

The Journal of
the Youth Affairs
Network of
Queensland
Incorporated

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transitions



YOUNG WOMEN'S ISSUES

Sexually Transmitted Debt

Gender, Violence and
Youth Work Practice

Young Women's Issues in
Remote and Isolated Areas

The Strength and
Determination of Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander
Women

International Women's Day

... and a whole lot more!

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WHAT IS YANQ?

The Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ) Inc. is the independent, non-government umbrella organisation of community based groups and individuals from Queensland's youth sector.

Operational since 1989, YANQ was incorporated in January 1991. The Network acts to promote the interests and well-being of young people in Queensland, especially disadvantaged young people. It advocates for them to government and the community and encourages the development of policies and programs responsive to the needs of young people.

YANQ also supports the development of regional networks in the non-government youth sector. It is YANQ's view that the development of stronger networks will lead to better services for young people as information and skills are shared.

YANQ consists of over 200 individual and organisational members throughout Queensland, including youth services, advocacy groups, church groups and community organisations with interests in areas as diverse as juvenile justice, housing, health, rural issues, young people with disabilities, young women's issues and young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-English speaking backgrounds. Associate members are drawn from federal, state and local government bodies.

WHAT DOES YANQ DO?

YANQ employs three staff in its Brisbane-based secretariat. It undertakes a variety of activities designed to raise the profile of and encourage action on issues affecting young people. Activities include:

- submissions to government reviews; • making representations to government/other influential bodies; • undertaking campaigns and lobbying; • consulting and liaising with members and the field; • publishing newsletters and journals; • initiating projects; • disseminating information to members and the field; • providing training; and • cooperating with interstate and national youth affairs bodies.

HOW DOES YANQ WORK?

YANQ is managed by a Coordinating Committee elected by the Ordinary (non-government) membership to oversee its day to day operation and supervision of staff.

YANQ holds a Policy Forum at least once a year at which delegates representing the membership give direction for YANQ's policy-making and activities for the next twelve months. Delegates to Policy Forum must be Ordinary members.

YANQ working parties on specific issues may be formed at any time during the year. Any interested member may participate in such working parties.

YANQ's decision making processes are based on a consensus model.

YANQ PUBLICATIONS

NEWSLETTER

Since 1989 the YANQ Newsletter has been published quarterly but from March 1992 *Network Noise* will be the bi-monthly YANQ newsletter. Members are encouraged to contribute to the newsletter which is ideal for communicating news on: • training events; • youth programs; • interagency or youth forum meetings; • publications and resources; • positions vacant; • changes of address. As of 1992 *Network Noise* will be distributed to subscribers and YANQ members only.

JOURNAL

transitions is the YANQ journal published three times per year. It presents in-depth articles on research and topical issues of relevance to youth affairs, both in Queensland and nationally. It is an ideal forum for youth service providers to describe and analyse their work. *transitions* is distributed to subscribers and members only.

WHO CAN JOIN?

Membership of YANQ is open to anyone with a proven interest in youth affairs.

ORDINARY MEMBERSHIP

Is available to individuals and organisations from the **non-government** sector and entitles you to: • nominate for the Coordinating Committee & Policy Forum; • full voting rights; • six newsletters and three journals per year; • information on campaigns and reviews; • opportunities to participate in YANQ workshops.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

Is available to individuals, departments and services from local, state or federal **government** and entitles you to: • six newsletters and three journals per year; • information on campaigns and reviews; • opportunities to participate in YANQ workshops. Associate members do not have voting rights and cannot nominate for the Coordinating Committee or Policy Forum.

SUBSCRIBERS

Subscribers receive six newsletters and three journals per year.

MEMBERSHIP FEES PER ANNUM

Individual	Income < \$16,000	\$5.00
	\$16,000 - \$50,000	\$20.00
	Income > \$50,000	\$30.00
Organisation	No funding	\$5.00
	Funding < \$100,000	\$35.00
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Government	Department or Service	\$70.00
Subscribers	<i>transitions & Network Noise</i>	\$50.00

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In this issue

It is often said that we live in a "post-feminist age". This implies two things: first, that the women's movement of past decades has secured for women all the rights to which they are entitled; and second, that feminism, gender studies, in fact the women's movement itself, is somehow "old hat", an irrelevancy in these modern and egalitarian times.

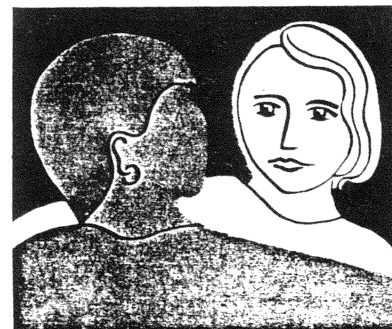
In compiling this edition of *transitions* we chose the subject of "Young Women's Issues" in part to challenge the assumptions outlined above. While it is true that feminist struggles have achieved major reforms in certain areas, many issues are yet to be addressed or require further improvement. There is still a place for a movement which works to ensure that women of all backgrounds are accorded their proper human rights.



This is no less true in our sector than elsewhere in society. Thus the other major aim in this issue was to bring together a collection of articles which discussed young women's issues in a context relevant to workers with young people.

In doing so, we hope to encourage workers - both male and female - to consider how their work practices are shaped by their attitudes to gender issues. The entrenched attitudes and practices of an agency or individual can have severe ramifications for the young people with whom they work. While this affects young men, we should never lose sight of the fact that it is young women who are consistently and severely disadvantaged by worker behaviours and systematic inequalities.

Articles in this issue cover a broad range of topics, including consumer credit, parenting, violence, sexual abuse, and



the experiences of young women from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-English speaking backgrounds, those with disabilities, and those residing in rural and remote regions.

Articles are written from a diversity of viewpoints but common themes emerge. All writers believe that young women's issues must be given serious consideration by service providers and analysed not just on an individual basis but in the larger context of structural disadvantage. In many cases, writers point to resources which will help workers to begin this process. In most instances, an open mind, access to information and a willingness to work towards better practice emerge as the major prerequisites for tackling service issues in relation to young women.



This issue also contains a profile of the State Government's Women's Policy Unit, an outline of International Women's Day activities to be held in March 1992, reviews of publications relating to women's issues, a central lift-out section on agencies servicing young women in Queensland and a research update of YIP funded projects.

We invite you to read, enjoy and THINK. And once you have, pass *transitions* on to other workers!

\$ \$

Prior to the large-scale entry of women into the workforce in the 1960's, a woman



Oh yeah ... HE had protection alright !!

was not considered a good credit risk. In order to obtain credit a woman was obliged to find a male guarantor (preferably a father), or to ask a man to take out the loan for her (preferably a husband). Single women had a snowball's chance of obtaining a loan. This is still sometimes the case, particularly in the area of business loans.

These days credit providers still like to have two borrowers signed up on a loan, or at least a guarantor. Naturally, they like the extra security of having more than one person to chase for payments, whether or not the people who sign on the dotted line actually receive the money or the goods financed. However, many of today's credit providers have twigged to the fact that the modern woman's increased financial status makes her a good credit risk, better than a man in many cases.

Selling Money to the Poor

Our service focuses on assisting low income people. Low income people pay more for credit because they are considered bad risks by the banks and credit unions and therefore must use finance companies which charge high rates of interest.

Finance companies focus their marketing campaigns toward low income people, using slogans like "No deposit required" and "Loans to Pensioners and Welfare Recipients". Door-to-door sales and

telephone canvassing campaigns focussed on low socio-economic regions are common. This is probably one of the most successful marketing campaigns in recent commercial history ... selling money to the poor.

The typical scenario is a used car sale. A low-income person is obliged to take an overpriced car from a dodgy car yard which offers associated finance, since the option of bank finance for a middle range car is not available to them. They

"Some single mothers are still paying off loans for prams for children who are now in their late twenties."

pay an inflated price for the car and for the credit (we have seen interest rates of up to 116% per annum!), as well as astronomical commissions on sales of insurance from associated insurance companies and on the sale of finance.

A high income person can often afford to buy an item outright, thus avoiding credit charges. A middle income person will be eligible for bank or credit union finance at market rates and will pay off the loan over a reasonable time period. A low income person pays an extremely inflated price for credit and can only make very small repayments. By the time a high interest, long term loan is repaid a low income person may have

paid back the principle twice over or more. Some of the more infamous Waltons loans were structured so that the loan was never paid off. Some single mothers are still paying off loans for prams for children who are now in their late twenties.

Spreading the Disease

Finance companies who specialise in loans to low income people are especially adept at assisting the spread of sexually transmitted debt. The cars sold by their associated used car yards are not what you'd call "valuable security". As a result, although they will invariably take a goods mortgage over the car they will also require a co-borrower, or at the very least a guarantor. If the person who wants the car is bankrupt or has a shocking credit rating they may even suggest that a friend or relative actually take the loan out in their name on behalf of the real borrower.

A girlfriend or defacto is the ideal co-borrower where the true borrower is a young guy buying a car or van. If a young woman has children the company can be virtually assured that, even if the bloke takes off, they will still be able to trace the woman. It's not so easy to go bush with kids! Even without children, women are statistically more stable, easier to harass and more likely to come up with the money ... somehow.

Most young people are on very low incomes. Many young people purchase cheap used cars on expensive credit (the main use for fixed-term personal loans received by young people is to purchase motor vehicles). Many young women end up paying off loans for cars registered in the name of their ex, written off by their ex, or just taken away by their ex, never to be seen again.



What Hope for a Cure?

There is very little legal protection available to women trapped in a sexually transmitted debt in Queensland. In states where there is a low-cost consumer credit tribunal there have been cases where credit providers, or their agents (such as a used car salesman) have been ordered to take the names of women off loan contracts. It has been necessary to prove that the credit provider or their agent knew, or ought to have known, that the woman received no benefit from the loan. In cases where it is obvious that registration of a car in a man's name was

women (and men) from unjust credit contracts. We would be happy to talk to young people about the circumstances of their cases and may be able to assist in some circumstances.

Our eventual aim, however, is to force an end to the practice of encouraging sexually transmitted debt by certain sections of the finance industry. We believe that this will not occur until legal sanctions are applied. Until the Queensland Government legislates to establish a legal forum for cases of this type, problems will go unremedied and credit providers will continue to collect the debts of their male customers from women who got a lot more than they bargained for.

References

Women and Credit Task Group (1990) How to get out of sexually transmitted debt: A guide for workers assisting women in debt, Victoria: Consumer Credit Legal Service.



arranged by the agent it is easy to prove knowledge of sexually transmitted debt. This is not uncommon. There have even been cases where agents have not only been aware but have participated in the coercion of unwilling women to sign up as co-borrowers.

Theoretically a remedy exists under *Queensland Credit Act* provisions which allow the re-opening of unjust credit transactions. However, the remedy is not in reality readily available because it requires an application to court by a solicitor or barrister as there is no consumer credit tribunal in this state. The procedure is complicated and expensive. Legal Aid is not usually available since the cost of the action is more than the amount at stake for the consumer, thus making it ineligible under Legal Aid guidelines.

Financial Counselling Services (Qld) Inc. has had some success with credit providers in securing the release of

Karen Fletcher is Director of Financial Counselling Services (Qld) and a part-time law student. Previous experience includes two years work as a para-legal at the Legal Aid Office, Brisbane.

Established in 1989, Financial Counselling Services (Qld) is a community based advice and advocacy bureau with services aimed primarily at low income earners. FCS provides practical advice on a range of financial issues including bankruptcy, budgeting, debt and legal issues. For more information phone (07) 257 1957.

STATISTICS ON YOUNG PEOPLE AND DEBT

A 1991 survey of credit users aged 15 to 25 found that:

- 34% had at least one form of credit.
- The most common type of credit product owned by 15-25 year olds was credit cards, followed by personal loans, store cards and company loans.
- In the 15-17 year age group, relatively few young people had any form of credit but those who did tended to be young women with store cards.
- In the 21-23 year age group both men and women acquired more credit than in earlier years, with females having the biggest acquisition rate.
- Automobile or motorbike purchases were the major purpose leading young people to take out personal loans. The majority of personal loans were acquired by men (61%). Young people acquiring a loan for a car were more likely to report the requirement of a guarantor, as were young people living with parents and those aged under 20.
- 20% of young people reported being unable to meet a payment which was due. Unemployment was the major cause. In 40% of cases, creditors gave extra time or extended the loan. Creditors took action in one out of 10 cases.
- Most young people received their information about credit from the credit provider at the point of sale of finance (rather than from schools or consumer awareness campaigns).

From E. Clark (1991) *Young People and Consumer Credit - Summary*, National Youth Affairs Research Scheme, National Clearinghouse for Youth Studies.

not seen, not heard

An Impression of the Needs of Non-English Speaking Background Young People in Brisbane

FRANCINE SEETO

The following excerpt is taken from the report of the NESB Youth Project "Not Seen, Not Heard: An impression of the needs of non-English speaking background young people in Brisbane". The project was an initiative of the Brisbane Migrant Resource Centre and the Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs to carry out research into the needs of marginalised and 'at risk' non-English speaking background (NESB) young people in South-East Queensland. Due to the limited duration of the project (6 months) research focused on the areas with significant NESB populations, namely West End, Goodna/Darra and Logan City. The primary objective, given the short timeframe and the complete lack of data on local NESB youth issues, was to establish a broad impression of people's experiences. In total, 103 young people were interviewed.

Aims of the NESB Youth Project

- (a) identify and document the needs of NESB young people in Brisbane;
- (b) identify and document the barriers to access to mainstream youth services from the perspective of NESB young people;
- (c) document the extent of mainstream youth services use by NESB young people;
- (d) initiate a working relationship between the ethnic and mainstream youth sector;
- (e) research interstate NESB youth models;
- (f) develop a local access system for relevant NESB youth literature;
- (g) advocate for NESB youth needs across government and community youth services;
- (h) develop recommendations and strategies for more effective and appropriate service delivery to NESB young people.

Hierarchies of Gender and Race

No research into the needs of any disadvantaged group in Australian society can ignore the specific needs and oppression of women within that group, within general society, and from an historical perspective. Australian culture is deeply rooted in a hierarchic, patriarchal system. The same system allows for a hierarchy of disadvantage which features NESB people at the lower end. Young women of NESB groups languish at the bottom of these. In political terms, NESB young women from the lowest socio-economic levels are invisible and mute.

NESB young women are not represented in official government policy rhetoric, eg. Priority One (1985), Access and Equity (1985), Multiculturalism (1989) and Social Justice Strategy (current). How could they be, when the policy makers, ethnic community leaders and opinion makers are predominantly male, politically conservative and from a more advantaged socio-economic position?

NESB young women's needs remain isolated from effective political bargaining and advocacy networks. They are not the main responsibility of any major lobby group and are not fully

represented by FECCA (Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia), ANESBWA (Association of Non-English Speaking Women of Australia) or any peak youth body. To be NESB, young (unmarried) and female may mean being far from the family power base; it usually means deference to father, mother, other family elders and brothers.

The project found that, in Brisbane, NESB young women from families who still practice traditional customs are especially stressed by having to adhere to values and customs which may be contradicted by an Australian culture which emphasises individualism and independence.

On the other hand it should be recognised that many NESB young women happily conform to traditional customs and feel oppressed instead by mainstream advocates who feel it is their duty to liberate them from perceived notions of patriarchal tyranny and abuse.

It is a difficult area for anyone concerned about justice and equality, and perhaps for that reason NESB young women's issues have generally been left to the ethnic sector to pursue.

The mainstream women's movement has failed to seriously explore the specific needs of NESB young women and incorporate them into a workable charter for social reform. Instead, many women

“ NESB young women's needs remain isolated from effective political bargaining and advocacy networks. ”

assume that female oppression by men has a common source and can be overcome by common means. Certainly Equal Opportunity, Sexual Discrimination and Sexual Harassment legislation benefit more women than in the past but on the micro-level, in the personal relationships between NESB young women and men and in the self-concept of NESB young women, mainstream feminism remains locked out of NESB consciousness.



In arguing that sexism and over-protective parenting exist in some NESB communities it must be stressed that the wider Australian community also harbours sexist and racist attitudes that greatly affect the way NESB parents treat their children, and young women in particular. It may be difficult to differentiate between inherent attitudes and attitudes that have developed in reaction to a changed social environment. Other researchers have suggested that NESB parents may adopt extreme positions of sexist and authoritarian attitudes as 'survival strategies', and that NESB young women may be fully cognisant of this.

Is 'culture clash' the result of dominant Anglo-Australian values which tell NESB young women that their mother culture is somehow 'inferior'? (Delahunt:1990).

Most NESB young women in the project understood gender inequality in terms of more favourable treatment of brothers and males in their culture. They could see that young men have more freedom to go out, have girlfriends, speak out, receive more praise for academic achievement, are not expected to do housework and are asked what they want for dinner. The treatment of young women, on the other hand, can be quite the opposite.

If I am watching a particular show on TV and my brother walks in and wants to also watch, I am expected to go elsewhere as a sign of respect.

Intergenerational and Cultural Conflict

Possibly in no other area are NESB young women in more need of support and understanding than the complex interface of intergenerational and cultural conflict. Previous research (Ethnic Communities Council of SA: 1985) highlights the fact that where parents are over-protective with their male children, they are even more so with their daughters.

A general finding based on interviews with NESB young people, male and female, was that NESB young women are more likely to place higher value on their relationships with parents than young men, so tend to be more passive and obedient.

Domestic Violence and Abuse

It became apparent during the project that there is a notion among some mainstream workers that domestic violence may sometimes be culturally acceptable and for outsiders to intervene would be to impose Anglo-centric values on another culture. Though NESB communities sometimes accuse government welfare bodies and police of interfering in traditional disciplinary practices, most NESB people agree that the ultimate welfare of women and children, as the least powerful family members, must be protected.

Incest on NESB young women was a concern raised by a few young women, NESB workers and community leaders. It is apparent that these cases, which usually involved brothers or uncles of the young women, received little or no attention from the family or community. Workers have said that, where it occurs, incest may have been a part of life in the family's home country, where it was not dealt with.

Quite often because they are used to it, young women don't understand that they can say NO. Some may not know that they have legal rights, or believe it is alright. (NESB Grant In Aid worker).

This appears to be an area requiring urgent research and in which neither NESB or mainstream community workers are adequately trained or resourced to work at present.

The only way the mainstream can ensure the proper legal, physical and moral protection of women, children and young people from domestic violence is to consult with communities to establish a bottom line for appropriate intervention and punishment.

Exploitation of women by men in any culture is unacceptable but when it happens to young women in a traditional NESB family structure which either condones or ignores it, the issue transcends intergenerational and cultural conflict and should be viewed from a human rights perspective. Incest and sexual abuse are definitely not acceptable in most cultures.

As soon as possible after arrival in Australia NESB families, and especially

NESB young women, must be provided with appropriate legal and health information which includes *how to access* support in the event that abuse of this type occurs.

It is my opinion that the various religious institutions that guide the spiritual and moral paths of many NESB families also have a duty to empower young women in this regard.

Recreational needs

The project found that, of the NESB young people interviewed, young women have the fewest recreational opportunities. In many cases NESB young women said they were expected to study hard, work hard, help out with household chores, care for the elderly or care for siblings. Sometimes it was unclear whether the young women or their parents owned these expectations.

For many, while they are encouraged to study and pursue careers, they are uncertain about continued parental support in these areas when the appropriate age for marriage arrives. For some NESB young women, going out entails being chaperoned by parents or a brother and sometimes young women feel it is too big a hassle to 'win' permission.

Sometimes I sneak out. Sometimes I just don't bother and stay home. Mostly I stay home.

Mainstream recreational activities were considered inappropriate by some NESB parents because of male participation, or because of being too physical, or mixing with 'bad kids'. Parents also feared for the safety of children in public places with young women being considered the most vulnerable to violence or negative influence. However, many NESB young women interviewed failed to see how a minimal recreational and social life can be for 'our own good'.

On the other hand, many NESB young women felt genuinely relieved that their families existed as familiar and secure havens away from the racist and humiliating environment of school or the streets.



Sexuality

The project's findings suggest that young women's sexuality is a major cause for parental control and anxiety. Discussions with NESB young people and adults indicated that NESB parents often perceive mainstream Australian culture as pleasure-seeking and self-indulgent.

NESB young women are growing up in a society with an often unclear morality base and in which the media, rather than religion, appears to shape values and principles. In Australian society, young women are valued for their beauty and freshness and there is little doubt that they are portrayed as sexual objects. Australians are, by and large, socialised into accepting this as a part of life. For many NESB cultures, however, where women are defined by their relationships to men and the role they play in the family, the notion of young women being valued for their gender qualities alone is unthinkable.

According to young women and adults in many NESB cultures (and particularly where parents are highly religious), female virginity before marriage is expected. The idea that women should be sexual only within marriage is so strong that a young woman may be beaten by her father or new husband if there is reason to believe she is not a virgin. This extreme reaction is in part motivated by religious doctrine and in part by fear of community scorn for the family name and for the parents themselves.

It isn't really fair when guys can do what they like though. They don't get the same beating or made to feel ashamed.

Many NESB young people of both genders reported having great difficulty in convincing parents that they can conduct non-contact relationships with members of the opposite sex.

NESB young people, workers and others from the community confirmed that many NESB parents ignore sexuality as an issue for young people. Some NESB young people and workers thought that such parents believe that young people,

and especially young women, should not want to know about sexuality. Many of the NESB young women in the project (despite the researcher's difficulties in raising the topic with them), appeared to want to have a basic understanding of their own bodies and reproductive health.

Anecdotal evidence provided by some NESB young males would indicate that parents not discussing sex with young people was not an effective strategy in preventing sexual activity.

Conclusion

In conclusion it seems fair to say that in the family unit, at school, in the labour market and in general society NESB young women often find it difficult to assert themselves. By ethnicity they are essentially marginalised by the dominant mainstream culture, by their youth they are expected by family to submit to guidance, and by gender they may be conditioned to submit to silence for the rest of their lives.

On a positive note, many NESB mothers are gaining leadership positions in their communities - participating in Women's Speakouts and Management Committees - and initiating dialogue with government authorities on behalf of their communities. This has led to a wider acceptance of stronger, more independent roles for young women in certain ethnic groups.

NESB young women through their education and greater exposure to the mainstream in turn have an important part to play in extending this new role to the general community. Some NESB young women already aspire to bridging the two communities - to be seen and to be heard in all areas of their life.

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- Delahunt (1990) in News Bulletin November, p.31.
- Ethnic Communities Council of South Australia (1985) Kaleidoscope of Cultures, Adelaide: ECC.

Francine Seeto is a Social Work graduate and was the Project Worker for the NESB Youth Project.

The Report, "Not Seen, Not Heard: An Impression of the Needs of Non-English Speaking Background Young People in Brisbane" by Francine Seeto is available from the Brisbane Migrant Resource Centre, PO Box 5325, West End 4101 for approx. \$5. Phone (07) 844 8144.



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Dept of the Prime Minister & Cabinet
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Barton ACT 2600

Untitled

Girl in faded purple dress
Tugs uselessly
At her prison of bars
Which she cannot unlock
For no one will lend her a key.

Flecks of white paint
Peel from beneath the bars
Leaving the bare
Dull silver underneath.

Cold
On her blood stained hands.

Outside
People in rose coloured coats
hurry by

To them
The girl in the faded purple
dress
Is invisible
A shadow on the pavement.

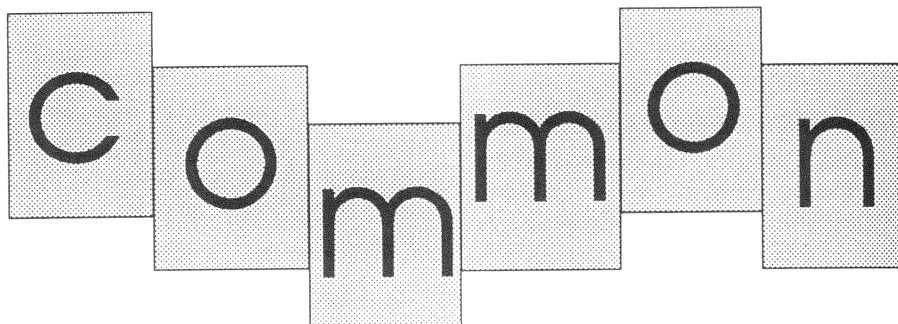
(Tracey, 16)

The above poem is a moving piece that sets you thinking. I have also included it for a devious reason. I am trying to delay the inevitable - you finding out that this article is about the dreaded "I" word ... incest. I can almost hear the pages being hurriedly flicked over now.

Incest - the Last Taboo

One of the few aspects of incest or sexual abuse on which most people agree is that it is a universally unpopular topic for discussion. The reasons for its unpopularity are varied. Perhaps the most significant factor is that incest (that is, sexual abuse within the family) challenges our society's most sacred principles.

First, to admit to the possibility of incest is to acknowledge that privacy within the family is sometimes misused. Secondly, incest involves the taboo subject of sexuality, an issue that, as a society, we still fail to discuss with openness and maturity. The secrecy involved in incest is the main element in its maintenance and continuation.



JUDITH

A number of myths surround incest and perpetuate misinformation about both the abusers and the abused. Two of the most common myths are:

- Incest generally happens to certain sorts of girls ... the bad sort.
- Children are seductive and adults can become sexually attracted to them because of their behaviour. Sexual relationships may occur.

Sound familiar?

Challenging Our Beliefs

Our community's general belief is that incest is rare, almost an anomaly, and that if it does happen, it is in poor and dysfunctional families. Even in the face of growing discussion and evidence, society's preference is to disbelieve. This lack of public acceptance is manifested in the continuing lack of community resources available to deal with incest.

As workers, we are unavoidably influenced by this attitude. Even if workers have experience and understanding of incest and its effects, the temptation is to minimise the situation, especially when the weight of public opinion condones this.

If this is the case for workers, we need to consider the difficulty for young women in seeking support when they may have to convince those who are disbelieving.

Statistics are one way to illustrate the extent of the problem. The difficulty with statistics is that they are often unreliable. This is especially true when the subject involved is one like incest. Reliable figures are difficult to obtain, so

any figures are, at best, educated estimates. The statistic most quoted in terms of the sexual abuse of young women is that one in four will be sexually abused in some way before the age of eighteen. (QCPA: 1989).

People's initial reaction to this is one of shock and disbelief. The sobering news is that this is generally considered to be a conservative figure. Abuse often goes officially unreported and undetected because of the secrecy and guilt young women feel. Given this, larger questions need to be posed.

Do we need to look at the situation quite differently? Maybe we need to accept that the normal experiences of young women often involve incidents of incest and sexual abuse.

Accepting this line of thought requires us to turn our ideas of family life and how young women live their lives upside down. However, it may also be a way to accept the problem in its true light and to prompt society to take responsibility.

Change for the Better

Contrary to your probable thoughts at this point, the situation also contains considerable hope. This hope comes in the form of two distinct changes occurring around us now.

First, there is a detectable increase in the importance placed on the general issue of sexual violence by both government and community. While this surge of interest revolves mostly around the issues of domestic violence and adult sexual assault, incest is also attracting increased attention. This is a slow

threads

ROWELL

process. Incest probably is, and always will be, the last frontier in terms of our society's sensibilities because it challenges our most sacred beliefs about ourselves and our families. In other words, the issue of incest may have the longest journey towards social recognition.

Secondly, there is a noticeable change in the importance placed on young women's issues. For the first time, young women are being seen as an important and unique target group deserving of special attention.

"It is constantly assumed that what 'works' with young men will be equally appropriate with young women. We must revise all areas of youth field policy and practice with respect to their relevance to working with young women and, where necessary, develop new approaches." (National Feminist YWN in Quixley:1991).

The Common Thread

Being aware of the real extent of incest enables us as workers to journey beyond the level of individual experience. This is not to suggest that each individual's experience is not important. However, we need to understand that society has a preference for seeing things in isolation. In this way, the global context in which all individual experiences can be situated goes undetected.

Understanding incest in a broad context has advantages and disadvantages for the individual worker.

The advantage is that an understanding of the causes and effects of incest becomes clearer. From this position, it is possible to see beyond the idea of individual

blame placed on young women and the isolation this engenders.

Alternatively, when looking at this "big picture", incest can become intensely overwhelming and individual workers can feel paralysed by the size of the issue and our society's general lack of attention.

However, there is a workable compromise between these two approaches. It is possible to work with young women on an individual basis while keeping in mind the common thread that links individual cases together.

Many workers feel that to work with young women on an individual basis is to perpetuate the isolation most young women already feel.

On the contrary, individual work coupled with a broad explanation of abuse provides a means for young women to see beyond their feelings of individual responsibility. It is a workable and relevant combination for young women seeking support.

Current work practices do not provide this service for young women in our community. At present there are simply too many young women and too few workers.

To Work or Not to Work with Incest Survivors?

My aim in this article was not to see how many workers I could emotionally blackmail into suddenly becoming incest support workers. Rather, it is to suggest that a re-examination of workers' feelings and opinions about working with sexual abuse is warranted.

"I'm sure I don't have the right skills to work with incest survivors".

"I'm afraid of making a bad situation worse."

"What if the situation blows up and I can't handle it?"

The above quotes are from workers with whom a colleague and I recently discussed strategies for work in the field of incest and sexual abuse. Comments such as these are surprisingly common. I say surprisingly because rarely have I noticed the same hesitation from workers towards equally emotional issues such as loss and grief or death and dying.

Perhaps, then, it can be assumed that the sensitivity and mystification surrounding incest are tied up with its specific characteristics - its sexual nature,

"Incest probably is, and always will be, the last frontier ... because it challenges our most sacred beliefs about ourselves and our families."

the dilemmas it raises in workers about the abuse of children and - considering the high incidence of abuse - workers' own experiences.

Therefore I believe, albeit somewhat controversially, that more than most issues incest is subject to workers' emotional/heart reactions rather than intellectual/head reactions. The decisions we make about working with incest are important. We need to analyse our immediate emotional reactions to see how realistic they are.

Our feelings are a useful guide in determining our suitability or otherwise to work in this area. However, they are only that ... a guide.

To choose to work in the field or not are both acceptable positions for workers to take. However, it is important to arrive at informed decisions. The difficulty arises when people use only gut reactions and are unable to back up their feelings with reasons on a conscious level. This task may prove difficult for some and for others provides little challenge.

It often occurs that people work with incest by chance. Incest may fall into the parameters of their work.

Alternatively, it may be selected by workers as an issue. Because of the importance of incest and, unfortunately, its common occurrence, we need to determine our work responses on a less "ad hoc" basis. We need to minimise the situations in which we will be surprised by our feelings and responses when incest raises its head, as it inevitably will at some point when working with young women.

A Four-Stage Process for Working with Incest Survivors

This critical self-evaluative element is part of a four stage, informal process of working with sexually abused young women that has become clear to me during my time working in this area. The steps of the process are:

1. **Accept incest as a common and relevant issue when working with young women.**
2. **Examine the feelings involved in making your decision to work in this area.**
3. **Inform yourself as a worker - your head and your heart.**

HEAD: Basic information. Once you have made the decision to work in this area, it is vital to keep yourself informed. Reference books, articles, workshops and conferences (as rare as they are on the topic of incest) are all important avenues to explore. For example, you will need information on:

- Myths and facts about sexual abuse.
- Sexual abuse and the law.
- Indicators of sexual abuse.
- People's common reactions and feelings.
- Long term effects.
- Disclosure and court information.

HEART: Stay in touch with the feelings that are constantly generated by working with incest. Acknowledge and accept them, and learn how to keep them in perspective. Being able to ask for support to do this is vital.

4. Inform young women about their options and support them in the decision/s they make.

The lack of information is a large and powerful reason why young women are rarely seen as decision makers. A young woman cannot alter the fact that she has been abused, but she can have power in deciding what she should subsequently do to begin or continue to recover. The options are varied and include:

- learning more about the abuse and why it happened
- reporting the abuse
- accessing counselling in any of its various forms
- choosing to tell people in her life
- writing/painting/recording her feelings and how they change with time.

As a source of information to young women, workers need to be able to offer reliable information at least in the areas listed above.

Our role should never be to recommend a particular option as best for a young woman. Instead, workers have a vital role in providing information on which young women can base their own decisions and offering support as they do this. In this way, a young woman is able to control what happens to her. This is important as this may well be her first experience in asserting control and options need to be presented to her as viable alternatives.

The stages presented here are only a few of the possible alternatives in working with young women who have been sexually abused. Working in this area offers flexibility and the opportunity to witness great change in the young women you see.

I have tried to stress that many of the problems associated with working with sexual abuse and incest relate to their secretive nature. Even as workers we are reluctant to discuss the topic and for many of us it holds all sorts of powerful unknowns. We need to move away from this reactive and restrictive position towards a more proactive one.

I have also tried to highlight the common threads drawing together individual experiences of incest. We can no longer believe that incest is an uncommon and isolated event. Many young women are and will be affected by it and need to have their feelings of isolation and individual responsibility challenged and changed.

Equally, workers benefit from realising that their individual feelings and reactions are experienced by other workers in the same area. A lot of people are dealing with incest individually when they could benefit from community knowledge and experience.

We can only support young women to work successfully through their abuse and its effects if we have the confidence to discuss the issue openly and to educate ourselves.

To do this we need to take away the power incest has to shock, embarrass and disgust us. If we are not able to reach beyond this, we will never be able to support young women effectively.

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Judith Rowell has worked as an Incest Support Worker for Zig Zag Young Women's Resource Centre since January 1991. Previous experience includes three years work in individual and group counselling and community education in the area of young women's sexual abuse.



AT LAST!

The Release of COMMON THREADS

Zig Zag Young Women's Resource Centre is pleased to announce that **COMMON THREADS: A Resource for Youthworkers working with Sexually Abused Young Women**, is now available.

This resource kit, compiled by Judith Rowell and Tracey Acton, aims to provide support to youth and welfare workers working with young women who have been sexually abused, or workers wishing to work more in this area, but requiring more information and training.

The resource material is presented in four booklets, providing easy access, relevant information for youthworkers wishing to inform themselves about this challenging field. These include:

Booklet 1: Basic Information about Sexual Abuse

Booklet 2: The Heart of the Matter - Information Relevant to Workers Needs

Booklet 3: Strategies for Working with Young Women

Booklet 4: Resources

The resource kit is available for \$20, including postage and handling, from

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THE STRENGTH AND DETERMINATION OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WOMEN

1st Year Welfare Students
School of Aboriginal and Islander Education
Kangaroo Point College of TAFE

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are taking greater initiatives to better themselves, their families and their futures. They are displaying leadership qualities which they possessed before white settlement and have not lost over the past 200 years of dispossession from their dignity and culture. ATSI women are steadily achieving more success in higher positions, recognising the importance of positive role models in ATSI communities. The following article examines how ATSI women in their traditional roles were vital to the survival of their tribal clans in the past, the adversities ATSI cultures, and ATSI women in particular, have faced since the invasion of white settlers, and how the traditional roles of ATSI women continue to be vital to the survival of their culture today - how the strength of ATSI women has not been lost.

Traditional Roles

ATSI men and women were traditionally equal, unlike the European settlers who had come from a patriarchal society. Most of these first settlers were male and developed an incorrect perception of ATSI society and particularly women's place in it. (Atkinson:1990)

Traditionally, ATSI women were the main providers for their children's needs. In all tribal societies they had as much, if not more, say in the ways that the people conducted their tribal clans. Some women provided more food for their immediate families than the men folk did. In fact, Aboriginal women of the desert tribes produced up to 80% of their tribe's diet, as the men were not always successful in hunting kangaroo, emu or larger game. (Bell:1980) This made the women's role critical to the survival of the group.

ATSI women had their own sacred ceremonies and initiations separate from the men's initiation rites. These were not to be talked about by anyone. Women's issues could not be discussed by men (nor men's business by women)

“ ... women faced the added trauma of rape and watching the children they had carried, born and raised, being stolen away from them. ”

under penalty of death. Women also had their own sacred sites separate from the men's sites. When anything of great importance was to be discussed it was done by the women and men together. They would talk for days or months on issues for however long it took until some agreement was reached.

The women educated the children and the children learned from their mothers from an early age how to gather witchetty grubs, lizards, berries, bush fruit, wild grasses and other bush tucker. Later in their lives when they were old enough to be initiated they were taught discipline. After this period of initiation they would live in the single women's or single men's camps until they wanted to marry.

Their traditional laws were strict and just. There was very little rape or murder, if any, in ATSI society, for fear that if they offended against the tribal lores they would be sung to death. This was a very strong belief and no-one betrayed these sacred laws.

Invasion of white settlers

With the coming of European settlers all traditional customs were to change dramatically.

The ever encroaching whites pushed the ATSI people onto neighbouring tribal lands, thus causing conflict between once friendly tribes. The whites saw this was to their advantage. They could pit one tribe against the other and when one

was gone they would simple wipe out the rest so there were none left to tell what had happened.

Some whites saw that blacks were being slaughtered indiscriminately and decided to do something about it. ATSI people were forced off their lands and were put on the missions for their own "protection". On these missions the white perception of ATSI people continued to be mistaken. Consequently, whites tried to make ATSI people like themselves. Many ATSI people suffered loss of identity after living for decades in this oppressed environment. But while it broke the hearts of many ATSI people it did not break their spirits.

Some ATSI women were allowed to leave the missions and work as domestics and cooks on the white properties around the area. Some men were also allowed to leave missions and work as stockmen and casual labour. These jobs were hard, dirty and menial jobs that required little training. Their pay was in food and board only. Even as recently as 1968 the wages for an ATSI stockman or a domestic woman was one third of a white person's wages. (Roberts:1985)

The beginning of white Australia saw the ATSI people being shot at, having waterholes poisoned, and the meagre rations they did receive were often laced with strychnine and arsenic. Babies and children were often victims of violent death.

Disadvantages ATSI Women have Faced

Ever since the white invasion the traditional and cultural lifestyle of the ATSI women has been altered in almost every respect. ATSI women became an easy target for sexual harassment for men of both white and black society, as well as suffering racial discrimination from white society. This still continues to happen today.

On the missions and reserves the ATSI women's lives differed because traditional life-style was no longer allowed. They were stripped of their cultural womanhood and spiritual rites. It was forbidden for them to practice

Being locked up is alien to the nature of ATSI people and still causes problems as a means of punishment. The Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody has indicated that the judicial system continues to be drastically inappropriate in the way that it copes with ATSI offenders. As a result of this ATSI people in Brisbane have set up a Murr Watch to ensure their people are being treated properly in prison.

these rites which had been part of their lives for centuries.

While both women and men suffered much of the terrible violence which came with white invasion, women faced the added trauma of rape and watching the children they had carried, born and raised, being stolen away from them. When husbands were locked away, white settlers would come and rape them. On missions or reserves women were often forced to have sex with the white manager or their rations would be cut and their children could not then be fed properly.

Unwanted pregnancies became a problem and fair skinned babies were not uncommon. By using men posing as welfare workers, the authorities would take these children away to homes where addresses were kept from their mothers.

During this time spent in institutions, private homes and properties the children were taught the ways of white society. Women were left broken hearted while children were encouraged to erase memories of families and culture. To this day some parents are still searching for their lost families.

These children were claimed by Europeans because of their whiteness but suffered the discrimination that their blackness brought. They also grew up with a feeling of not belonging to either culture. This has caused trauma and mental problems for both women and children, which many are still trying to overcome today.

Disease

Prior to European colonisation of Australia ATSI people were happy and healthy. The coming of the white man created many problems for the ATSI people. They brought diseases that did not exist before and which ATSI had no protection against. These killed thousands of ATSI people far beyond white settlements.

It caused a lot of trauma and heartbreak to the women to see their families dying from European diseases such as the common cold and venereal disease. They felt helpless at not being able to treat or control illnesses they knew nothing about. Previously they had been able to treat most sickness with their traditional medicines. (Many of these have been shown by modern science to be effective.)

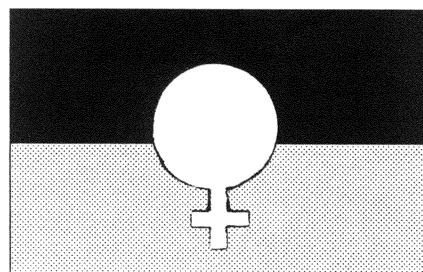
Today, incidence of many diseases such as diabetes, mental illness and alcoholism remains extremely high amongst ATSI people. ATSI children continue to suffer from eye and ear infections rarely seen in other Australian children.

Alcohol

Unwittingly, white Australia gave ATSI people a major tool for their own destruction while keeping from them any real means of power.

Alcohol was one of the first civil liberties given to blacks. ATSI people got the right to drink before they got the right to vote. In the 1960s people fought for the right to drink alcohol. Now people are fighting for the right to have alcohol restricted. (Langton:1991)

Years ago, the problem of alcohol as we know it today did not exist. Now conditions have deteriorated beyond belief because of the availability of alcohol.



Standards of behaviour have gone for the younger generation and there is increasing violence towards women.

In today's society ATSI people are using alcohol and getting drunk as an escape and therefore an excuse for their violent behaviour and the treatment they inflict upon their families.

Of all the "mistreatments" of ATSI people, grog overall, has been the major cause of destruction of much of the Aboriginal cultural heritage. It has helped destroy a lot of the people's self management skills, even to a point of hindering family organisation. It has been largely responsible for wiping a community to a state of ignominy and leaves a trail of lost souls with no where to go.

Alcoholism is enabling ATSI people to forget their tormented past, and reliance on this escapism from reality and today's pressures has become a disease in itself. Its effects go far beyond physical devastation of the individual.

Education

Education has been, and continues to be, a major problem for ATSI people. The 1981 Census showed that only 4.1% of ATSI people had received post-school qualifications as opposed to 24.2% of the general population. (Daylight:1986).

One of the main reasons for the lack of formal education among the ATSI people has been the absence of schools, particularly secondary schools, in areas where they live. The problem of attendance in schools is astronomical, partly because of the lack of understanding and interest given to the ATSI cultures by some educators.

Schools are sometimes seen as yet another white institution controlled and dominated by whites to fit ATSI children into white society. For many children, health problems and living conditions at home also make it difficult to perform properly at school.

Because of this lack of education ATSI people do not have the same opportunities in the work force. Unemployment continues to be a major problem.

Motivation

ATSI women have consistently been a leading role model to their families and communities. We are convinced that, since the beginning, this has been a strength to ATSI women in being strong decision makers and managers, especially in the hard times and until the 1990s. This is because their role as mother and care-givers has never truly left them. ATSI women have never failed to utilise all the opportunities that have come their way. They are visionaries and are quite able to work

towards a better future and deal with the injustices of the past in harmony with their situation. (Bell:1991)

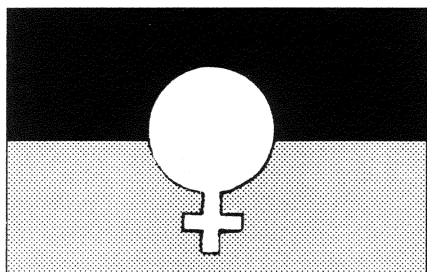
ATSI women continue to maintain their role as nurturer, economic provider, the role model and the creator of the nation. (Ober:1991). They are tired of watching their children suffer in sub-standard conditions. Some remote communities still have inadequate housing and sanitary conditions. They live without power or running water and have very few education facilities.

ATSI women want to better their position in society and reflect a better image to their children. They wish to influence their children in a way that will motivate them to take charge of their own lives. They have had enough of living off welfare handouts. They know welfare handouts keep people in the poverty cycle. It conditions children into believing it is acceptable to live off the government for the rest of their lives, their lives and financial status restricted by meagre welfare benefits. It is a poor reflection on society when a person's aims and objectives have become meaningless.

ATSI women have always taken a leading role in everything they have undertaken. They have been a major motivating force in the establishment of services for their people. They have helped to establish and run services in the areas of health, education and child care. Many women's support services and interest groups have also been set up. Within Brisbane these include the West End Women's Group, Wandara Neighbourhood Centre and the Inala theatre group, Icy Tea.

ATSI women are also tired of what alcohol is doing to them, their families and their culture. They are uniting to hold rallies and proving to ATSI people that alcohol does not have to have a main function in everyday lives. At Aurukan, the women formed a committee and were successful in closing the canteen. In Alice Springs recently women from the Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjankjatarra, Yankunytjara Women's Council organised a rally protesting against grog. They declared that "Aboriginal culture is alive and well and women will make sure it remains





that way until eternity." Women have stood by their obligations to fight the grog and much of the evil which has possessed men and influenced children.

ATSI women are capable of making their own decisions and while this right was often taken from them in the early days of white settlement, they are now regaining confidence to do what they want to do and choose which direction they wish to take in their lives.

The Future

A survey on the implications of ATSI women's issues, aimed specifically at ATSI women, was recently carried out by students at Kangaroo Point College of TAFE.

While the majority of women felt positive about their future, others expressed concern about their children's future - how children are treated in the classroom and the lack of ATSI culture being taught in schools. They would like everybody to learn and understand a culture that has survived over 100,000 years.

In the past ATSI people could not obtain an education easily in the white man's system. Those privileged enough to go to school were limited to the early primary grades. These days every child has the right to an education regardless of race or religion. Legislation and government policies have been put in place to make this law.

The main obstacles ATSI women continue to face include lack of financial support, family support, motivation, self esteem and confidence. Yet the women surveyed believe that the increase in education and employment opportunities makes it possible to better themselves and get ahead. For this reason, many have chosen to continue in education. They can see that white

education provides the chief means to being heard and recognised in white society. Without qualifications or education they know that it is almost impossible to adequately put forward their points of view. Education is a way into the white political system. Choosing to continue in education has made them feel good about themselves because they have taken the initiative. All women agreed it was important for ATSI women to continue to take the initiative.

Institutions and organisations such as TAFE colleges and University courses catering especially to ATSI people have helped make education possible. Many women who have realised their education skills are limited are working towards becoming skilled and qualified by enrolling in suitable courses at TAFE, universities or in Skillshare programs, and by contributing to women's issues.

Education is the backbone to the continuing recognition of ATSI women's potential. In 1986, 67% of participants in Abstudy were women. (National Agenda for Women: 1988) This shows that more women than men are continuing their education. ATSI women have been very vocal as lobbyists and see education as being an important step on their stairway to success.

While some people still consider ATSI women as second and third rate, in some careers they are the forerunners. (Ober: 1991). Leading ATSI women include: Pat O'Shane, who in 1976 became the first ATSI barrister and later the first woman in Australian history to head a government department; Evonne Cawley, the first woman of an indigenous race to win Wimbledon in 1971 (Ellis: 1982); Lois O'Donoghue, who recently headed ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission); Christine Woolgar, who in 1990 was the first ATSI woman graduate of medicine from the University of Queensland.

Some of the greatest achievements ATSI women believed they could obtain through furthering their education and improving their career options included: holding onto their culture, acting as strong independent role models for all ATSI women, supporting their families, gaining status in the community and gaining power to control their destinies.

These women saw their futures as very promising. They look forward to having equal opportunities, gaining equality with men, being in greater positions of authority and continuing to have many and varied choices and opportunities.

When asked for their response to the statement, "ATSI women are taking greater initiatives to better themselves, their families and their futures", they felt that this was a very true, positive and relevant analysis of where they were going.

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Welfare 1 Students involved Kangaroo Point College of TAFE:

Cecelia Bekue	Douglas Pickering
Tracey Birch	Grahame Saunders
Shane Coghill	Florence Ware
Joyce Cooper	Phyllis Webb
Meredith Crump	John West
Cliff Kuna	Sharmaine Whitter
Mark Luker	

Gender, Violence and

A recent study exploring the experiences of young homeless people revealed that many are subject to violent episodes whilst resident in youth accommodation services (Alder:1991). Alder's study also reveals, most alarmingly, that many young women interviewed in the study reported that they had been subjected to sexual harassment and other violent abuse whilst living under the protective auspices of a residential youth facility.

This is an appalling situation. Working in a residential youth service is not an easy task - the demands are great, the wages are comparatively low, and youth work itself has almost no career structure. However, the above mentioned research must encourage us to act to ensure that these totally unacceptable findings cease to be the norm in the very near future. The question is, how?

What is proposed here is that effective management and elimination of violence are based on two things - skillful practice and understanding. It is a great fear however, that the youth sector's capacity

for such skillful practice is diminished by an absence of general understanding, particularly in relation to violence and young people. When youth work training programs advertise martial arts which effectively promote violence as an efficient means of dealing with violence, then this fear is well founded (RCCWAQ: 1991).

The proposition put forward here is that violence is much more than a product of individual agency, much more than a result of individual pathology. To understand violence in youth work it is necessary to view violence outside the exclusive context of youth work.

Violence is very much located within the wider societal context. It is proposed that an historically sensitive gender analysis will best inform the issue of violence within that wider context - obtain an understanding of the roots of violence, of its gendered history and nature in that wider context, and you might be well on your way to doing something about it in a youth work setting.

A Violent History, A Violent Present

Violence as perpetrated in modern Australian society is really a continuation of Australia's violent past. Henry Reynolds (1991) presents compelling evidence that debunks the myth of a European Australia born in a peaceful manner. The flogging, rape and murder of convicts, the rampage of bushrangers, the slaughter of Aborigines and a lemming-like propensity to go to war are all testaments to our violent and bloody beginnings. These violent beginnings were not only confined to these very public displays. The expectation was (is) that real men were tough, and the process by which this kind of masculinity was proven often involved domination and subordination of women, homosexuals, migrants and Aborigines.

Today's media still perpetuates a culture of male violence that is almost ingrained in our national psyche. The historical roots of 'real' masculinity have been embellished by media that continuously present images of violence in sport, overt militarism, and women in stereotypical submissive roles (Lewis:1983). It is not surprising then that a significant part of the rite of passage to manhood involves so many young men in physical beatings, courtship violence, parental assault and road slaughter on a massive scale.

Little wonder too, that the vast majority of perpetrators of violence are male (National Committee on Violence 1990), and that 23% of men and 17% of women reported in a recent national survey that spouse abuse was okay in certain



Youth Work Practice

A PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION BY MAREE BOYLE

circumstances (Office of the Status of Women:1988).

What history and the mass media combine to give us is an increasingly violent world - a world where certain forms of violence are legitimized and actively encouraged. For youth workers, the ramifications of this are obvious. We work with young men and women who carry the legacy of history and the messages of the modern media. For too many of the young men we work with, violence is considered a necessary and normal part of life. For many young women the role of peacemaker in a violent relationship, object for a violent outburst, and carer when the violence subsides and the guilt sets in, is an apparently natural role.

Countering a Gendered Violence

The challenge for youth workers is to question the apparent naturalness of these roles, to debunk the myths and images of what is acceptably masculine/feminine, and to assist young people in exploring alternative ways of self-expression that do not inflict physical or emotional harm. To do this requires that youth workers question some of their own beliefs and commonsensical notions - after all, we are all products of the culture we live in. It is realised that to challenge one's own belief systems and ideologies about gender and violence is not easy. It is difficult to maintain the energy to challenge that which sits comfortably and feels okay. However, if we do not engage in this process, our protests about the horror of violence in our work will ring hollow.

As a profession we have set ourselves a formidable task. We have the job of demonstrating to young people alternative forms of harmless, non-gendered

“Above all, we need to view violence as gendered.”

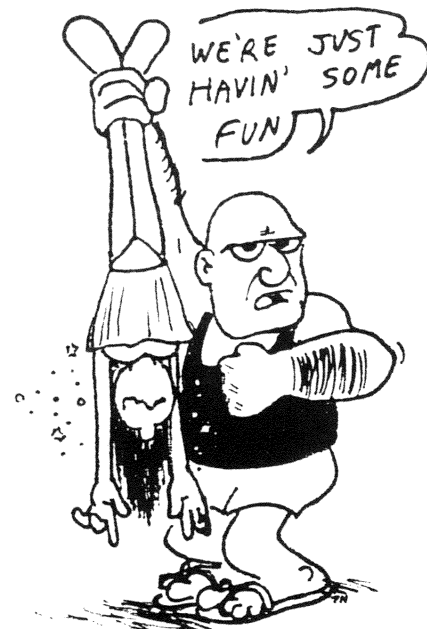
self-expression - yet our profession is organized in a highly gendered manner. We have a majority of female workers but the people who make the decisions, the recognised sources of power and authority in youth work, are mostly men. Does this not support the message that the gendered nature of power relations which underlies much of the violence is part of the apparently natural social order between genders?

However, it is not acceptable to just 'leave youth work to the boys' (Higgins 1991). For many of the young people with whom we work, a mixed gender service is the only option available to them. If it is not appropriate to work exclusively with young women or young men, then what can we do?

Working with Young Women and Men

A good place to start is our work with young women. We can begin by challenging and sometimes discarding the frightfully disempowering therapeutic approach towards young woman. For far too long young women's reports of

sexual assault and violence have gone unheard in the name of 'appropriate' therapeutic practices. Many of us can look back in shame to that young woman we dismissed as 'acting out' fantasies of a horrifically abusive past. In the pursuit of therapy, we never really believed the stories of violence and abuse she told us. If we want to give power to young women to enable them to deal more effectively with male violence, we could at least begin by doing them the courtesy of believing them.



A more appropriate analysis of what young women tell us about violence in their lives is that, if anything, they will underestimate or trivialise the violence they experience. Sadly, for many young women violence is accepted as a 'normal' part of being female (Kelly: 1988, Halson: 1991).

Although there is some value in developing strategies that assist young women to avoid violent relationships, this in itself is not enough.

As youth workers we also work with significant numbers of young men. We must find ways of making it very clear to young men that violence is always impermissible, something that will not be tolerated or condoned. We must recognize that for many young men violence is a learned form of self-expression. We must not fall into the trap of believing the biological myths about young men and violence. Violence perpetrated by young men is not 'natural' or 'inevitable', but something that is constructed and therefore subject to change. If we demand that young men desist from being violent, we can only expect success if we are able to show them some equally expressive alternative.

This does not mean we continue the practice of condoning supposedly cathartic violent expressions, which seems to be an entrenched part of the conventional wisdom of youth work. Allowing and encouraging explicit episodes of verbal abuse may make a young person more manageable in the short term, probably because of spent energy. Youth workers need to consider this an unacceptable practice because it will reinforce the idea that a violent episode will lead to a period of harmony. This is counterproductive, for it helps set the pattern of violent behaviour in later life.

There is also room to challenge some of the 'glamorous' activities of youth work. Taking what are often violent, rigidly masculinized young men out into the country and engaging in 'Solo man' activities for a few days is more likely to reproduce and reinforce inappropriate and violence-producing gender stereotypes than anything else. It seems unproductive and erroneous in the extreme to suggest to young men and women that stereotypical images of 'real' masculinity and femininity offer solutions to their struggles.

"Shelters" - or Settings for Violence?

The strategies we use for service delivery also need to be scrutinized. Why do we continue to persist with the practice of providing crisis accommodation in the

pressure cooker environment of the traditional youth shelter? If you cram large numbers of stressed young people into a large household and demand that they live in harmony with each other, you are really creating confrontation and violence. Those who fund such agencies need to listen to creative suggestions from the field that would result in the updating of such outdated models of service provision. We need to challenge our complacency in this area and be prepared to change where necessary. A good start would be more single sex services offering privacy and a sense of dignity!

Finally, we can review our practice in relation to gender and violence by looking to ourselves. There are many myths about the nature and causes of violence, and we need to be aware of these. We also need to be aware of our own prejudices and be prepared to challenge ourselves and each other when these surface during the course of practice.

Above all, we need to view violence as gendered. Violence is overwhelmingly male, the result of power relations between young men and young women. Youth workers need to gain a good grasp of what violence is, and this can only be satisfactorily achieved by putting gender analysis well and truly on the youth work training agenda. Without this we will always be caught in the unproductive web of 'victim-blaming' and pathologizing.

Maree Boyle has been involved in Youth Work for a number of years and is employed at the Youth Housing Project. She is currently undertaking post-graduate studies in the Dept of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Queensland.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank the Domestic Violence Resource Centre for their advice and use of their wonderful library. Special thanks to Karen Walsh, Peter Pearce and Shirley O'Toole for inspirational discussions and helpful comments.

Violence as a way of achieving ... justice is both impractical and immoral. It is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. The old law of an eye for an eye leaves everybody blind. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his (or her) understanding; it seeks to annihilate rather than to convert. Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys community and makes brotherhood (or sisterhood) impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. Violence ends by defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

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the wild women's group

RESPONDING TO THE
SOCIAL NEEDS OF YOUNG
WOMEN WITH A MILD
INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

CAROL GRAHAM AND
ANNA SPENCER

The Wild Women's Group is a group of young women who challenge the very essence of youth work and the women's movement. They are a group of young women who all share in common a mild intellectual disability. The name of the group, chosen by the young women, expresses the energy and strength of these young people. It is an energy and strength that is too often ignored or denied by the community generally and the youth sector in particular.

Background

The Wild Women's Group emerged in response to a need that was identified by workers at the Community Living Program (CLP) in Brisbane.¹ Workers at

CLP were concerned about the social isolation of young women with a mild intellectual disability. Not only are they marginalised by their age, gender and disability, their marginalisation is compounded by the failure of the women's movement, the youth sector and the disability rights movement to address their particular needs. (Palmer & Woodcroft-Lee: 1990).

This article provides a general overview of one endeavour by one community based agency to respond to some of the social needs of mildly intellectually disabled young women. The issues and challenges inherent in this work are noted. The young women involved were either participating in the CLP program or linked with the project through other organisations in touch with young women. Funding for the project was secured following a successful collaboration between CLP and Zig Zag² - a young women's resource centre in Brisbane. The Office of the Status of Women provided the funds for CLP to conduct a 12-month project.³ The aims of the project were to:

- 1) consult with young women about concerns they have in common;
- 2) utilise the benefit of support of women by women;
- 3) evaluate existing social and community resources and their relevance to young women;
- 4) provide opportunities and experiences for young women to develop skills, to work cooperatively and to take collective action on issues of common concern;
- 5) enable young women to extend their knowledge and experience to other young women with similar concerns;
- 6) provide improved and more equitable access of young women to social and community resources.

The project commenced in February 1991. A youth worker was employed on a sessional basis to facilitate the project's development. This worker began to contact individual young women to consult with them about what they wanted and how the project should be developed. The outcome of these consultations was the formation of the Wild Women's Group.

Group Issues

A number of issues emerged in the process of meeting with the young women, both individually and as a group. Because of space constraints this article outlines the most prominent issues which arose for this group.

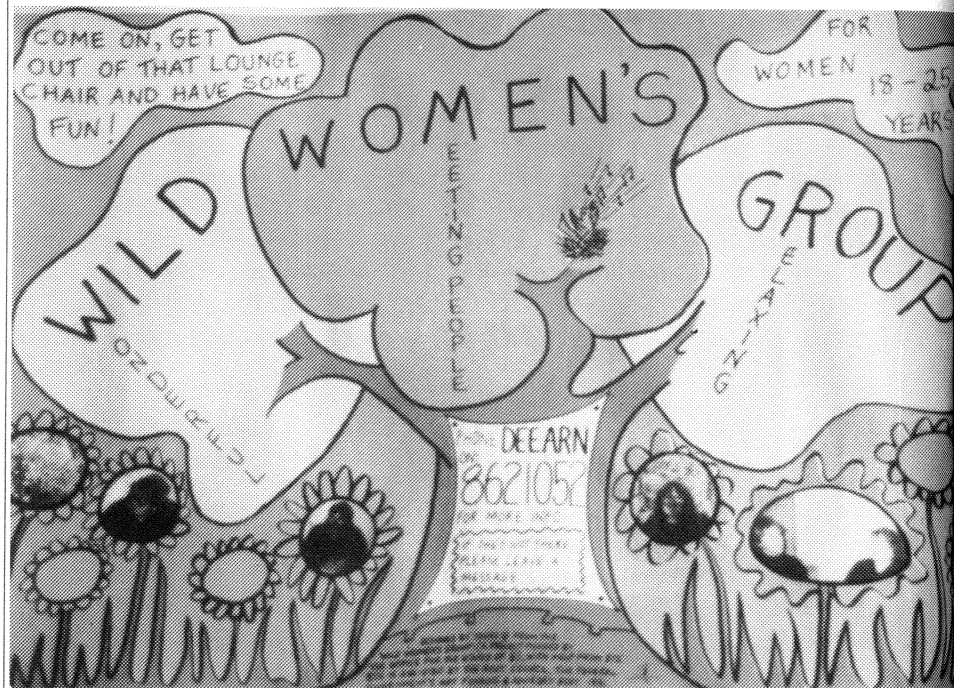
The Young Women's Perspectives

From the outset the consultations revealed that there were many young women who were eager to become involved in a group of some sort. The requests and suggestions however, as to what the group should do, were many and varied. Some young women wanted to socialise, others wanted to have fun, and others wanted to address issues such as rape and young women's housing needs. The challenge for the workers was to ensure that the processes established between participants respected the different needs and expectations of individuals while preserving the developing cohesiveness of the group.

The experience to date has been that different needs get met at different times, with the group changing its focus according to its composition. The more independent and confident the young women the greater their interest in exploring women's issues, whereas women who have lower levels of autonomy express a need for social contact and time out.

Obstacles

The major obstacles which acted as deterrents for the women attending the group included the necessity to catch public transport and their lack of knowledge or fear about doing so. Simply being confronted with a new and unknown situation - a new environment, with new people and new experiences - evoked uncertainty in many new participants. Wherever possible the worker endeavoured to meet with young women prior to group



meetings. This gave the young women an opportunity to become familiar with the worker and to hear more about the group. Often the worker would support their efforts to use public transport in getting to the group. Time and resource constraints did not enable the worker to respond to all the additional support needs of the young women. For those young women involved in other aspects of the CLP program support was forthcoming from other staff.

Psycho-social Influences

The young women's level of autonomy and self esteem clearly influenced their ability to begin and sustain membership in the group. Family and peers were very influential in supporting, encouraging or deterring their involvement. Family fears, questions and attitudes could not be dismissed. The attitudes of friends or partners were also influential. These significant others could feel threatened and subsequently undermine a daughter's or friend's involvement in a group which was outside of the sphere of influence and was promoting their participation in the wider community.

Despite the very strong desire for a close female friend many young women were fearful of getting close to other women. Previous negative experiences of

relationships with women made participation in a women's only project a risky business for some young women.

For others it was fear of what the experience will raise for them as women and how this could impact on their feelings about themselves and their relationships with others. For example, when the group raised issues in relation to sexuality, it heightened awareness of gaps in intimate relationships and it exposed participants to new ways of relating.

The group is ongoing and it has considerable potential to build on these developments and explore more fully the interests and concerns of the young women involved. The current issue is whether resource constraints will enable this potential to be fully realised.

Consistency and Routine

The importance of consistency and routine became increasingly apparent as the project progressed. The Wild Women's Group identified their need to meet at a set place and time. This saved confusion and established a safe context from which they could explore new environments that otherwise are often too threatening to enter, for example, coffee shops, restaurants or theatres.

Self Image

Low self esteem and underdeveloped communication skills did hinder many young women from participating fully in the group. The challenge for the worker was to facilitate communication between members when their own self doubts and fears made it very difficult for them to deal with the conflicts which inevitably arose as the group developed.

The need to be liked and accepted was very strong amongst participants. When young women were challenged, disagreed with or were misunderstood by others, they dealt with it by either withdrawing into themselves - no longer risking to speak or be active - or no longer coming to future group meetings. At other times to steer clear of issues that aroused conflict, they made successful efforts to change the subject, distract, or simply agree with their adversary to avoid an argument.

Role of the Worker

Responding to group conflicts was difficult for a sole worker. Not only did individuals need assistance in communicating their needs and feelings, the group processes needed to be challenged and encouraged. When an additional worker was employed this task became less arduous, enabling each worker to respond to different individuals while promoting the development of the group. Follow-up however, will still need to occur with individual young women to assist them to deal with those issues and concerns that arise as a result of their participation. Like any group it is not immune to scapegoating, power plays and intolerance of difference. Workers need to be able to challenge the group and assist those more vulnerable individuals if safe and satisfying participation is to be experienced by all.

Reflections

Disability in the youth sector is somewhat of an enigma. Despite the

youth work experience of the project worker, considerable uncertainty was experienced at the outset in relation to their ability to work in this area.

Yet the actual experience of meeting and working with the women underlined the reality that young people with a disability are, above all else, *young people*. They experience the same issues as the general youth population in relation to their health, housing, financial security and relationships.

For a worker with young people with a disability the differences lie not with the issues but in the pace the work needs to take. For example, a mild intellectual disability in a young woman challenges a worker to take the time to enable that young woman to understand and use a train timetable. The temptation to be directive rather than encouraging has to be resisted otherwise workers fall into the trap of replicating what has always happened for these young women growing up.

People too often assume that young people with a disability are incapable of completing a task for themselves. The outcome is that they are constantly denied opportunities and the time and space of their own to do their own growing and achieving.

The young women who made up the Wild Women's Group wanted opportunities to be with other young women. They decided to produce a poster about the group. They did this and personally delivered the posters to community agencies in contact with other young women.

Enabling the young women to take the lead in these activities had other positive outcomes. It exposed them to a range of people and agencies and to the services and resources they had to offer. It also promoted their confidence in meeting new people and communicating their wants and needs.

If the worker had taken a leading role the young women's own personal doubts and dependencies could have been reinforced, along with the limited notions of others about young people with disabilities.

Conclusion

The experience of working with this group of young women has demonstrated that the work is not that different from working with young women in general. The challenge for youth agencies is not to be overwhelmed by fears or uncertainties of *how* to respond to young people with disabilities. For workers the challenge is to take the initiative and reach out and involve these young people in opportunities which will enable them to articulate and satisfy *their* own needs.

Endnotes and References

1. The Community Living Program is a community based organisation funded by the Commonwealth Government which supports young people with a mild intellectual disability to live independently in the community.
2. Zig Zag Young Women's Resource Centre is a community based organisation that responds to young women's issues through individual and group work with young women, community education and political lobbying.
3. The National Agenda for Women Grants Program is administered by the Office of the Status of Women, Dept of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The program aims to enhance the status of women in Australia by making yearly grants of up to \$25,000 available to selected organisations. The CLP/Zig Zag women's project group applied for a project grant of \$10,000 to be substantially used to employ a worker.

Palmer, D and Woodcroft-Lee, C.P., (1990) "Women of the shadow universe", in *National Women's Conference*, Canberra, September.

Carol Graham was employed as project worker for the Wild Women's Group. Her previous experience includes five years with the Brisbane Youth Service.

Anna Spencer is employed as a family worker with the Community Living Program. She has extensive experience of young women's issues through working in both the government and non-government sector.

this is the way of life here

YOUNG WOMEN'S ISSUES IN REMOTE AND ISOLATED AREAS

JO JARVIS

Jo Jarvis, a volunteer youth worker, has been meeting with a group of young women in Charleville aged 13-15 for over thirteen months. With the exception of one, they have spent the majority of their lives (if not all) living in Charleville or remote towns nearby. The following is an overview of issues facing young women in remote and isolated areas as experienced by this group.

- Nothing to do - no cinema, no drive-in, no sports centre, no McDonalds or other fast food outlets, no shops.
- Health - no female doctors to talk to.
- Finances - very little work available. Even if you get some there is nothing interesting to spend your money on.
- Few people to talk to - not many counsellors to relate to for advice and creative ideas.
- No access to services and information.

This is how a group of young women belonging to "Lowanna Kotara" ("girls' group") view life in south-west Queensland.

There is the attitude that this is the way life is here - you've just got to make the most of it. This may mean joining local sporting groups (sometimes the only organised, regular activity). For others, the alternatives are hanging around town with friends or staying home.

Efforts by the community to get things going (Youth Club Skating, movies etc.) often prove frustrating because attendance is erratic. Perhaps this is because the young people feel cheated and don't believe the community is really committed to their wellbeing.

My aim in working with the young women of *Lowanna Kotara* is to give them a vision for life beyond Charleville and also to encourage and teach them there is hope and purpose in life and

that they can become fulfilled and vital people right where they are.

This has not been an easy task but I believe they are starting to learn it is possible. It has taken lots of time and effort and a genuine desire to be their friends, to share my life and home with them. I believe anything less would have hindered the help and advice I have been able to give to these young women. I believe this is the reason there is such good attendance at Lowanna Kotara meetings. The only reason they don't come is if they are sick or out of town.

I think one of the major things to consider when looking at the issues facing young women in remote and isolated areas is the fact that there will always be people in these areas and there is a need to help them realise their uniqueness and positive qualities. I believe that the lack of entertainment, services, money, etc., can be an excellent opportunity to develop personal character and ingenuity. The most needed stimulus to achieve this is people with a positive attitude. I believe there are many opportunities that are not taken and developed because of the "it'll never work out here" mentality of the locals. Discouragement is a very real problem but I believe this can be overcome with a team approach and good contact with other people in the same role in neighbouring areas and in the more urban areas.

I think an educational approach of "where to go" when advice or help is

needed would be useful, but the best way to really help is to attract positive people who have a *long term* commitment to dealing with issues and are willing to become a part of the community and become friends with the locals. I have noticed that people who have lived most of their lives here are suspicious of new folks with new ideas and workers must be willing to show they have the best interests of the locals and their community at heart. This takes time and effort. Quick fixes will not have lasting effects. Trust needs to be established before any real progress can be made.

There are many positive qualities about life in remote and isolated areas, but the problems the young women identified are also very real. In addition I would like to add:

- Family breakdown is a very real threat to young women, along with incest and physical abuse, which lead to low self esteem, hard exteriors and strong independence. Caring support is greatly needed.
- Underage drinking is also a major problem, resulting partly from few constructive entertainment options and the fact that pubs are one of the few meeting places. Drinking is considered an acceptable past-time and is not strongly policed.
- Teenage pregnancy is also high, with many young women opting to keep their babies and become single mothers.



- Crisis housing for young women who are not yet able to live by themselves is also a major problem. Young women whose families have broken down have few, if any, alternative places to go.

I believe many of the problems mentioned can be overcome if they are not blown out of proportion and if people are willing to take the time and trouble to invest their hearts and heads. Some of the problems mentioned, I believe, are attitude problems. Every community has its problems, but a realistic look at what they are at the grass roots level will also provide some insight into ways to solve them.

I guess one of the biggest lessons I have learnt in the two years I have been an active participant in a remote community such as Charleville is that my ideas and hopes will come to nothing if I do not have the best interests of these people at heart and the perseverance to withstand their testing and probing to check out if I mean what I say.

Problems faced by young women in remote areas are magnified by the very fact of geographic isolation. The young women need to know that their best interests are at heart, that workers are willing to hang in there and really help, if they are to have any hope of believing in themselves and overcoming the difficulties that face them.



Jo Jarvis is a volunteer youth-worker who has trained and worked with Cornerstone Christian Communities for three years. She has been living and working in Charleville for two years and established Lowanna Kotara in October 1990.

Young Parents Program

A Health Support Service for Young Women

WHO WE ARE

The Young Parents Program is a community based health and support service for young women who are pregnant or parents. We are located in a suburban house in Kedron and service the Northside of Brisbane. Young Parents Program works closely with staff at the Royal Women's Hospital.

WHAT WE OFFER

• Groups

We run two ongoing weekly groups for young women. One for pregnant women aged 18 years and under and one for young mothers. The group for pregnant women has a strong antenatal education focus. Both groups are friendly and informal and are for:

- fun
- to meet people and make new friends
- to find out more about pregnancy, labour and being a parent
- talking and listening
- information on a range of topics of interest to young women such as health matters, child care, assertiveness, relationships, housing, social security.

• Health Service

The service employs a community midwife to work with young pregnant women who have little social support, particularly those who are homeless or living in inadequate accommodation. The midwife works as an independent practitioner and provides the following services:

Clinical Services

The midwife provides a share care service in conjunction with a specialist at the Royal Women's Hospital. The midwife carries out urine testing and monitors blood pressure and foetal growth. She will also assist young women to arrange and attend specialist

appointments at the Royal Women's Hospital when necessary.

Health Education

Information is provided to young women on a range of topics such as diet in pregnancy, labour and pain relief, breast and bottle feeding, preparing for hospital and taking the baby home. The midwife provides support throughout a young woman's pregnancy and will visit women at home and after birth. She is also available to support women during labour.

The Young Parents Program also provides individual counselling and referral to young women. Staff at the program are involved in community education.



CURRENT STAFF AT THE PROGRAM

Coordinator:	Michelle Futur
Midwife:	Carol Le Brocq
Administrator:	Claire Ward
Youth Worker:	Shelly Neilson
Placements:	Social Work students from the University of Queensland are regularly placed.

HISTORY OF YPP

The Young Parents Program commenced in 1986 to address a wide range of needs faced by young pregnant women and young parents. At any one time there are approximately 90 women, aged 18 years and under, registered for antenatal care at the Royal Women's Hospital, Brisbane. Social Work staff at the hospital were concerned that young women were not utilising established antenatal services to the extent they could. This was thought to be due to a number of factors:

- the clinical setting of the hospital being intimidating;
- staff attitudes may be perceived as being judgemental;
- young women may feel under-confident, anxious about pregnancy or birth or embarrassed about the changes to their bodies;
- antenatal services being lecture-based and very much like school.

In addition, hospital social workers felt there was a need for follow-up of young women after the birth of their babies, to provide support and access to resources. For many women, motherhood is an isolating and lonely experience, and it was felt there was a need to improve access for young mothers to existing community resources and networks.

The Young Parents Program commenced with two Social Work students from the University of Queensland on placement

INFORMATION ON

BIRTH
HEALTH
PREGNANCY
CHILDCARE
HOUSING
MONEY



in February 1986. Since then, students have developed the program, running self help groups for both pregnant women and young mums. To ensure continuity and expansion of the program, funding for a full-time worker was obtained under the Family Support Program (Qld). A social worker commenced employment in June 1987.

Employment of the social worker facilitated:

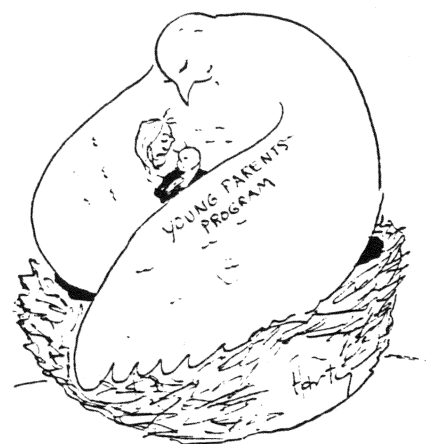
- Granting of funds in late 1988 from the Neighbourhood Centres Program to purchase premises. A house in Kedron was purchased, where the program is now based. The office is a pleasant house in a suburban street and close to public transport. Group meetings are held on the premises.
- Development of community networks and encouragement of referral from non-hospital sources.
- Diversification of service.
- Policy and research work and the development of links across the health, education and welfare sectors.
- Community development approach, with the worker able to assist community groups to develop responses to, and resources for, young parents.

During 1991, the Young Parents Program implemented and developed an Outreach Midwifery Service. Funding for the Midwife and Outreach Youth Worker was obtained from Queensland

Health under the Innovative Health Services for Homeless Youth Program.

THE FUTURE

In 1992 the Young Parents Program is planning to offer a wider range of support groups to young women with children as part of a joint project with the Brisbane Youth Service. The groups will focus on parenting and self-esteem issues and will be offered on an ongoing basis during the first six months of the year.



For more information
contact

Young Parents Program,
119 Stafford Rd, Kedron
4030 on (07) 357 9944.

Gender Issues in the Youth Field

— SUZI QUIXLEY —

Social unrest springs from an awareness of social inequality and a personal discontent. These problems are seen as social problems needing collective action, rather than individual issues with personal solutions.

(Rowland 1984: 3-4)

In this paper I will argue that the world, and hence the youth field, is "sexist". This sexism is based on widely held gender assumptions.

It is important at the outset to understand some key words and what they mean. Many trendy words have been bandied around; often the words used in the debate over sexism have been mystified and misinterpreted; certainly, the debate has generally been used to generate conflict and division between people.

"Gender" means something different to "sex". Describing someone as being of a particular sex is a matter of fact. "Gender" moves beyond these facts and is used to describe social assumptions that women and men have different characteristics, abilities and behaviours arising from their sex. These cannot be demonstrated as being biologically connected with sex differences.

The definition of "human nature" is an abode of sexist assumptions. Until recently, few questioned the idea that to be biologically male or female predetermined a set role in society, beyond the limits of physical differences. "Masculinity" and "femininity" were perceived as "natural" outcomes of biological differences. This type of definition led to the legitimisation of clearly differentiated sex-role stereotypes for women and men in society. Social structures such as hierarchy as a means of organisation, and the 'nuclear family' as the 'building block of society', similarly took on the status of being "normal" (despite historical and anthropological evidence to the contrary).

It cannot be proven that *any* particular behaviours, attitudes, skills, values or other characteristics are *biologically* based in sex differences. Equally, we cannot prove that they are not. What we can readily demonstrate, however, is the *massive* level of socialisation in those roles that occur to all of us from birth. Sex-role stereotypes are evident in the treatment received from both people and structures from birth. Think of the key question asked as soon as a baby is born... "What is it?" The nature/nurture debate then, is the debate over whether the differences we see between the sexes

are naturally occurring (inherent) or socially taught (socialised).

In a sense, it doesn't matter at this point in time, whether sex roles are inherent or socialised; nature or nurture. The fact is that many of the limiting roles placed on men and women are taught. Until we can take this teaching out of the equation, we cannot possibly judge the viability of the "nature" position.

Women and men are being limited to particular roles assumed to be connected with their sex. Almost every function in this society is defined as "male" or "female". Because of this sex-role stereotyping, most people are not given the opportunity to really explore opportunities outside of their prescribed gender role. This is a pity, since society loses an enormous amount of potential from individual men and women who might better contribute through roles ascribed to the opposite sex.

Sex-role stereotyping is also sexist. Because of the wider range of roles attributed to men, than women, this affects women far more than it does men. The impact of lack of opportunity for women in particular is doubled, when one realises that the roles which are ascribed to women are generally socially valued far less than those ascribed to

“ The oppression of women is so deeply institutionalised, legitimised and perpetrated within this society that it occurs without the need for any conscious consideration or effort. ”

men. (For example, money is the measure of power, status and achievement in Western culture ... the key gender roles of "wife" and "mother" are not financially rewarded ones.)

One way in which women's and men's roles are differently valued is by the

division of society into public and private spheres. Operating in the public sphere (eg. the world of work) attracts social benefits. This mainly happens through economics - the main method of acknowledgement in a society based on capital. Women's roles are seen as supportive of men's roles. They do not operate autonomously, and receive material reward for their contribution at the discretion of men (eg. their husband, father or the State). The training for acting on these differences relates to many areas of life. For example, the notion that knowledge exists only if it can be rationally (ie. emotionlessly) argued, places a particular value on knowledge. It makes knowledge an essentially male-defined commodity, since men are *taught* to think in this way, whereas women are *taught* to think in emotional terms in preparation for their role as nurturers and supporters of men and children.

Given the material basis of society, ownership is the key to social status. Given that men have the primary means to own things, women have become part of men's property. Men attract status according to the behaviour/role-adherence of "their" wives. They are encouraged to see themselves as emasculated if they are in a situation where women play a strong role in their lives (eg. a female boss, a strong willed wife). This message is particularly reinforced by the media, where women are taught to "package" themselves as either a sex object or a wife/mother.

If women are objects (or property), then they are "for sale". The notion of women as men's property legitimises sexual harassment in both the public and private sphere. (This explains the hesitance of the State to intervene in "private family matters" such as child abuse and domestic violence. It also relates to the importance of marriage ... a married woman is clearly the responsibility of one man.)

Language is often used as one form of sexist harassment. At the overt level use of different words to describe the same behaviour in the case of men and women (men "discuss" / women "gossip"; men "laugh" / women "giggle") is a form of sexual harassment. At a deeper structural level, there is not a single

word describing women in the English language which is fully positive, and most are bound to stereotypes of women. Social values are reinforced through the use of different descriptors indicating similar behaviour (eg. sexually active young women are "sluts", but young men are "studs".)

Use of the word "patriarchy" has often been assumed to be an anti-male statement. In fact, it is a purely descriptive word. It describes the multi-faceted system in society which operates to serve

oppression. So too, is the rule of those from non-Western cultures by Europeans, or of the disabled by the able-bodied, of the homosexual by the heterosexual. It describes any situation in which a structural power imbalance exists between different social groups, and can then be applied to an individual level.

The "dominant culture" then, are the group (maybe 5% - 10% of the population) who decide what is "normal", "natural" or "true". These values are



... and then he said, "What's gender got to do with men!"

men's interests at the expense of women's interests - that is, to maintain an unequal system. Patriarchy exists at all levels - in the structures of society (eg. hierarchical), the assumptions by which we live/work (eg. sex role stereotyping) and in our 1:1 interactions (eg. who stays sober to drive!?) In other words, it is *integral* to our society. We have *all*, women and men, integrated patriarchal values to the extent that often we are not even aware of acting from these assumptions. Patriarchy is frequently so internalised, that we perceive its values as "normal", "natural" or "true".

The idea of "oppression", too, is often misrepresented. It describes any situation in which the powerful rule over the powerless in some patterned manner. In other words, the rule of women by men is described as

then promoted to the whole community through a range of subtle and not-so-subtle means. It's not even this simple. In the case of sexism, the dominant culture at this time may not have even considered the need to promote their ideology at all ... the structures and assumptions that underlie the oppression of women have been in place for thousands of years. The oppression of women is so deeply institutionalised, legitimised and perpetrated within this society that it occurs without the need for any conscious consideration or effort. It is "normal". Both women and men continually act out "their" role as a matter of "ordinary" life interaction. Frequently, *neither* is aware of the fact that they are operating on the basis of *assumptions, expectations and norms* which cannot be demonstrated to be correct.

So how does this relate to the youth field?

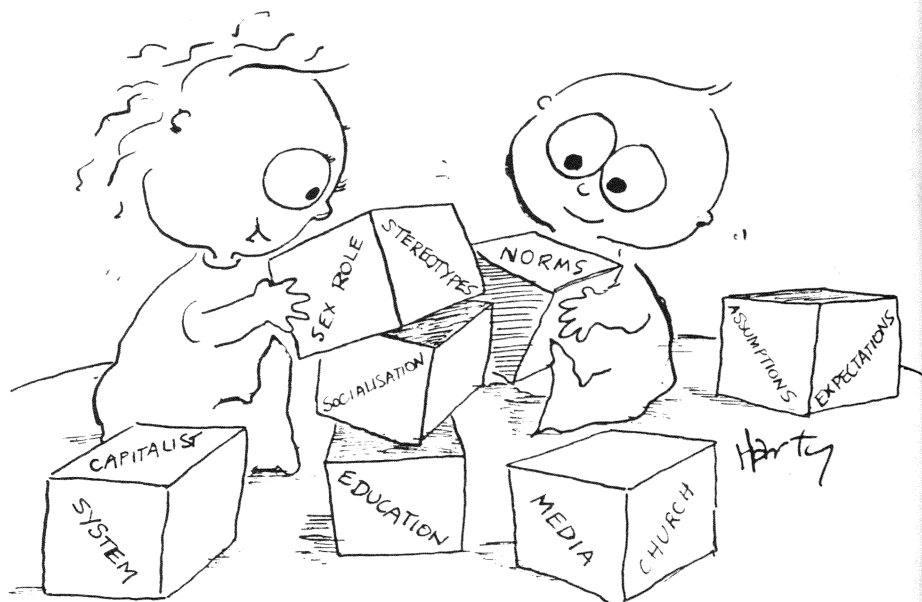
One way of looking at the way gender is institutionalised in the lives of young people, youth workers, workers with youth and the structure of the field, is to examine the various systems which operate in society and the field.

The Church System

It is interesting that the church has largely discarded the details of Judaistic beliefs (the Old Testament) in favour of New Testament teachings. Despite the teachings of Christ, the one major exception is the continued belief in a subordinate role for women. Some of the implications of this have been: women being treated as property to be passed from father to husband on their wedding day, the role of women as the nurturers of men and children, the location of women's lives in the domestic/private world (and of men's in the public/social world ... even within much of the Church itself!), women's lack of right to control their own bodies/reproduction, and the delegation of "women's work" to a servile function which is not economically valued.

The Capitalist System

Within this system, the power is held by those with the most money ... men own 98% of the world's wealth! Accordingly, women have little say in how that wealth is distributed. Under capitalism, women have constantly provided a reserve labour force. With the exception of war-time, women have been located in servile occupations. 63% of paid women workers are concentrated in 3 areas (retail/sales, clerical and service); all but 2% of young women apprentices are hairdressers; 41% of women professionals are nurses and 36% are teachers (ABS 1983). Despite the so-called "equal pay provisions", the average wage for women continues to be significantly less than that for men. In 1984, women's average income was only 76.4% of men's (Jones in Broom 1984:106). This is



because the occupations women traditionally fill are treated as unequal work. The sexual division of labour is a convenient mechanism for retaining women's dependence on men, and their poverty, if 'unattached'. Ten times as many women as men are on pensions/benefits, and women are five times as likely as men to be living in poverty (Gardiner & O'Neill 1987:2). A recent survey (Anderson & Blakers 1984:5) found that if "hidden unemployment" was included (eg. young women undertaking domestic duties rather than registering as unemployed, young single mothers), 83% of young people not connected to the workforce or education were young women.

The capitalist system also benefits enormously from the promotion of the nuclear family as "normal" (particularly by the Church). Creation of a large number of small isolated units of people,

“Sex-role stereotypes are evident in the treatment received from both people and structures from birth.”

generates consumer demands greater than those in more frequently occurring family systems (which have occurred in other societies and our own throughout history). This produces an (ever increasing) demand for mass production of goods and services. (For example, an

extended family of 15 might share a washing machine. If these people are separately located as 3, 4 or 5 families, they require a washing machine each.)

The Media System

Another 'outreach program' of the capitalist system, the media, is owned and controlled by the dominant culture. Young women are encouraged to buy the right make-up, wear the right clothes, starve to the requisite weight ... in short, to develop an image which is appealing to young men. The goal is the 'romantic myth' - settling into the arms of a single young man. Little is suggested in young women's magazines about what should happen next, though it is implied that they have two options - to become an (invisible) wife and mother, to do two jobs - the 'superwoman' who parents husband and children and also works for pay. Certainly, consumption of a large number of consumer goods is a part of either/both possible life directions. Over 50% of media revenue in Australia comes from advertising; women spend 80% of the money outlaid on consumer goods!

Given the interest of the dominant culture in maintaining this situation, it is not surprising that the image presented of the women's/feminist movement is twofold - either, of women seeking equal pay (which has been achieved!?!), or of the 'radical fringe' - women not satisfied with this achievement because they hate men!

The Justice System

The vast majority of young women in custody are under "protective" orders of some kind, usually related to being victims of sexual abuse or being sexually active. In fact, a recent Victorian study found that 92% of incarcerated young women (compared with 10% of boys in similar institutions) were there for their own "care and protection" (Gardiner & O'Neill 1987:4).

Tax laws discriminate against young women earning their own/second (!) income; criminal law penalises young prostitutes but not their clients; few States legislate against husbands raping "their" wives; in practice, the onus remains upon

"We have barely begun to seriously explore the best means of working with young women."

a young woman to prove that she was raped beyond 'any imaginable doubt'; young women are penalised more heavily for similar criminal offences than young men, nationally (ibid:4).

The Health System

The legitimate self-doubts, tensions and fears arising from women's training (...women really only have two potential roles - as a sex object or a wife/mother) and experience (...it's widely held that at least 50% of young women have been abused by 18 years old) are constantly treated as neuroses. Women are taught to accept the authority of a (male) doctor who "knows", to accept drugs of dependence to block their tensions, to use drugs with known side-effects and possible linkages to cancer to control their reproduction. The health system has done little to improve women's self-concept, and, arguably has done more harm than good in the areas of both physical and mental health for young women.

It is interesting to note the link between the juvenile justice system and the health system. An excellent video "Open Tantrum" which was made in Queensland, noted the process of young women who graduated from juvenile justice institutions to psychiatric services. Aberrant young women are either "bad" or "mad"!

The Education System

This system reflects and reinforces the predominant sexist values of society. Teachers pay significantly more attention to boys in class, and assess the same behaviour in different ways (eg. girls "bitch" / boys "disagree").

Girls are structurally and personally discouraged from studying maths and sciences, despite a recent study which showed that 83% of jobs require maths and sciences (Ingvarson & Jones in Morgan 1986:9). At a structural level, frequently "girls" and "boys" subjects are simultaneously timetabled which forces a consistent choice between 'streams' of subjects, examples and illustrations in key school texts relate to boys' experiences and men's achievements more often than women's, and generally, boys' childhood toys provide preparation for academic thinking not experienced by girls.

On a more personal level, there is some evidence of young women experiencing a 'fear of success' and of harassment of young women undertaking 'non-traditional' subjects by boys in their classes.

Despite the fact that numerous studies argue that single sex classes improve young women's learning, few such classes exist. Is this because young men's learning is lessened in single sex settings?

Despite the fact that most women will spend almost as much time in the paid workforce as men (on current estimates, 50% compared with approximately 65% of their life ... or 10 years less), young women still perceive a narrow range of occupational choices for themselves - a view that is consistently reinforced by parents, career guidance officers, teachers and the media.

Where to from here?

This paper has attempted a "broad brush" analysis of gender issues in society generally, with youth field examples. If we are to tackle these issues seriously, we must develop clear individual and collective *visions* of how we want the world, and the field, to look/act/be in relation to gender issues. Within the field, this includes a picture of worker/management relations, worker/worker relations, worker/youth relations and youth/youth relations. Only then can we seriously tackle developing day-to-day *strategies* toward achieving our vision.

The field of 'work with young women' is a new one. We have barely begun to seriously explore the best means of working with young women. Most of our work is based in models developed over time for work with young men (the primary target of youth work, historically).

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- Rowland, R. (Ed.) (1984) Women Who Do & Women Who Don't Join the Women's Movement, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Suzi Quixley is a freelance worker in the youth sector involved in research, training, writing and relief work. Suzi's speech formed a Keynote Address at the NT Youth Affairs Conference in Darwin, 30 April 1991.

Women's Policy Unit

OFFICE OF THE CABINET

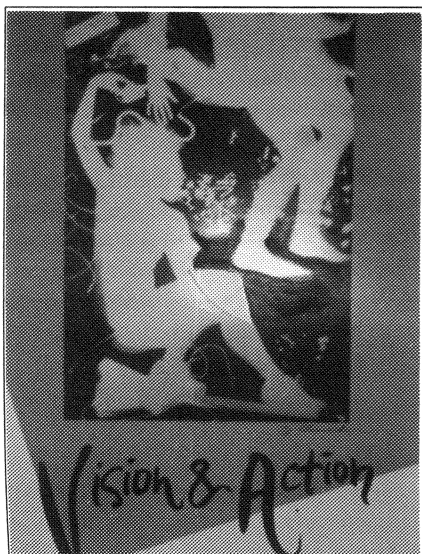
The Women's Policy Unit is responsible for implementing Government policy to improve the position of women in Queensland. The work of the unit covers two main areas:

- policy coordination, through its Policy Coordination Section, and
- information dissemination, through Women's Infolink.

The role of the Unit includes:

Policy Coordination

- the development of policy options and policy advice
- monitoring the impact of specific policies upon women
- coordination across Government Departments in relation to women's policy issues
- participation in the development and assessment of submissions and advice for the Honourable the Premier, and through the Premier to Cabinet



- liaison with other Government (Commonwealth, State and Local) and non-Government organisations

Women's Infolink

- the provision of information and referral services to women
- the development of strategies to maximise women's access to information.

In fulfilling its role, the Women's Policy Unit is undertaking a range of activities to address key issues for Queensland women.

Some of the current areas of activity by the Women's Policy Unit include the following:

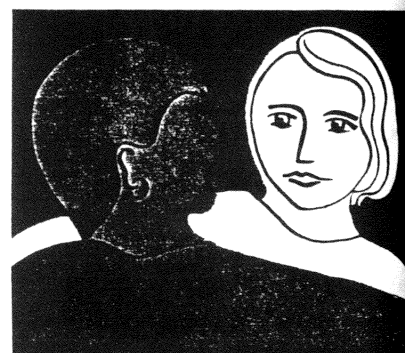
- An Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC) on Women's Policy has been established to develop a coordinated Government response on matters affecting women. Working groups of the IDC are looking at the issues of violence against women and economic equality.
- A Women's Budget Statement was produced in association with the 1991/92 State Budget. This statement highlighted specific Government initiatives for women and assessed the impact of general policies and programs on women.
- A conference "Balancing the Gains" on Women, Efficiency and Award Restructuring has been held. Outcomes from the conference are being considered within the context of the Women and Economic Equality Strategy.

• Projects have been commissioned to research equity and award restructuring issues for women. Papers from completed research are available in published form.

• An Information Strategy for Regional, Rural and Remote Women is being finalised to ensure that the Women's Policy Unit is accessible to all Queensland women.

There are three issues which have been targeted for consideration by the Women's Policy Unit in its first year of operation. They are:

- women and violence
- consultation mechanisms
- women and economic equality.



The Unit is interested in seeking the views of all women in Queensland on these issues, and will be providing policy advice on the implications of these issues for Government action.

Views will be particularly welcome on how each issue affects young women.

If you wish to comment on aspects of the present priorities or to raise further issues, the Women's Policy Unit would be pleased to hear from you. Contact:

Ms Carolyn Mason: Director
Women's Policy Unit and Women's
Advisor to the Premier
Office of the Cabinet
PO Box 390
North Quay Qld 4002
Ph: (07) 224 4062

research

update

research

Youth Initiatives Program

In response to the Human Rights Commission Inquiry into Youth Homelessness (The Burdekin Report) funding was first made available in the 1989/90 financial year for innovative pilot projects for homeless young people in the form of the Youth Initiatives Program (YIP) under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP).

The aim of YIP is to assist homeless young people under 18 years of age, including those aged 12-15 years. Within this age group special priority is made for:

- *chronically homeless young people, namely those who are in crisis with multiple problems and who are therefore long-term homeless*
- *Aboriginal young people*
- *young parents, particularly single parents.*

In the 1990/1991 financial year funding was again made available under YIP for non-recurrent grants. This has provided a number of youth services with an opportunity to conduct developmental projects, some of which will have state-wide effects as seminars, kits, reports and/or documentation become available.

The following agencies were successful in their application for a non-recurrent grant. Their research projects are outlined below.

YOUNG WOMEN'S PLACE (TOOWOOMBA)

Young Women's Place received a non-recurrent grant of \$33,665 for research into the needs of young women in the Toowoomba and District Region. Yonna Powell was employed in November 1991 as Research Project Worker to conduct a twelve month Action Research Plan into the needs of young women aged 18 years and under. Objectives of the research include giving young women an opportunity to identify and speak to their needs and implementing programs to adequately service the needs of young people. Methodology of the research will incorporate one to one interviews and ongoing group-work sessions.

Established in late 1991 Young Women's Place takes a holistic, preventative approach to working with young women, pro-actively addressing issues such as domestic violence and sexual abuse. Focus of the research project will be in line with ongoing service areas of Young Women's Place, namely health, education, housing, employment and interpersonal relationships.

For more information contact
Yonna Powell on (076) 329 481.

BURRAGAH ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER ADVANCEMENT COOPERATIVE SOCIETY (WOODRIDGE)

Burrarah Aboriginal and Islander Advancement Cooperative Society received a non-recurrent grant of \$27,000 to undertake research into the needs of homeless Aboriginal and Islander young people in Logan and surrounding areas. Colin Smith and Martin Watago were appointed as Research Workers in October 1991.

The aim of the research is to identify problems Aboriginal and Islander young people face so that adequate services and facilities can be established. A camp was successfully held as a means for the young people to talk informally and openly about their needs. A range of issues was covered from alcohol and drug abuse, crime and domestic violence to lack of accommodation and affordable recreational facilities.

The long-term goal of the project is to establish programs, support services and recreational facilities for Aboriginal and Islander young people. A report is expected in March 1992.

For more information contact
Colin or Martin on (07) 209 4744.

BEAUDESERT INTERAGENCY (BEAUDESERT)

Sponsored by the Beaudesert Shire Council, the Beaudesert Interagency received a non-recurrent grant of \$29,010 to conduct research into the trends and needs of homeless young people in the Beaudesert Shire region. Maree Machin commenced employment as Project Consultant in November 1991 to identify the needs of homeless young people aged 12 to 18 years, with a specific focus on Aboriginal and Islander young people, single parents and young people at risk.

The research aims to highlight and document gaps in service provision for homeless young people. Objectives of the research include establishing a series of recommendations for further action by relevant local, state and Commonwealth government departments and non-government agencies; minimising duplication and promoting coordination of services; and raising community awareness of community needs and services not being adequately met.

research

Methodology of the research incorporates surveys, consultations, literature reviews and statistical base establishment. An Agency Consultation Meeting was held in late January, three Public Meetings are planned for late February and a Youth Forum will be held on 14 March to be organised and conducted by a core group of young people. It is envisaged that documentation will be available in April 1992.

For more information contact
Maree on (07) 357 9690.

CAPRICORN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (ROCKHAMPTON)

Central Queensland received a non-recurrent grant of \$30,000 for research into the needs of homeless young women. The grant is being sponsored by the Capricorn Community Development Association Inc. and has been allocated to two organisations: Toonooba, an Aboriginal welfare organisation which is part of the Careforce network and the Young Women's Support Service. Both are based in Rockhampton.

Karyn Olive has been appointed by Careforce/Toonooba for five months to undertake research into the needs of homeless young aboriginal women in the Rockhampton district. It is expected that the project will be focussing specifically on health, education and accommodation issues, as well as the nature and adequacies of service provision in the area.

The two staff of the Young Women's Support Service, Melanie Doyle and Peta Lloyd, are using an action research approach which will extend over a year. Objectives of the research include involving young women in the development of the service, docu-

update

menting accommodation and related support services, providing young women with information in the areas of health, accommodation, education and relationships and organising special workshops on these issues.

For more information contact
Karyn on (079) 279 129 or Melanie
and Peta on (079) 227 236.

CENTRE EDUCATION PROGRAM (KINGSTON)

The Centre Education Program received a non-recurrent grant of \$36,000 for a research and development project on the needs of young parents in the Logan City and North Albert area. Mandy Nielsen commenced employment in October 1991 as Research Worker for the twelve month project.

The research aims to document young women's experiences of parenthood and to develop strategies to address emerging needs. An important principle of the project is to enable young women to participate in the research process at different levels. This process involves consultations with young parents and service providers using a variety of information generating techniques, including surveys, interviews, group discussions and possibly a forum day.

The target group for the research project is pregnant young women and young mothers aged 20 years and under. Mandy is actively seeking to involve young Aboriginal and Islander parents and young parents from non-English speaking background (NESB), as well as Anglo-Asustralian young parents.

For more information on the
project please contact Mandy
at the Centre Education
Program on (07) 808 6800.

research

WHITSUNDAY FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP (PROSERPINE)

A combined grant of \$6,880 has been awarded to the Whitsunday Family Support Group by the Youth Initiatives Program (\$5,880) and the Commonwealth State Housing Program (\$1,000) to commission research into the needs of young people in the Whitsunday shire.

Brian Cheers, Richard Hill and Roseanna Bone of the Department of Social Work and Community Welfare at James Cook University have been commissioned to conduct the study: The aim of the research is to investigate the needs of young people in the Whitsunday Shire, with a particular emphasis on the needs of homeless young people in a large rural area and tourist centre.

The duration of the project is six months commencing in March 1992. A final report will be submitted to the Whitsunday Family Support Group for consideration of findings and recommendations with a view to identifying the services required to meet the particular needs of young people in the region.

The research study will be a collaborative exercise involving welfare practitioners in the Whitsunday area, as well as students from the Department of Social Work and Community Welfare. A planning meeting was held in early February during which it was agreed that the research should involve extensive semi-structuring interviews with young people, as well as interviews and discussions with service providers in the area.

For more information contact
Brian (077) 814 221
Roseanna (077) 815 154, or
Richard on (077) 814 879.

update

YIP non-recurrent grants will again be available in the 1991/1992 financial. Parties interested in applying should contact their DFSAIA Regional Manager for more information on guidelines. Deadline for applications is 30 June 1992.

DFSAIA REGIONAL MANAGERS

Brisbane North Region

Geoff Rowe
PO Box 1086
Milton Centre Qld 4064
(07) 365 9881

Brisbane South Region

Pam Spall
PO Box 540
Woolloongabba Qld 4102
(07) 391 6066

Central Queensland

Lex Burgess
PO Box 738
Rockhampton Qld 4700
(079) 31 9699

North Queensland

Majella Ryan
PO Box 5941
Townsville MC Qld 4810
(077) 22 1110

South West Queensland

Shane Ryan
PO Box 165
Ipswich Qld 4305
(07) 280 1777

Have you or your organisation got something to say ?

The Youth Affairs Network of Queensland Inc welcomes contributions to its bimonthly newsletter *Network Noise* and its journal *transitions*.

The purpose of the newsletter is to encourage the flow of information across the Queensland youth sector. It is ideal for communicating news on issues and events in an accessible, informal manner.

Is your agency:

- running workshops ?
- involved in youth programs ?
- organising youth interagency forums ?
- advertising positions vacant ?
- changing its address or phone number ?
- producing publications or videos ?
- keen to promote its service ?

If you answered yes to any of the above then write to YANQ today. Your notice will be placed in *Network Noise* free of charge !! The newsletter is distributed in January, March, May, July, September and November of each year so you have plenty of opportunity to promote your activities and services. Please send in items and information along with your phone number no later than the first of each previous month.

transitions on the other hand is a vehicle for the publication of research material of relevance to youth affairs in Queensland. The journal is distributed three times a year in February, June and October to subscribers YANQ members across the state, including government and non-government departments, youth organisations and workers with young people.

Future issues: *Policy and Practice Issues Relating to Young People* (June 1992), *Young People and Health* (October 1992) and *Aboriginal Issues* (February 1993).

Guidelines for submitting journal articles:

- The preferred length for articles is 2,000 - 3,000 words. (This is negotiable.)
- In preparing articles for publication please consider the wide range of audience - educators, policy makers, researchers, youth workers, professional and volunteer workers - and keep the writing style straight forward and accessible.
- Referencing should follow the Harvard system, citing the author's name, year of publication, title of publication, name of publisher and place of publication. (For journals, identify Volume and page numbers).
- Accompanying photographs should be sharp and clear (black and white preferred) and diagrams should clearly drawn or laser printed.

Technical requirements

- One typed hard copy - double line spacing printed on one side A4 paper.

If you have any queries or would like to make a contribution to *Network Noise* or *transitions* please contact Rita Riedel at the YANQ office on (07) 852 1800.

All contributions are welcome!

Celebrate International



Sunday

TUESDAY, 3 MARCH 1992

Creative Stress Management Workshop

2 part workshop 3 & 10 March exploring relaxation, diet and stress management techniques.

Brisbane Women's Health Centre

165 Gregory Tce, Spring Hill

\$3.00/\$1.00 concession

Contact: (07) 839 9962

THURSDAY, 5 MARCH 1992

Ministerial Policy Launch - Policy Statement on Gender Equity in Education

Mitchelton State High School

Contact: (07) 237 0810

Women's Health Course: "Making Friends with our Strengths: Self Esteem and Assertiveness"

(4 part course)

Brisbane Women's Health Centre

165 Gregory Tce, Spring Hill

\$3.00/\$1.00 concession

Contact: (07) 839 9962

FRIDAY, 6 MARCH 1992

Lunchtime forum: "Senior Public Sector Managers: Women/Equity and Management"

12.30pm

Contact: Lorelle Noble, PSMC, on

(07) 224 4195

Lunchtime forum:

"Women in Higher Education"

A luncheon sponsored by the Union of Australian College Academies

12.00pm

Room A, Parliamentary Annexe

Alice St, Brisbane - \$30.00

(UACA members will be subsidised)

Contact: (07) 397 9677

Women's Health Pavilion

The Zonta Club of the Fraser Coast Area is organising a Women's Health Pavilion at the:

Maryborough Health Expo

Main Pavilion

Maryborough Show Grounds

10.00am - 9.00pm Friday

9.00am - 4.00pm Saturday

Contact: Ms Win Collins on

(071) 219 506 wk or (071) 222 540 ah



Women's Club

Informal social function. Come along to relax after work, catch up with friends and meet new women.

Brisbane Women's Health Centre

165 Gregory Tce, Spring Hill

5.30pm - 6.30pm.

Contact: (07) 839 9962

SATURDAY, 7 MARCH 1992

Federated Clerks Union Women's Seminar

9.00am - 12.00pm

29 Amelia St, Fortitude Valley

Union members only

Contact: Rina on (07) 252 8666

International Women's Day Dance

8.00pm

Blind Hall, South Brisbane

Contact: Dee on (07) 229 1686

SUNDAY, 8 MARCH 1992

Women's Fun Run

8.00am Davies Park

Riverside Drive

West End to Botanic Gardens

Contact: (07) 237 9830

Rally and March

11.00am

Assemble King George Square

March to Botanic Gardens

Speakers, stalls and entertainment

Contact: Dee on (07) 229 1686

Departmental Stalls at the Botanic Gardens throughout the day

- Housing and Local Government
- Family Services & A&I Affairs
- TAFE/TEQ
- Women's Infolink
- Administrative Services
- Police Service
- Community organisations

Women's Day - 1992

8 March



MONDAY, 9 MARCH 1992

UNIFEM Breakfast

A fundraising breakfast hosted by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). Guest speakers: Teresita Quintos Dales - Phillipines
Hon. Paul Keating,
Hon. Wayne Goss
7.00am Hilton Hotel
Queen St, Brisbane - \$24.00/hd
Contact: (07) 369 4051



Seminar: "The Role of Unionists in the Implementation of Anti-Discrimination and EEO legislation".

Speakers: Ms Helen Twohill (HREOC)
Ms Julie Cork (PSMC)
9.00am - 12.00pm
Trades and Labor Council Building
16 Peel St, South Brisbane
Contact: Katy on (07) 846 2468

Lunchtime forum:

"Women have the Power to Change the Face of Rural Queensland".
Sponsored by the Department of Primary Industries. Speakers:
Sen. Margaret Reynolds
Ms Carolyn Mason,
Toowoomba
Contact: (076) 314 200

Lunchtime forum: "Gender Equity Policy - A Policy for the Future"

Conference Room, Ground Floor,
Education House
30 Mary St, Brisbane
12.45pm - 1.45pm
Contact: (07) 237 0810

TUESDAY, 10 MARCH 1992

Morning tea forum with Ms Teresita Dales of the Phillipines - UNIFEM Guest 1992
9.30am - 11.30am
Women's Infolink
2nd floor, Pavilion Arcade
Cnr Albert & Queen St, Brisbane
Contact: (07) 229 1686

Lunchtime forum:

"Don't let Rural Isolation be a Threat"
Sponsored by the Department of Primary Industries.
Speakers:
Police Officers/Women's Safety Project
Domestic Violence Unit/QLD Police Service
Toowoomba
Contact: (076) 314 200

Launch:

Charter of the Rights of Pregnant Workers
By Trades and Labor Council and Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission.
2.00pm
Trades and Labor Council Building
16 Peel St, South Brisbane
Contact: (07) Katy (07) 846 2468

WEDNESDAY, 11 MARCH 1992

Lunchtime forum:

"Chemical Residues: An issue Close to the Heart and Home"
Sponsored by the Department of Primary Industries.
Speakers:
Dr Lyn Clarke,
Agricultural Health Unit
Moore Hospital
Dr Elaine Brough, Entomologist, DPI
Toowoomba
Contact: (076) 314 200

Workshop: "Osteoporosis"

Facilitated by Susan Kevork, Nutritionist
Brisbane Women's Health Centre
165 Gregory Tce, Spring Hill
\$3.00/\$1.00 concession
Contact (07) 839 9962

THURSDAY, 12 MARCH 1992

Lunchtime forum:

"Increasing Opportunities for Women in Rural Industries"
Sponsored by the Department of Primary Industries.
Speakers:
Ms Jenny Mitchell,
Dept Agricultural & Rural Affairs, Victoria
Ms Helen Parker,
Qld Distance Education
Toowoomba
Contact: (076) 314 200

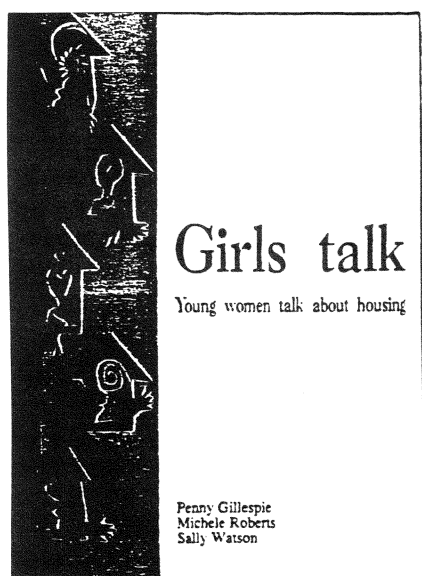
book

reviews

book

GIRLS TALK:

Young women talk about housing



Penny Gillespie, Michele Roberts & Sally Watson, Zig Zag Young Women's Resource Centre 1990, 91 pp, \$10.00. Available from Zig Zag Young Women's Resource Centre (07) 843 1823.

When "Our Homeless Children" was released in 1989, it was immediately distinguishable from most reports by its extensive use of direct quotes from young people interviewed in its preparation. "Girls Talk" uses a similar format to investigate the issues surrounding housing options available to young women and the need for change in this area. It takes the technique a step further, grouping the personal stories of 17 young women into the first half of the book and commenting on these stories (and those of a further 33 participants) only in the second half.

This arrangement emphasises that the young women involved are indeed real people, rather than mere "research subjects" and gives primacy to their own understanding of their experiences. Stories are told in total, rather than being split into small parts throughout the

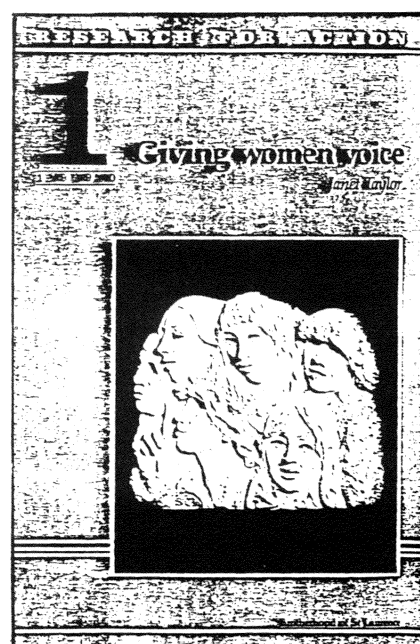
text. This allows a fuller understanding of the multiple factors which may impinge on any one young women's efforts to find and keep a roof over her head.

The second half of the book discusses the issues identified from the stories of the 50 young women involved in the project. It is emphasised that "young women" fall into diverse groups and will have different needs depending on their situations. The accommodation requirements of different groups of young women are discussed, for example, young women with children, young women with disabilities, young women from ATSI or NES backgrounds, highly mobile young women. On the other hand, common factors do emerge and general trends and principles are also discussed.

This book demonstrates that current accommodation options for young women are inadequate and change is needed. In deciding the direction for change, accommodation providers should consult those most affected - young women - who are shown here to be resourceful, determined and well able to contribute to better planning for the future.



GIVING WOMEN VOICE:
Feminism and Community
Services



Janet Taylor, Brotherhood of St Laurence 1990, 110 pp, \$13.00. Available from Brotherhood of St Laurence (03) 419 7055.

Like "Girls Talk", "Giving Women Voice" is notable for the opportunity it gives women to speak of their own experiences, in this instance as users of community services.

During 1989, 60 low-income women from inner and outer metropolitan Melbourne were interviewed and asked to describe their experiences in accessing and using community services. Participants came from varying backgrounds and ranged in age from 15 to 65, with most in their twenties and thirties. Seven different kinds of agencies were involved and most of the issues discussed are of relevance to those working with young women. Many of the matters raised - such as the right to dignity and information - are also relevant to male service users.

Janet Taylor intersperses quotes taken directly from individual interviews with

reviews

book

reviews

a commentary based on her findings from the study as a whole, which also included interviews with 20 service providers. As explained in the introduction to the text, she writes from within a "feminist practice framework" and links individual women's experiences to broader issues of inequality.

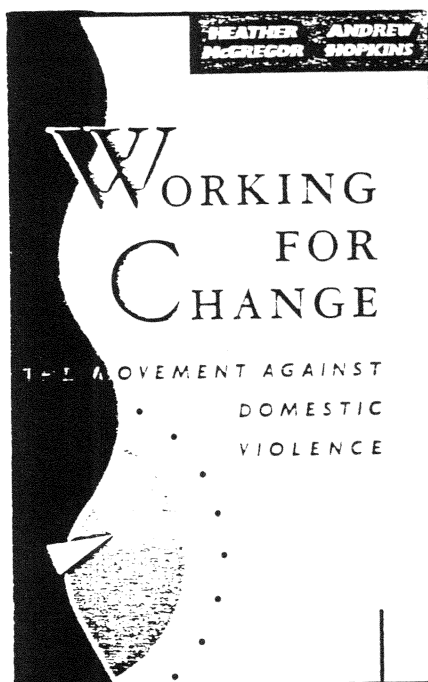
Service providers sometimes fear that a book grounded in any political theory - such as feminism - will be of little use in dealing with practical issues in their day-to-day work. However, Taylor's point is that those working in community services can learn much from the growing and diverse body of feminist thought.

Her book is ample proof; the comments of service users give a clear indication of what does and does not work for them, while service providers describe a range of strategies they have developed to make their services accessible, useful and empowering for women. Taylor's commentary highlights neatly the consistencies between different women's experiences of community agencies and ties them to a clear feminist analysis.

Written in an informal style, this is a useful text for all workers, if only to read in their own words what a group of service users think of service providers.



WORKING FOR CHANGE: The Movement Against Domestic Violence



Heather McGregor & Andrew Hopkins,
Allen & Unwin 1991, 150 pp, \$19.95.
Available from bookshops.

"Working for Change" is a fascinating and well written book which covers a lot of ground in its 150 pages. It examines the feminist response to criminal assault in the home ("domestic" violence) through an enlightening discussion of the history of the refuge movement in Australia and, specifically, the operation of the Domestic Violence Crisis Service (DVCS), established in Canberra in 1988.

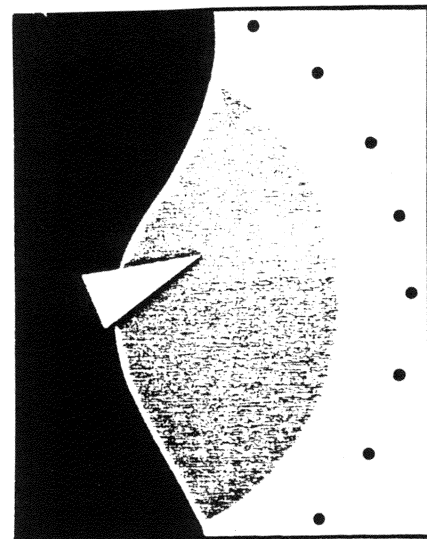
In doing so, it offers a concise analysis of the origins of such assault and makes recommendations for legal and institutional changes to prevent its recurrence. Moving smoothly between real-life examples from the DVCS and broader philosophical questions, it debates a number of controversial issues, including the role of the law in countering assault in the home. The authors argue that such assault must be treated as a

criminal offence and not as a matter for conflict resolution.

In addition, "Working for Change" chronicles the significant role played by the refuge movement in achieving political and social reform over the years. However, authors McGregor and Hopkins also point out the role of powerful feminist bureaucrats ("femocrats") in initiating social change. They canvass a number of feminist arguments critical of femocrats but ultimately declare that "it is essentially the collaboration between these two groups [refuge workers and femocrats] which has enabled the movement to make the progress it has."

The book also discusses the structure of feminist services such as refuges and the manner in which services relate to significant organisations such as police, courts and funding bodies. This discussion identifies both the potential deficiencies and strengths of characteristically feminist modes of organisation (eg collectives) and gives an interesting account of the mainly positive relationship between DVCS and the Canberra Police.

"Working for Change" is a book worth reading for anyone wanting information on criminal assault in the home and is made even more interesting by its analysis of a social movement.



youth affairs peak bodies

GOVERNMENT

Commonwealth

Youth Bureau
DEET
Canberra ACT 2600
(06) 276 8462

ACT

Youth Affairs
ACT Housing and Community
Services Bureau
3rd Floor, ACT Health Authority
Cnr Moore & Alinga Sts
Canberra ACT 2601
(06) 245 4607

News South Wales

Office of Youth Affairs
Ministry of Education, Youth and
Women's Affairs
Level 2, 410 Campbell St
Sydney NSW 2000
(02) 561 8700

Northern Territory

Family, Youth and Children's
Services Branch
Dept of Health & Community
Services
87 Mitchell St
Darwin NT 0800
(089) 89 2727

Queensland

Youth Bureau
Department of Tourism, Sport and
Racing
Education House
30 Mary St
Brisbane QLD 4000
(07) 237 1293

South Australia

State Youth Affairs
Department of Employment and
TAFE
69 Hindmarsh Square
Adelaide SA 5000
(08) 226 1820

Tasmania

Office of Youth Affairs
Department of the Premier and
Cabinet
2nd Floor
Franklin Square
Hobart TAS 7000
(002) 303 893

Victoria

Office of Youth Affairs
Ministry of Ethnic, Municipal and
Community Affairs
Level 4
500 Burke St
Melbourne VIC 3000
(03) 602 8300

Western Australia

Office of the Family
Youth Policy Unit
3rd Floor
May Holman Centre
32 St George's Tce
Perth WA 6000
(09) 222 0333

Local Government

Youth Affairs Reference Group
Australian Local Government
Association
Municipal Association of Victoria
468 St Kilda Rd
Melbourne VIC 3004
(03) 867 5266

NON-GOVERNMENT

National

AYPAC
PO Box 179
Civic Square ACT 2608
(06) 247 3540

New South Wales

Youth Action and Policy
Association (YAPA)
4th Floor, 8 Kippax St
Surry Hills NSW 2010
(02) 281 2344

Northern Territory

Youth Services Development
Officer
Darwin City Council
PO Box 84
Darwin NT 0801
(089) 82 2511

Queensland

Youth Affairs Network of
Queensland (YANQ)
PO Box 116
Fortitude Valley QLD 4006
(07) 852 1800

South Australia

Youth Affairs Council of SA
(YACSA)
1st Floor, 194 Morphett St
Adelaide SA 5000
(08) 212 5246

Victoria

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria
(YACVIC)
Suite 1/250 Gore St
Fitzroy VIC 3065
(03) 419 9122

Western Australia

Youth Affairs Council of WA
(YACWA)
137 Lake St
Northbridge WA 6000
(09) 328 8277

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 Income > \$50,000 N-G ☐ Govt ☐ \$30.00

Organisation No Funding ☐ \$5.00
 Funding < \$100,000 ☐ \$35.00
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Government Department or Service ☐ \$70.00

I hereby subscribe to the aim and objectives of YANQ, enclose a copy of our constitution/annual report (organisations only) and cheque/money order for the prescribed membership/subscription fee.

Signed _____ Date _____

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