my own history. (See Table 2)

**Table 2: My perspective (at 16 years of age)**

	OBJECT 1	OBJECT 2
Name the object:	Padlock	Mirror
Rename 1	Imprisoned	Unattractive
Rename 2	Unwanted	Beyond help
Rename 3	Abused	Blacked out

Through dialogue, I engaged with my memories and myself, images of the past, to discover and uncover the deeper meanings. I literally felt the pain, the sorrow, and the abuse that I felt at that time. This process helped me to connect with my life in a different way, and in a sense, as people read this, and make meaning of their own lives, we will find connection, which will build community. The chance to tell our story affirms our power to write our own history and to participate in making our history. (See Table 3) The journey that I have been through demonstrates this by simply naming and renaming. It is interesting that my reflection on the mirror, at age 32, was similar to that of group A.

**Table 3: My perspective (at 32 years old)**

	OBJECT 1	OBJECT 2
Name the object:	Padlock	Mirror
Rename 1	Hidden	Image
Rename 2	Mysterious	Reflecting life
Rename 3	A curious closed space	Who am I?

In a sense, we are locating ourselves on the map and seeing ourselves as part of a longer journey. (Barndt, 2001) To name and rename is to make sense of our lives, the

world, and our place within it. Actors make sense of themselves as actors in their own cultural world. Young people make sense of themselves as young people in their world. Willis (2000) describes this as art that is to specify a quality of humans making and remaking material conditions of existence. Art has a place of quality to express life, interaction, human practice, and cultural forms. The use of objects is an expressive art form, which produces and investigates meaningful relationships with others, the object itself, and material around us.

#### **4. The process**

It is important to understand three dimensions in the process: defining the objective; learning and participation; and methodology.

##### **4.1. The objective**

The objective to any learning process should be to shift, improve or change the participant/s in order to make them feel capable of changing their reality, their lives, and the society with which they live. (Slattery, 2001 & Ferreira & Ferreira, 1997) If using various strategies helps young people name and rename the world, then the youth worker has moved the learner to look externally and internally in their life from a different perspective. They have engaged, connected and created new opportunities for the learner.

##### **4.2. Learning and participation**

Learning itself should be a continuous dialogue between youth workers and learners. Whatever strategy is used; youth workers and learners should be seen as equal participants in the learning process. (Ferreira & Ferreira, 1997) In many cases, the learners might need to take risks and make an effort to do things that they normally would not do. (Burnaby, 2001) At the same time, youth workers may need to take risks as well. As Slattery (2001) states learners are more likely to connect and engage if the activity is outrageous! Slattery, later in his book, outlines the importance of difference. Difference creates knowledge and hope that says change is possible. As youth workers and learners engage and connect in the learning process together they start to unravel what is real, and with truth, great learning will take place.

Participation is an important part of the learning process. Every person needs to be an active member, which means to respond to what is offered by feeling connected emotionally and/or intellectually and make independent contributions. In order for

participants to engage, learners need to feel connected to what is going on and be willing to extend themselves in the process. Participation itself happens in different ways, it is not just about speaking. (Slattery, 2001) Use of various strategies allows learners to be active, rather than passive recipients of information or instruction. (Foreman, 1990)

The benefits of participatory education is more participation, choice, independence, sense of fulfilment (for learners and youth workers), and recognition of ownership of their learning and work. (Burley, 1990) The activities themselves are a vehicle for learning. Therefore, immediate life experiences of the learner are acknowledged and utilised. Youth work itself does not acknowledge the experience of young people; rather it starts with how young people themselves experience the world. (Foreman, 1990) If a young person is confronted with an issue, then learning begins.

The cyclical process begins with sharing the participants' experiences and knowledge. The second step is to analyse and build on the experiences to find similarities and differences. The third step is plan for action, and then finally to reflect on the action. Auerbach says the process looks at what is, asks why it is that way, and asks what can be done about it. (Cited in Campbell, 2001) No matter what process one may choose to do participatory education, they all see that reflection and action (praxis) is important. Reflecting on what has taken place brings an element into the process that facilitates learning. (Foreman, 1990) Therefore, as young people learn to reflect about their capacities and responsibilities, they will begin to learn how to evaluate their circumstances.

### **4.3. Methodology**

The methodology is important, where theory becomes the moment of practice. Ferreira (1997) believes in order to set the methodology the youth worker needs to understand and experience the main problems of the learner. One does this by talking with the learners, living with them, and understanding their lives, their thinking and their culture. (Then the youth worker can see the situation, judge the situation, and then act to change the situation.) After this the youth worker can produce codes, which are the material representation of the generative theme. A code can be drawing, interviews, imagery, and role-plays. But the only way to produce the codes is to work closely with the learners. This was the foundation of Freire's work in South America.

## 5. Strategies

In naming and renaming the world, what strategies can young people use in order to achieve a result? Freire stated, “True dialogue unites subjects together in the cognition of a knowable object, which mediates between them”. (Freire, 1985, p49) Use of objects, themes, imagery, story telling, metaphors are just some examples whereby two individuals or a group of people are brought together over a common ‘object’, and through dialogue, the mediation process begins. For example, last year I engaged in conversation with someone who was struggling with her life at work. In my time with her, I asked her to think of an object or image that describes the problem. She said, ‘a coffee percolator’. I then led her through a series of questions.

M: What part of the coffee percolator are you?

S: The coffee filter bag

M: Is the filter bag working properly?

S: Sort of. It’s a little slow.

M: Is there a blockage?

S: Yes. The filter is old and dirty. It has been used over and over again.

M: Can you change it?

S: No.

M: Who looks after the machine?

S: No one.

M: Is the coffee pot functioning properly?

S: Yes, but it is cracked. Many people use it and abuse it.

M: Does each of the parts do what they are designed to do?

S: No. The coffee doesn’t taste nice, parts are broken, and basically it is falling apart.

M: Is there a way to fix it?

S: Yes, perhaps. Replace the filter, buy a new pot and mend the other bits.

M: Will this be easy?

S: No, but I think it can be achievable.

Through on-going dialogue over thirty minutes, Sarah saw exactly where the problem was, how she can change things, who needed to communicate, none of which she could see earlier. The externalisation of the problem helped her tremendously and this is where the use of objects, themes, etc can be of great benefit in getting to the core of any issue.

Barndt, since the mid 1970s, has used a powerful combination of storytelling and photos as a means for participants to name and rename the world.<sup>8</sup> (Cited in Campbell, 2001) Slattery (2001) has used numerous methods, drawings, imagery, objects, interviews, questions, storytelling, themes, visual aids, and a combination of these. Walker (1988) and Willis (2000) bring a wealth of ethnographic experience to participatory education. Deshler (1990) outlines the importance of the use of metaphors in helping name and rename the world.

This paper will now look at six strategies: storytelling, photos and imagery, objects, drawing, metaphors, and ethnography. Each strategy will be named, explained what it is, how it works (by giving an example), and explain why it would be an effective strategy to use.

### **5.1. Storytelling**

Storytelling can draw on personal experience or on other people's experiences. Every human has a story to tell. Occasionally differences can be found in similar stories, and this could create conflicts, however, if common ground can be easily found, then this will build community. (Slattery, 2001 and Barndt, 2001) It is important that space is created so stories can emerge; without space the story may remain locked within the learner.

The story itself needs certain characteristics to make it an effective story: a life experience; expressed thoughts, feelings, and behaviour; external events and inner experiences; and illustrating various roles. The youth worker can then invite questions, so that the learner can learn from the experience as well as others who are involved. (Russell, UTS)

Storytelling is an effective strategy, either used alone or in conjunction with other strategies. The mere process of telling our story feeds connection into the community.

### **5.2. Photos and imagery**

A group of people in a room holds similarities and differences. Photos can capture this on paper. Barndt (2001) believes that photo stories and imagery finds common interest. Everyone in the group needs to be involved in the process of bringing together photographs and creating the story.

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<sup>8</sup> Barndt has also included herself in that storytelling from personal experience, which breaks away from the traditional ethos of educators and facilitators.

This strategy becomes a collective process that breaks the silence in the act of naming and renaming. Barndt (2001) notes at this stage in the process there is tremendous energy that is released and people recognise themselves in their complex histories.

One photograph holds history and past elements of our own lives. A photo-story is a tool, which can reflect these life experiences. It frames our presence in the world and reflects back to us like a mirror. (Barndt, 2001)

Youth workers can also bring a series of images that are based on a theme, and the learners make up a story about what is happening. (Slattery, 2001) This activity brings connection and engagement. It is not necessarily based on personal experiences, but it does enable a group to work together and to find similarities and differences.

When combining photos or imagery with storytelling, the experience will integrate joy, pain, and connection.

### **5.3. Objects**

Objects are an excellent tool. They externalise problems, invite communication to a sensitive issue, bring safety, and provide an avenue through which young people can express themselves. (Slattery, 2001)

Youth workers can choose an object or the learner can choose their own. Both are effective methods. The object itself becomes symbolic and the ability to touch it, turn it, and place it, is revealing and brings connection to the learner. It is important to analyse the object and develop meanings through questions, observation, and participation. (Willis, 2000)

When I visited *Creative Youth Initiatives* (CYI) on Wednesday 22 May 2002, (see Appendix A) I interviewed four students<sup>9</sup> and the youth worker. Firstly, I asked them to choose an object, anything that is real in the world that would best describe their current situation. (See Table 4)

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<sup>9</sup> I feel constrained to give labels to these young people I interviewed. If I use their first names, then I am breaching confidentiality. If I label them as 'homeless' or 'marginalised', then I am placing them into a category. If I label them with a letter or a number, then I am making them subjects of an enquiry, as though they are on display. If I do not give them a name, then I am ignoring them as human beings, who have value and worth. In my uncomfortableness, I will use the term that the support worker used: *students*. I realise I am making an assumption that the young people themselves feel comfortable with this.

**Table 4: Objects exercise 1**

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Worker
Purple	Butterfly	myself	hexagon	yesterday's newspaper

Each student could name an object, colour, or shape immediately, without much thought. It is hard to know the meanings behind the naming process without enquiring further.<sup>10</sup> But one can start to make some assumptions, for example, the colour purple is usually associated with emotional abuse and butterfly gives imagery of freedom, creativity and peace about oneself. It is interesting that the worker has described the students as tired, run down, and useless. She commented that it sounds harsh to say, but realising that this is how many of them feel at times. Perhaps students 1 and 4 relate to this, by stating it in their own way, while student 2 seems far removed from this, almost in another world, and student 3 is not willing to disclose anything about himself by stating 'it is just me'.

Secondly, I asked each of them to name two objects (the same as the previous objects) and to rename them. (See Table 5 and 6) The students found this exercise a little difficult to understand. They related more to object 2 than object 1.

**Table 5: Naming and renaming exercise 2a**

<b>OBJECT 1</b>	<b>Student 1</b>	<b>Student 2</b>	<b>Student 3</b>	<b>Student 4</b>	<b>Worker</b>
Name the object:	Lock	Lock	Padlock	Lock	Padlock
Rename 1	-	Box of ambitions	Freedom receptacle	Stuck	Insecure
Rename 2	-	-	-	-	Trapped
Rename 3	-	-	-	-	Dark (black)

**Table 6: Naming and renaming exercise 2b**

<b>OBJECT 2</b>	<b>Student 1</b>	<b>Student 2</b>	<b>Student 3</b>	<b>Student 4</b>	<b>Worker</b>
Name the object:	Mirror	Mirror	Reflection	Mirror	Mirror
Rename 1	Reflection	Mask	Reaction	Real	Reflective
Rename 2	Compact reflector				Cracked
Rename 3					Obscure

Object 2 was easier to identify with. Two students were able to see themselves in the 'mirror', one reacted to that, and the other compacted it. The other two students spoke not from what the object does, more from what it can do – the creation of a mask, that is to put on someone else's face, not to reveal oneself; while the other spoke of what

<sup>10</sup> Because I was a stranger coming into the Centre, I was unable to take the exercises further by enquiring reasons behind their choosing. This exercise is particularly helpful for a counsellor / counsellee relationship, whereby the counsellor can begin to enquire more about the object and get deeper below the surface of the inner meanings, similar to that of the coffee percolator example.



is real. ‘When I look into a mirror I see the real me.’ He may have gone on to describe what he saw, but probably felt uncomfortable with a stranger to do so. The CYI worker had similar views to the training students in group B.

If we placed everyone’s answers side by side (see Table 7), we would discover some similarities and differences. The adults who were training to be youth workers and the CYI worker more or less went in the same direction – defenceless, vulnerable, and dark. I, on the other hand, as a 16 year old, used stronger words and came to a place of abuse. The other students could not get to the end of the renaming process. Three students disclosed very different answers in describing what object 1 meant to them. Only student 2 went onto to describe her box of ambitions – the place where she keeps her belongings, the place that she keeps secret and locked, the place that no one can touch, it is a place that she holds onto and hopes for.

**Table 7: Bringing all tables together**

Object 1	Group A	Group B	Worker	Melissa at 16	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Melissa at 32
Name:	Padlock	Lock	Padlock	Padlock	Lock	Lock	Padlock	Lock	Padlock
Rename 1:	Confined	Security device	Insecure	Imprisoned	-	Box of ambitions	Freedom receptacle	Stuck	Hidden
Rename 2:	Shut away	Threat	Trapped	Unwanted	-	-	-	-	Mysterious
Rename 3:	Defenceless	Vulnerable	Dark (black)	Abused	-	-	-	-	A curious closed space

Object 2	Group A	Group B	Worker	Melissa at 16	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Melissa at 32
Name:	Mirror	Mirror	Mirror	Mirror	Mirror	Mirror	Reflection	Mirror	Mirror
Rename 1:	Reflection	Inward	Reflective	Unattractive	Reflection	Mask	Reaction	Real	Image
Rename 2:	Expression	Hidden	Cracked	Beyond help	Compact reflector	-	-	-	Reflecting life
Rename 3:	Representation	Hard to see	Obscure	Blacked out	-	-	-	-	Who am I?

I could relate particularly to the female student at CYI, who renamed mirror to mask...

*Jade easily forgot who she was. The rule of the street was never to let anyone know who you were. To live was to live a continual lie. Jade was used to this from school, so this part wasn’t difficult. Jade lived, as did all the other homeless kids, under an assumed name. She was to never tell anyone who she was, where she came from, or her real name. This included her friends on the street, her drug dealer, the local bar attendant, and the cops. She had to protect herself; no one else will. When asked, her name was simply – Minks. It stood for wit and trouble, just like a monkey.*

*Every day was a continual web of lies that kept on feasting on one mammoth pile of manure. Jade soon learned to live that lie and forget all that mattered. She began to believe that the body she was stuffing with chemicals was another body; it wasn't the real Jade. So it never mattered what she actually did to herself. Amongst the homeless, it was commonly believed, that if she killed off the person she claimed to be, then she still would have her original self to fall back on. It was the only hope that lived somewhere in that strung out brain of hers. If that hope disappeared, then all would die of fear in the first night. Some did.*

*No one stopped to think that they were actually hurting themselves. 'You had to do what you had to do, and you didn't care if that hurt you or anyone else.'*

*The two extremes lived side by side, not noticing the other. **It was a two way street.** (Baker, 2002)*

Using objects one on one is a key strategy in helping young people name and rename the world. It enables young people to dialogue externally to the source of the issue or problem, providing them an avenue to talk about the issue without feeling threatened in anyway. It gives a chance for youth workers to enquire further about the cause-effect relationship with the issue at hand and the object that they are speaking to, from and about. By asking the right questions, youth workers will be able to learn more about the young person, the issue they are struggling with, and more importantly work out ways together to find a solution. Engagement, connection, community, and trust are all important aspects to this strategy that must be in existence in order for it to work.

#### **5.4. Drawing**

Drawing allows learners to interact with themselves, colour and the page before them. In a brief moment, they are wholly focused on a theme that places them into a good or bad experience, depending on what the youth worker has asked them to draw. A drawing in itself may not help the learner at all, but when it is finished and the youth worker starts to ask questions to the picture is when movement occurs.

Slattery (2001) asked students he was working with to draw symbols that represent their heart (what they were feeling), their head (what they are thinking), and their body (what they are doing), in order to see what is happening within their lives. To give an example of this, I drew these three symbols as a 16-year old homeless young person and then again as a 32-year old, as I am now. (See Appendix B)

The drawing on the right represents my life as a 16-17 year old, a time in my life that I have named 'rocky road'. The heart is broken and blackened out. The head is swirling of confusion and stimulated by drugs. The body is active, broken, and abused. The drawing on the left represents my life now as a 32 year old. I have named this 'extending'. The heart is now big, not broken, but a little bruised and bleeding, from extending love out to others. The head is now active and full of useful knowledge. The body is now taken care of, extended, and healed. The tree represents the growth that occurs day by day from within the heart.

During the interview session with students from CYI, I asked them in exercise 3 (see Appendix B) to look at the drawings to find meaning and to say whether they can identify themselves within any of the drawings. (See Table 4)

**Table 8: Drawings**

Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Worker
Body in drawing 2	Head in drawing 2	None	None	Broken heart in drawing 2, bringing them to drawing 1

Two out of the four students could identify with parts of drawing 2. Both these students connected more with art than they did with the objects, while student three seemed to engage much more favourably to the objects, and student four did not connect, and therefore could not engage with the objects or the drawings.

Drawing is a tool whereby young people can engage with either someone else's drawing or their own. They are able to express themselves and their story without saying a word. For example, I felt an immediate affinity with both students 1 and 2, as they explained why the body or the head identified with them. Drawings capture a collection of words and themes that speak louder than a spoken word. I invite you to take a look at these drawings (Appendix B). What do you see? What do they say to you? Can you identify with one of them? These drawings, and others, will speak to

everyone differently, that is the beauty of artwork. It will depend on your understanding, perception, and experience.

### 5.5. Metaphors

Metaphoric language is a useful tool to describe things, critically reflect, and provide transformative learning in order to name and rename the world. Willis (2000) states metaphors help to clarify and articulate an abstract idea by comparing it to a concrete object in the world.

According to Black in 1962, metaphors have two subjects: a primary subject and a secondary or metaphorical subject. Both subjects are regarded as systems of belief, rather than individual concepts. The two subjects interact, the secondary one highlighting important features from the primary subject, and within this interaction two ideas merge. (Cited in Deshler, 1990)

To interpret a metaphor, an intuitive leap must be reached to connect the two ideas. This is when critical reflection begins. For example, the youth worker selects a primary subject, say '**life as a young person**'. The learner then thinks of any metaphors that relate to the primary subject from their memories or experience with the primary subject. From my own experience as a young person I would say, **prison, rubbish dump, party, death**. The youth worker then asks the learner to unpack this by describing in detail on paper its meaning in reference to the primary subject. The learner then needs to reflect on the values, beliefs, and assumptions that are embedded in the meanings of the metaphors. Once this has been established, question the validity of the metaphor's meanings by comparing this with the learner's life experience, knowledge, information, values or belief system. This will then confirm or deny the meanings. The learner then can create new metaphors to express meanings that they may want to emphasise in regards to the primary subject. This can be repeated several times or the youth worker can change the primary subject. Deshler (1990) divides primary subjects into three categories: personal, popular culture and organisation. My example used the 'personal' category.

The analysis is essential to transformative learning, consciousness raising and praxis. Thoroughly examining our meanings, which gives perspective to the primary subject, provides us with the capacity as youth workers to make sense of the universe, sort out perceptions, make evaluations, create an adventure in meaning, and guide our

purposes. Creating metaphors, therefore, is an act of naming the world and this is an act of power. (Deshler, 1990)

### **5.6. Ethnography**

Ethnography provides the empirical and conceptual discipline. Ethnography brings about social and structural change. Willis (2000) says ethnography is the eye of the needle through which the threads of the imagination must pass. Therefore, it is about experiencing the everyday that is grounded, tested and justified in theory, which Willis calls 'grounded imaginings'. The open art of **ethnography** seeks to discover materials of relevance to basic questions within the cultural world. Because materials still need to be discovered and specific theories still need to be developed, the definition of 'relevance' then needs to be broad and 'hunch-driven'.

Walker's (1988) book examines the relations between youth cultures at a boys High School (Stokeham), professional culture of the teachers, and the formal operation of the school. In his examination he uses ethnographic methods over a 5-year period, where he got to know and understand how young men perceived their problems and set about to solving them. Walker noticed a variety of cultural modes that were occurring: social class, ethnic, sexual, family, educational and other social factors. Sport, ethnicity and gender were the three main dimensions that stood out as groups and individuals developed.<sup>11</sup>

Walker was struck by the degree of creativity and initiative the students have shown in handling the problems and opportunities. In his conclusions, he noted, if education is to contribute to social change, then freedom and power has been enhanced for the students to make personally fulfilling and socially beneficial choices about how to live their lives. It was important that youth workers do not focus on narrow self-interest, have a broad understanding of society, and a variety of occupations and interests. Walker noted last of all, that the story of Stokeham will always be incomplete because "people move from their youth and early adult life into yet more cultural contexts". (Walker, 1988, p170)

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<sup>11</sup> Many of the students differed in the way they left school and many changed in the process of transition.

## **6. Evaluation**

The strategies that have been presented in this paper are all effective. It depends on the circumstances and the willingness of the young person to move through the experience. What strategies are most effective? The use of objects can be an important effective means to dialogue, reflect, enquire, struggle to find meaning together, and to learn and apply this meaning; that is to name and rename the world. Other effective strategies can also include drawings and metaphors.

I have seen the object technique of naming and renaming the world in action many times. Not just what I have described in this paper, but also in use for adults, youth, children, as well as young people. I do not know any other technique that is as helpful for so many different issues. It allows the person to externalise the problem and name it as something else. In this naming procedure it helps the person to identify the problem. In order for that person to relate to the object better, the counsellor then can enquire about the object, asking strategic questions in order to find meaning. The person is then able to move on and identify, in the renaming process, the core issue/s. In the end, the person may feel more able to talk openly about the subject or to express in drawing or imagery how they now feel.

Use of objects, drawings, metaphors, imagery, etc is a way to start the process and enables the counsellor to find a connection to dialogue. As I stated earlier, Freire (1976) said the foundation of dialogue is love, humility, faith, trust and hope. Without the existence of these things dialogue will not begin. Trust takes a while to build between two people or longer in a community. The use of objects helps to build this trust, and in the naming and renaming process, the foundation of dialogue is born. Life is constructed on questions and challenges, and as the counsellor enquires further into the object itself, dialogue and communication begins, and then one is able to reconstruct themselves and find meaning within their world.

## **7. Conclusion**

Naming and renaming the world does help young people in the face of disaster, abuse, homelessness, or even the smallest of issues. More youth centres across Australia should embrace the use of objects and the naming and renaming process.

In order that youth workers help young people to name and rename the world, they should embrace the combination of the immediate concern issues (emergency accommodation, food, clothing) as well as one on one counselling to help young people learn more about themselves, their environment, their past and their future, and alongside of this the use of objects, drawings, and metaphors (depending on what connects with them).

In the end, if youth workers are embracing these strategies that connect with the way a particular young person understands, then it will help the young person to not only dialogue with the youth worker about their life and experiences, but also help them to find meaning in the world in which they live. Hopefully in their reconstruction they find themselves, their world, and are able to name it, and rename it, in order to find love, humility, faith, trust, and hope.

*Time passed by. The days were not so endless. The night was not filled with fear, at least for most of the time. There was an element of fear living in the same house as a violent drunk. Jade's life drifted, like a free piece of timber floating in the open seas. She had the world at her feet, and she wasn't about to let it pass by.*

*During her travels to and from work and trying to stay away from home at night, she often pondered upon life and opportunities. Many times she wondered just how she got to this place... (Baker, 2002)*

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